

God's Grace on the Prairie

The History of the Dakota-Montana District

1970-1995

By Alan W. Gumm

**To the Glory of God
and
Dedicated to the Pastors, Teachers and the Members of
The Dakota-Montana District
Past, Present, and Future**

[Written for the 75th anniversary of the Dakota-Montana District & Presented in July 1995]

Amazing grace! God's amazing grace! How sweet the sound of God's grace to the ears of His children! It is only by God's grace that we celebrate the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Jesus Christ. It is only by God's grace that wretched sinners are saved from an eternity in hell. It is only by God's amazing grace that we have the hope of heavenly mansions.

It is only by God's amazing grace that we celebrate the 75th Anniversary of our beloved Dakota-Montana District. It was God's grace that led faithful, courageous, dedicated, *seelsorge* pastors like Christian Boettcher, Julius Engel, and Frank Wittfaut to the Dakota Territory. God's grace protected these *Reisepredigern* as they rode their horse and buggy for hundreds of miles in every kind of weather to proclaim God's grace in Christ to the souls gathered in little villages, towns, and hamlets. God's grace brought the district into existence. God's grace provided Northwestern Lutheran Academy in Mobridge, SD. God's grace brought the district safely through wars, drought, the Depression, controversies and a school closing. God's grace held our district in His arms and blessed us.

If you doubt that God's grace has been present, is present, and always will be present in our district, then I invite you to read Pastor Herbert Birner's fine, fifty-year history of our district and to read what follows. Everything that has taken place in the life of our district for more than 75 years is born from the unmerited grace of our God.

Amazing grace! God's amazing grace! How sweet the sound of God's grace as we celebrate our 75th Anniversary of the Dakota-Montana District!

I have been asked to write the history of our district from 1970 to the present. This part of our history has never been written before. I am now getting into "uncharted waters," so to speak. I will discuss what God's grace gave to our district by biennium.

1968-1970

These were tumultuous and rebellious years in our country. Our country was entangled in the Vietnam War. Riots ruled the streets. Drugs dragged many of our young people into unholy living. There was Woodstock, "acid rock," long hair, short skirts, bra and draft card burnings, flower power, the peace sign, psychedelic graffiti, drugs and much unrest in our country. The men returning from 'Nam were unwelcome and called "baby killers." Every position of authority was challenged. We walked on the moon and our country bragged of its accomplishments. Communes were set up and "free love" was encouraged among our young people. There were daily news reports from Vietnam flashing the destruction and carnage across our television screens. Draft dodgers fled to Canada and some of those "artful dodgers" enrolled at Northwestern College to avoid the draft. God knew that they were there for the wrong reasons. He kept them out of the ministry.

It was a time of unrest and rebellion. Being on the prairie of our district kept all of this social unrest from our youth for a while. But it did reach our wide-open skies and our “amber waves of grain.” The only mention that there were social problems is in President Arthur Kell’s report. He alluded to national unrest when he wrote: “There have, of course, been many other blessings. Only since our last Convention in 1968 have the incidental blessings which we enjoy here in the form of *Lebensraum* and fresh air have been brought forcefully to our attention by the news media of the country.”

It was a time of unrest in our country, but it was a time of celebration in our district. In 1970, the district praised God for 50 years of grace. Rev. W.F. Sprengeler preached the sermon of the 1970 Convention opening service. He was there when our district was born. Professor K.G. Sievert wrote a history of our district entitled “Preaching The Gospel On The Dakota-Montana Prairies.”

In his report, Pastor Kell used John 15:16 as the basis for his report. He wrote: “The important thing is that we continue to preach the Gospel for the salvation and nourishment of our souls, and that we do so humbly, but faithfully, always remembering, ‘Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.’”

Faith and Lamb of God in Billings, MT merged to form a new congregation – Apostles. Trinity at Sturgis, SD and Hope at Spearfish formed a dual parish. First at Winnett, MT; Faith at Melstone and Holy Trinity at Lavina formed a tri-parish.

The Mission Board reported 29 congregations served by 16 missionaries and one vicar. There was one vacancy. The 29 congregations had 1445 communicants and 2434 souls. Yankton, SD; Minot, ND; Bozeman, MT; and Barrhead, Alberta, Canada were exploratory. 50-75 people were attending the services at Barrhead. We never did establish a congregation there because the group there only wanted services in German. They were not necessarily interested in standing firm on God’s Word.

What I found amazing was the number of WELS students at some of the colleges in our district. There were 27 WELS students at Rapid City, SD; 30 at Spearfish; 32 at Vermillion, SD; 60 at Aberdeen, SD; and 100 at Brookings, SD.

The Mission Board was seriously looking at Mitchell and Huron, SD; Grand Forks, ND; Missoula, Butte, Helena, and Kalispell, MT; Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Regina, and Winnipeg, Canada.

The Evangelism Committee reported that the first evangelism workshops in the district were held in 1969-1970. There would be a Synod-wide evangelism effort (program) in 1971. The Committee formed a district evangelism library. Each pastor in the district would receive the material presented at the 1970 Mission Fair at the Seminary. The Committee also encouraged pastors to use the Synod’s Soul Conservation Commission by sending names of military personnel and college students to them.

The 1968-1970 biennium saw 14 candidates ordained. Two of them were Joel Frank – Nebraska District President, and our Dennis Hayes. Five other pastors transferred into the district. There were two colloquies, one resignation, and one retirement. Eleven pastors left the district. The Convention was held at the Academy and Pastor Kell was re-elected District President.

1970-1972

As the District met in convention at the Academy in Mobridge, June of 1972, there were torrential rains and sudden flooding at Rapid City. News reports stated that hundreds would lose their life and destruction of property could reach one hundred million dollars. Pastor Kell mentioned that in his report and then he asked, “How many more biennial conventions lie in the future for us?” Of course, only God knows the answer, but signs of the times point out that the end is near.

Pastor Kell used 2 Corinthians 4:5 as the theme for his report. “Nor do we preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” He reminded the delegates, and especially the pastors of the district of why they were there and what their calling in life was all about. What Pastor Kell said 22 years ago holds true today. May we take them to heart. He said, “We are to remember, ‘We do not preach ourselves.’ For we certainly are not to proclaim our own ideas and ideals or our own opinions and convictions and then perhaps proceed to rationalize and defend

them and pass them off as the very essence of Christianity. No, we have but one call and that is to proclaim Christ Jesus the Lord.”

During the biennium many congregations joined together to form new congregations or parishes. St. Paul's of Argo Township, SD closed and joined Our Savior's of Brookings. Good Shepherd at Presserville Township in Montana moved to Wolf Point. Eight families of Good Shepherd in Sioux Falls, SD were granted a peaceful release to form a new congregation in Sioux Falls. St. Paul's was formed in December of 1971. Good Shepherd in Wolf Point and Salem in Circle, MT formed a dual parish. First in Gary, SD and Trinity in Hendricks, MN did the same. Bethlehem in Watertown, SD and St. John's of Rauville Township became a dual parish. Christ of Morrystown, SD, St. Paul's of McIntosh, SD, Bethlehem of Watauga, SD and St. John's of Paradise, ND formed a four-star parish. Immanuel of Elgin, ND, Zion of Burt, ND, Trinity of Carson, ND and St. Luke's of Leith also became a four-star parish. St. Matthew's of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada was suspended from fellowship because of false teaching of the Scriptural truths of Fellowship, Unionism, and the Public Ministry. This took place April 15, 1971.

There were six ordinations in this biennium. Robert Weimer and Carl Lindemann were two of them. Four pastors transferred into our district. There was one colloquy, two resignations and two retirements. Professor K.G. Sievert retired after 50 years in the ministry on June 3, 1971. He had spent 43 years at the Academy. Rev. Sprengeler departed this life and entered eternal life on April 2, 1971. Seven men left the district.

The Mission Board reported that there were 26 mission congregations and one exploratory field. 16 missionaries cared for 2086 souls, 1349 communicants. The congregation at Pierre finally was given a name – Redeemer. Barrhead, Alberta, Canada disappeared from the Mission Board report. Pastor Gilbert Bunde from Willow Lake, SD, was doing exploratory work in Huron, SD.

Some familiar words were written in the District Mission Report in 1972. “Because of a backlog of requests and shortage of funds exploratory work has been reduced in all areas of the United States. Approval of the GBHM is now necessary before trial services can begin. The normal period for such services is six months with approval necessary for all extensions.”

There were 116 WELS students at Brookings in 1972. The Lutheran Collegians at Brookings canvassed several areas for the District Mission Board. The Board was awaiting guidelines from the Synod's student services committee.

The District Stewardship Board was in the process of studying stewardship policies, objectives and guidelines in connection with a directive from the Synod Stewardship Board, which was reorganized at the 1971 Synod Convention. Pastor James P. Schaefer, the Synod Stewardship Counselor, came out and explained the new stewardship program for the fall of 1972.

It seems that in the early 1970s, programs for congregations were being drawn up. Stewardship programs were entitled “Love Cares” and “Walk Together.” Pastor Norm Berg even wrote an essay for the “Stewardship Handbook.” The “Lending To The Lord” program encouraged members to lend to the Synod for Kingdom work. The Synod's Evangelism Board was also drawing up programs for congregational use. Each congregation was encouraged to form an Evangelism Committee.

Twenty-four district congregations conducted religious surveys. Four children and six adults were baptized; four adults were confirmed; 14 families and five adults were in Bible Information Classes; there were 250 prospects. Even with these blessings from our Lord, there were still congregations who refused to have an organized Evangelism program in their congregations.

In the fall of 1971, the Academy had the largest enrollment in its history up to that time. There were 121 students. At the time of the Convention, 115 students had enrolled at the Academy. A new president's house, garage, football field, and landscaping were built.

Our district memorialized Synod to stop supporting Bethesda and provide a “home” to care for the exceptional children of the WELS.

Pastor Kell was re-elected District President. Pastor Richard Strobel and Pastor David Krenke were the Vice-Presidents and Pastor John Engel was elected Secretary.

1972-1974

The 27th Biennial Convention of our District was held at the Academy at Mobridge, June 18-20, 1974. This was the WELS' 125th Anniversary. Pastor Kell used Ephesians 5:20 as his theme for his report. "Giving thanks always for all things.... unto God and Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." He encouraged the delegates to "give thanks always for all things as a church."

As a district of the WELS we had much to thank our God for and Pastor Kell briefly listed how God richly blessed our district from its earliest days to the early seventies. He listed many of the preaching stations that once existed in the district but were no more. Pastor Kell also pointed out the great blessings God gave to our district through the Academy. The 1973 enrollment at the Academy was 131. An all-time high! He noted that the Academy was not receiving more support from the district.

From reading Pastor Kell's report of the biennium, I get the impression that there was some serious discussion already then about closing the Academy. Unfortunately, five years later the Academy would close.

This was a very quiet biennium in our district. Seven men began their ministry in our district. Pastor Paul Heiderich was one of them. He has always had a close relationship with his car or whatever he drives. His first Call consisted of McIntosh, Morrystown, Watauga, SD and Paradise, ND. He has always had more than one congregation to serve.

Four men entered our district. There was one colloquy and one teacher resigned. Ten men left the district. Many pastors from the district moved to other congregations within the district. For the first time congregations did not amalgamate or form large parishes.

The old dormitory was torn down at Northwestern College in 1973. Northwestern Prep had its own separate faculty and president in 1974. Professors L. Umnus and R. Sievert retired at Northwestern. Professor Victor Voecks passed away in New Ulm. He taught at DMLC for 43 years.

Ten new Christian Day Schools opened in our Synod. Two schools closed. 26,507 students were in our Synod's Christian Day Schools. There were nine Area Lutheran High Schools.

A new lectionary was drawn up by the Synod's Commission on Worship and the floor committee at the Convention encouraged that this lectionary be studied at conferences.

Mission work in the district progressed steadily. On June 9, 1974, 27 people attended the first exploratory service at Mitchell, SD. Pastor John Engel and family moved to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, to begin exploratory work there. He was our District Missionary.

Mission Board Chairman Pastor Wayne Schulz said that there were 23 mission congregations and two preaching stations. 15 pastors cared for 2119 souls and 1304 communicants. By the way, those 1304 communicants gave \$197,488 in offerings in 1973.

The Stewardship Program was entitled "In Joyful Response." "Lending to the Lord" showed total loans of \$3,745,249.39 as of March 31, 1974.

There were two major Evangelism developments. "Talk About The Savior" was introduced. It was a Law/Gospel presentation. The second development was "the decision of the Executive Committee of the Synod's Commission On Evangelism to seek a Coordinator of Evangelism."

Here's an interesting note: "The 1973 Synod Convention authorized the Academy to draw up a master plan for its facilities, envisioning an ultimate on-campus enrollment of 200 students."

A quiet biennium ended. The District Praesidium remained the same after elections. Yes, it was a quiet biennium, but soon things would change.

1974-1976

The writing on the wall was becoming clear. Northwestern Lutheran Academy was in trouble. In his report, NLA President Daniel Malchow gave some disheartening news.

The Synod did give permission for NLA to look at remodeling and fixing up the campus to house 200 students, but the Synod would not have the money to do the necessary work. The Commission on Higher Education stated that the Educational Institution Building Fund projected a deficit, so there would be no money for improvements. The hope was that the district congregations would contribute more to the Academy. From April 1, 1975 – March 31, 1976, the school received \$8,789.49 from the district. There was a plea for more money.

NLA President Malchow reported that August of 1975 saw 115 students enrolled at NLA. He urged each congregation to send more students to NLA. He clearly pointed out the need for more students. He wrote, “It should be apparent that if our school is going to continue as a worker training institution of the Synod, we need students.... If we want this school to continue and to flourish, we should demonstrate this by the students we send. If few students come from our district, we are only paying lip service to the purpose our school is intended to serve. Then others might justifiably contend that a worker training school of the Wisconsin Synod located in Mobridge, SD, is not a sound investment.”

The 1975 graduating class sent eleven to DMLC. Eight enrolled at NWC. That sounds great, but only three juniors, six sophomores, and one freshman were enrolled in the pastoral course at the Academy. The floor committee brought a resolution to get more students and more money from the district congregations for NLA.

The handwriting on the wall was becoming more clear. The closing of our beloved Academy was drawing near.

This District Convention met at the Academy. There were 63 lay delegates, 45 pastors, two professors, and three teachers present for the opening of the Bicentennial Convention. No, it wasn't the 200th Anniversary of our district. It was the 200th Anniversary of our country. President Kell urged the convention to give thanks and praise to our gracious God for all of His rich blessings upon our country. The freedoms of speech and worship and all the other freedoms that we enjoy are blessings that we should never, ever take for granted.

In this biennium, six young men were ordained. Pastor Wayne Rouse was one of them. Three pastors and three professors came into our district. Four of them went to the Western Wisconsin District – Kloehn, Dengler, Russow, and Strobel. That district has never been the same since then. Pastor Kell (8/17/75) and Pastor Wilbert Schulz (6/6/76) celebrated their fortieth year in the ministry. Pastor Kell was elected District President. Pastor Ed Werner and Pastor David Krenke were the Vice Presidents and Pastor John Engel was the Secretary.

We had four Christian Day Schools in our district in 1976. Billings had 16 pupils; Rapid City had 23 students; Mobridge had 56 pupils and Watertown had 115 pupils. Synod-wide, 16 new schools opened in 1975 and 20 schools were scheduled to open in 1976. There were 11 area Lutheran High Schools. A youth newsletter entitled “Generations” was begun.

The District Mission Board's prayer was that “God would give our missions and missionaries an extra measure of boldness to meet the requirements of preaching the Word of the salvation of souls in our area of responsibility.”

Bismarck, ND and Brookings, SD became self-supporting and Mitchell was granted manpower in July of 1975. Church sites were being purchased in Huron and Mitchell, SD, and Bozeman, MT. Yankton's chapel was being built. A new parsonage in Brookings was dedicated. Huron and Mitchell would soon have parsonages. There was hope to start new missions in Calgary, Lethbridge, Regina, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg, Canada. Missoula, MT was another place that has a good nucleus of WELS people. There were still 23 mission congregations in the district.

Nine pastors from our district brought a Memorial to the District requesting that we ask Synod to appoint a committee to study the “expediency of the current practice of the WELS requesting and applying for gifts, grants, and matching funds from any source outside of WELS.” This committee was to report to the ten districts in 1978. The District made the request.

This discussion concerning money received from outside the WELS, especially from AAL, would go on for a number of years. My first conference in 1980 spent lots of time, hours, in fact, discussing a conference paper about AAL.

There would be lots of discussion about AAL money, but the main topic of discussion for the next three years would be the closing of Northwestern Lutheran Academy. Another controversy would yank at the heart strings of our district's people. All those feelings that the people would have in 1979, would be resurrected in 1993, when the decision was made to close our school in Prairie du Chien, WI. But that story will come later.

1976-1978

In 1975, the Synod at Convention voiced its approval of the master plan for building construction at NLA. They wanted the school to be able to have an enrollment of 200 students. Some construction needed to be done. The Synod recommended that Phases I and II of the master plan be undertaken when there was enough money in the Synod's coffers. Building contractors and consultants were hired. The actual construction was not begun but preparations were being made. Building could start as soon as the money was available.

This exciting, hopeful time in our district was crushed at the August, 1977 Synod Convention. Shocking news spread across the district. The 1977 Synod Convention of the WELS "called for the removal of NLA from its present location to a new site, with preference to be shown toward the Southwest or West Coast." All plans for expansion, building and even the future of NLA were abruptly stopped.

From the reading that I have done, the reasons the Synod decided to close NLA were as follows: 1) Small enrollment; 2) A large percentage of students did not enter NWC or DMLC; and 3) Not enough financial support for the school from the district.

What was the district going to do? A special convention was called by the Praesidium at Moberly on January 25, 1978. The purpose of this convention was "to hear the proposals of the CHE in respect to NLA and to study their implications for our district." Because of a severe snowstorm many of the pastors and delegates were unable to attend the Convention on the 25th so the Convention was extended another day.

There were six resolutions formulated at this special Convention. It was a call for some serious action. Two years before there had also been strong encouragement for action to save the Academy, but now there was great urgency to save the Academy.

Here I will summarize the resolutions. 1) Agree that there is an urgent need for more pastors and teachers; 2) Maintain Synod's historical commitment to training future church workers through the academy system; 3) Recognize the need for NLA to continue; 4) That the District assume the responsibility to carry out the master plan for NLA; 5) That every congregation in the district study the needs and plans of NLA; declare financial support to replace the music facility; and that each congregation inform the District Secretary how much they will give toward NLA; 6) That the district set the goal of 42 freshmen for the fall of 1978 and the Praesidium and faculty carry out a district recruitment program.

Each congregation was given a survey to fill out concerning financial support. Financial support for 1978-1981 promised by the congregations totaled \$177,500.00. There were 72 congregations in the district. Five congregations gave no commitment and three congregations did not contact the District Secretary.

The Special District Convention called for 42 freshmen. In June of 1978 there were only eight enrolled. They were hoping for 24. The numbers of those who were enrolled in the pastor or teacher courses also declined at NLA.

NLA President Malchow concluded his report by encouraging all the district to pray for NLA and that at the same time the district should remember to pray "Thy will be done."

On May 25, 1978, the Academy celebrated its 50th Anniversary. The theme for the Anniversary and for the convention in June was "A Tree Planted By The Rivers of Water."

In Pastor Kell's President's Report he pointed out that the Campion Campus at Prairie du Chien, WI might be purchased by the Synod for a new school. He told the Convention that NLA is like a tree that is planted by the rivers of water. If a person didn't quite believe that, then they should go out of the gym and look at the river below the Academy. Later he said, "The Living Word of God, the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ, that is the river from which every child of God and from which also Northwestern Lutheran Academy draws its life-giving strength to grow and to blossom and to bring fruit a hundredfold."

The Synod was to have a special convention in July of 1978 to discuss the future of NLA and Martin Luther Academy in New Ulm, MN and the possible purchase of the Campion Campus. The District resolved to thank the congregations of the District for their financial commitment to take over the responsibility to carry out the master plan for NLA and that we seek Synod's approval to proceed with the implementation of the master plan for NLA. The District was also encouraged to recruit more students and to pray. Our district recommended that because the housing at MLA in New Ulm was overcrowded and because the Campion Campus was up for sale that the Synod purchase the Campion Campus. The district felt that the Synod needed another prep school, not an amalgamation.

The 50th Anniversary of the Academy should have been a time of rejoicing, thanksgiving, and praise. To be sure there was much of that, but dark clouds were overhead, and the tree planted by the rivers of water was in danger of being hit by lightning. The lightning struck at the special convention of the Synod in July of 1978.

Professor Richard Strobel was the essayist for the 1978 District Convention. The title of his essay was "The Role Of The Prep School In Our Educational System." What he wrote in 1978 was not only prophetic about what happened at NLA but also what took place in 1993 at the Synod Convention. Maybe it is prophetic of the future.

Here is his last paragraph:

While it may seem to some that I have been belaboring a point and tilting at windmills, since we all, or at least most of us, agree that NWC needs the prep schools and that DMLC is better off with them, I do not think that I have done so. For this reason: Before us is the Campion issue, but I firmly believe that behind this there is something even more weighty, namely the question of whether we need the prep schools at all. Granted, today, at least ostensibly, we as a Synod are all for the prep schools. But when one observes the Synodical scene, the question arises: How about ten or fifteen years down the road? If we should one day lose our prep schools, this would have dire consequences for our pastor-training course. It would mean, ultimately, downgrading this course at NWC and at the Seminary. Would we want that? But even more is at stake. In 1969 the CHE stated: 'The history of many a church body that has lost its confessional position indicates a close connection between such loss of confessionalism and a growing dependence on schools outside its control for the training of its public ministry.' This is indeed the case, for the loss of the prep schools had this result in other church bodies going back to colonial times. Secularization began on the prep school level with the loss of the prep schools and then spread to the colleges and seminaries. This, I submit, is a price we cannot afford to pay.

There were six men who came to our district from our Seminary. Two pastors transferred into our district while two transferred out. Two pastors resigned and three retired. Pastor Kell was elected to his final term as District President. The other three officers remained the same.

Apostles in Billings, and the dual parish of Sturgis and Spearfish became self-supporting. Parsonages were erected at Huron and Mitchell. Chapels were constructed at Yankton and Huron. Plans for a chapel at Bozeman were underway. Exploratory services were being held at Helena and Missoula, MT; Hot Springs, SD; and Jamestown, ND. The Mission Board Chairman, Pastor Wayne Schulz, added this to his report: "This represents a high in the recent history of our district." How true!

The 1978 District Convention would be the last District Convention held at Northwestern Lutheran Academy at Mobridge, South Dakota. August 1, 1979, the Academy doors were closed.

The following congregations were organized in the 1970s: Pierre, SD; St. Paul's in Sioux Falls, SD; Bozeman, MT; Yankton, SD; Huron, SD; Mitchell, SD; Missoula, MT; Jamestown, ND; and Hot Springs, SD.

1980-1990

1978-1980

I began to collect resource materials for a conference paper and for this history of our District after the 1993 Synod Convention, which voted to close Martin Luther Prep at Prairie du Chien, WI, and Northwestern Prep in Watertown, WI and amalgamate them on the Watertown campus; as well as to close Northwestern College at Watertown, WI and Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, MN, and amalgamate them in New Ulm. As I read through President Kell's 1980 report, I realized that what he said is definitely apropos for us today. He reminds us of some very basic things. He also points us to the future. Here is part of his report to the 1980 District Convention in Watertown, SD:

And since that time a certain spirit of gloom has become noticeable in the district. Some members are not participating in the Synodical committee meetings any longer. Here and there one gets the impression that the Gospel has been taken from us. But isn't that a rather human reaction? Is it all that bad? If you think it is, what do you think the apostle means when he says, 'All things work together for good to them who love God?' Does he not mean to say that all things, even those which are highly disagreeable to us, under God will turn out to be the greatest blessing we may have experienced? And is that Scripture principle not applicable here too? We certainly must realize that the Lord of the Church has permitted our school to be closed. What is stopping us from praying and looking for those blessings He has promised? As a matter of fact, there is evidence for us to believe now that we are on the way to receive those blessings that will be ours if we but believe the promises of God. As a first step in that direction, an area high school committee has been organized and has been hard at work for about a year. Our failings in the past have been noted. They have been debated and vows have been taken not to repeat them in the future. The cause of Christian education as against the present humanistic training of our youth in our public school system is being highlighted on many an occasion. The fact is also being emphasized that this cause is worth sacrificing for. We don't know exactly when this regional Lutheran high school will be started or where in the district it will be located. But we do know that here lie the blessings which the Word of God promises. We know it is not too late for we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. Trusting in God's promises, we are confident that what looked like a great calamity to us only two years ago may well under God turn out to be one of the greatest blessings the Dakota-Montana District has yet experienced. May God grant it.

Martin Luther Preparatory School had a first year enrollment of 360 students which was 160 more than anticipated. Four new Area Lutheran High Schools opened in 1979 bringing the total of ALHSs to 18.

The Mission Board reported that exploratory work was being done at Hot Springs, Jamestown, Missoula, and Helena. Mission status was granted to Missoula, Hot Springs and Jamestown. Work was begun in Calgary, Canada. Chapels were purchased for Jamestown and Bozeman. Construction was to begin for Wetaskiwin, Alberta. Names of WELS members living near Gillette and Casper, Wyoming were requested. There were 19 mission churches in our district served by 14 men. There were 1536 souls and 1015 communicants.

The Evangelism Commission began arranging an Evangelism Convocation in each conference during the fall of 1980. In 1980 the Synod was doing mission work in 11 foreign countries with 50 missionaries.

The fall stewardship program was entitled "Love Gives." A special post-Easter Synod offering collected \$150,000 by the end of May of 1980. A 15% increase was needed for the 1981 PBS to carry out the Synod's

work. In 1980, the Synod had already run up its borrowed total to \$31,027,043. Our district warned Synod to be cautious and use restraint in borrowing money.

A new hymnal called *Lutheran Worship* was being looked at and studied by our Synod's Commission On Worship. This was Missouri's new hymnal. Our Commission was studying it for possible recommendation to be used in our Synod.

1978-1980 saw Pastor Gerald Blobaum and four other men begin their ministry on the prairie. Four others transferred in and mostly because of the closing of NLA, 14 pastors and four teachers left the district. There were two resignations and Dr. Paul Peters died on September 3, 1979. Zion in Reeder, ND closed its doors and joined Redeemer in Hettinger, ND.

Pastor Wayne Schulz was elected District President; Pastor John Engel and Pastor Ed Werner were the Vice Presidents and Pastor Dennis Hayes was elected Secretary.

1980-1982

Since this was my first district convention I was thankful that it had been a quiet biennium and a peaceful convention. Pastor Wayne Schulz was our district president. He too, was thankful that it was a quiet biennium.

Some of the concerns brought forward were the \$10 million "Reaching Out" offering, the feasibility of the Synod publishing its own hymnal, the pension plan and adding a Canadian to our District Mission Board. We also heard the report of the Synod's Committee to Study the Matter of Guidelines For the Formation of New Districts. (How do you like that title?) There was a possibility that the 1983 Synod Convention could adopt the report and have the Dakota-Montana District chopped up and amalgamated with other districts. In essence, wipe our district off the face of the earth. Our district vehemently opposed that idea and it never happened. Thanks be to God!

It seems that our district has always had difficulty with the Legislature and State education people in South Dakota. There was a bill in the SD house that if passed it would have forced parents of our Christian Day School children to obtain permission each year from their local school board for their children to attend a non-public institution that was non-accredited. Teacher Dan Schmal was to serve as our liaison between our District Board for Parish Education and the State Department of Education.

As of 1982, there were six schools in our district, which were in Billings, Watertown, Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Mobridge, and Aberdeen. Total enrollment was 322.

The Dakota Montana Lutheran High School Association met annually and was gaining support for an Area Lutheran High School.

Seven new Christian Day Schools opened in our Synod in 1981. There were now 373 Christian Day Schools in our Synod.

Chapels were dedicated at Missoula, Hot Springs, and Bozeman. Exploratory work was being done at Minot, ND; Red Deer, Alberta; and Milbank, SD. Requests for exploratory work were made for Sidney, MT and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Evangelism Seminars were held throughout our district. These seminars were for pastors and lay people. The pastor and teachers at Good Shepherd in Sioux Falls wrote and taught a completely new VBS course on sharing the Savior.

The District Special Ministries Board informed the district that *Luther's Catechism – Simplified Version* was available to congregations who had mentally handicapped children. I have used this course and it is very helpful in teaching the Word of God to those who have a difficult time learning.

Timm Meyer and I entered the district along with three other pastors during this biennium. There was one colloquy, one retirement, and one resignation. Five men left the district and eight entered the district. Two of those eight men were Pastor John Ruege and Pastor Reginald Pope. Pastor Pope had been out here during the 1950s and 1960s. At my ordination in Hazelton, he and Mrs. Pope reminisced about their days in the district. Their eyes sparkled as they spoke of the district. They hoped that they could return one day. At my first pastoral

conference, Pastor Wayne Schulz asked for names to put on the Call list at Mitchell. I suggested Pastor Pope. President Schulz asked, "Is he a theologian?" I told him that he had nothing to worry about. Pastor Pope would be a reliable pastor. The rest, as they say, is history.

Professor K.G. Sievert, Pastor A.P.C. Kell, Pastor Walter Hermann, and Pastor Gerhard Geiger entered eternal glory during the biennium.

Messiah in Glendive, MT, closed its doors in 1980 and joined Trinity in Terry, MT. The Praesidium remained the same after elections. 1980-1982 was a quiet biennium. By God's grace it would stay that way for a while.

1982-1984

Usually, the President's Report is in the Convention folders. At this convention there was a reason why the President's Report was handed out. President Wayne Schulz requested that he not be considered for another term as President, because he had served as chairman of the Mission Board and had served as President for two terms. He wanted to spend more time with his growing congregation and school.

We were stunned, but we could understand. The District President is still a parish pastor with souls to nourish and souls to bring to the Savior. We need not forget that.

Pastor John Engel was elected District President, but he declined it. Later he said that he did not have enough time to properly consider the position so he thought it best to decline it. Pastor Ed Werner was elected President. Pastor Pope and Pastor John Engel were the Vice Presidents. Pastor Wayne Rouse would be elected Secretary. An office he held until 1994.

The theme of the convention was "Sing Aloud Unto God Our Strength." This theme was appropriate for our convention. We discussed the increase in the decrease of offerings. Serious financial cuts would have to be made if offerings did not increase. This scenario would be repeated for the following ten years. The offerings from the Synod did not even come close to what the delegates at the Synod Convention had budgeted since 1981. Pastor Schulz encouraged us to urge our congregations to meet the challenge of higher offerings with God's help.

Another area where we would need God's strength and guidance is how to best serve the smaller congregations where they and their towns were dwindling in population. President Schulz urged these congregations and pastors to be flexible if there was to be realignment.

The District Mission Board was looking into the possibility of additional congregations in Billings, MT; Fargo, ND; Sioux Falls and Rapid City, SD. The Board was looking at churches in Minot, ND; Milbank, SD; Red Deer, Alberta and Lemmon, SD. Livingston, MT went self-supporting and became a dual parish with Bozeman. Much work was being done in Calgary, St. Albert, Wetaskiwin, and Red Deer, Canada. There was hopeful thinking of getting something started in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Some Synod activities from this biennium are worth mentioning because they would eventually affect all of us. The committee appointed to study the roles of man and woman completed their assignment. Pastor Kurt Eggert, a D-M Alumnus, began to serve as the project director for the new hymnal. A large number of DMLC graduates were not assigned, but in the not-so-distant future, there would be a shortage of teachers. The CHE authorized the Seminary to proceed with plans for a new auditorium/gymnasium. Two new homes were erected on the MLPS campus. MLS initiated a new program entitled "Taste Of The Ministry" which gave seniors an opportunity to briefly experience the life of a teacher and pastor. This program became popular with all of our Synodical schools in the 1990s. We were encouraged to get involved with the D-MLHS Association.

Travel/Canvass/Witness teams were introduced during this biennium. The 1981 Synod Convention authorized the Synod office of Executive Secretary of Evangelism. Pastor Paul Kelm accepted the Call. *The People's Bible* series began during this biennium. We voted to recommend to Synod that District Presidents receive a vicar or a graduate assistant because of the tremendous work load of the District President.

Pastor Doug Free and three other Seminary graduates entered the ministry in our district. Nine men left. There was one colloquy, two resignations, and Pastor Robert Weimer retired for the first time. Eight men

entered our district, three of them are still here as of the writing of this paper – Pastor Peter Naumann, Pastor Steve Persons, who would leave and then come back, and Pastor Norm Seeger.

It was another quiet biennium. Again, our thanks to God.

1984-1986

This was Pastor Werner's first District Convention as President. The theme for this Convention at St. Martin's in Watertown, SD, was "The Word Is Now." We heard how God's Word is our great heritage and out of love for God, who loved us first, we will share that saving Word with the people of the world.

The "Reaching Out" offering totaled \$20,011,962.00 by April 11, 1986. We thanked the Lord for opening the hearts of His people. Yet we also heard that the offerings for Synod's work were dramatically dwindling. The administration of the Synod was instructed by the 1985 Synod Convention to operate on a balanced budget. The Commission on Communication and Financial Support (CCFS) was born at the 1985 Synod Convention. The Board for Parish Services also had its birth at the same Convention.

Fourteen pastors were serving 16 missions, and one exploratory was started in Custer, SD. CEF and "Reaching Out" dollars paid for land, parsonage, and WEF unit at Calgary. The same for Helena, MT; a parsonage at Bozeman; land and parsonage at Milbank; and the purchase of an existing church at Hot Springs. Moorhead, MN, Valley City and Jamestown, ND became self-supporting.

An *Evangelism Handbook* was produced, along with "Precious Is The Child," "A New Beginning" and the groundwork for a Mass-Media-assisted outreach program was laid.

We still had six Christian Day Schools in 1986, although their name was changed to Lutheran Elementary Schools. Total school enrollment in our district was 339 students.

Pastor Doug Free was our district's first CCFS chairman, a post he still held at the writing of this paper. The CCFS was responsible for encouraging Gospel-motivated "mission offerings" from the congregations of the district, "so that the important mission work and worker training that we carry on as a Synod may enjoy increased financial support."

The District Stewardship Board, in a lengthy report, urged every pastor and every congregation to actively utilize stewardship materials and programs.

One particular resolution has a special place in the hearts of Pastor Jim Bolda, Pastor Bob Weimer, and myself. It was at this District Convention that Christ Our Redeemer Ev. Lutheran Church of Gillette, Wyoming, left the Nebraska District and joined the Dakota-Montana District. Thank you!

Our district urged the Synod to move the "Bethany Program" from Mankato, MN, to Northwestern College in Watertown, WI.

Another executive secretary was desired for Parish Services. Our district recommended that the Synod keep doing what it had been doing and not create a new position in Milwaukee. They didn't listen!

The Sampler was introduced the first Sunday in Advent of 1986. We tested the service, which, in some form, became part of the new hymnal.

Elections were as follows: Pastor Ed Werner, President; Pastor Reginald Pope and Pastor John Ruege, Vice Presidents; and Pastor Wayne Rouse was elected Secretary.

Eight new Seminary graduates came to our district. Pastors Paul Marggraf, Tom Rawerts, Dean Biebert, and Ron Kruse were still in this district at the writing of this paper. Five men entered our district from other districts. Pastors Jim Bolda and Curt Seefeldt also came to the district. Nine men left our district. There was one resignation.

There was a great deal of realignment of congregations in our district during this biennium. Milbank and Summit, SD dissolved their dual parish. Faith and Dupree, SD became a dual parish as well as Isabel and Timber Lake, SD. The four of them were together at one time. Flasher, ND, Paradise, ND and McIntosh, SD became a tri-parish while Morrystown, SD called a semi-retired pastor. The four of them were also together at one time.

Another quiet biennium with many changes in our district. We thank God for that peace.

1986-1988

In his report, President Werner urged the district to “strive to practice sound stewardship of time, talent, and treasure.” Pastor Werner very clearly defined each of those gifts from God. “Treasure is the physical blessings which can be measured in dollars and cents. The Lord has given everyone something.... Talent is a bundle of unique blessings which makes each of us an important and useful part of the body of Christ.... Time is given to us to reach a goal.... Since much time is wasted, much talent unused, and many treasures could be put to better use it becomes obvious there is a need for ‘Spiritual Renewal.’”

Pastor Werner informed the district that “one of our congregations was reduced from a position of ‘ready for self-support status,’ to a stressful economic situation when nearly half of the congregation chose to abandon the Biblical doctrine of church fellowship.” A little over 30 people left the congregation, but as time went on, the Lord blessed the congregation with renewed growth. We give thanks to God for His grace.

There were no vacancies in the preaching ministry at the time of the Convention and for several months before the Convention. All vacancies on the faculties of our Christian Day Schools had been filled.

In this biennium, seven Seminary graduates came out here to the prairie. Pastors D. Reichel, J. Carter, S. Nowicki, and P. Paustian found souls to care for at Great Falls, MT; Watertown, SD; Hazelton, ND and Terry, MT respectively. Pastors M. Enderle, D. Hayes (returned to the fold), and T. Johnston came to our district. Eleven men, including myself (lapse of sanity), left the district. One teacher resigned. Wilmot and Summit, SD became a dual parish.

The 1987 Synod Convention passed a resolution that said that “the Synod conduct a Mission Outreach Program to establish a \$10 million endowment fund to be used exclusively for mission outreach.” Thus the conception of the “Lift High The Cross” offering.

At one time, we had opened 20+ new missions and assigned all of our Seminary graduates. Not so in 1987. Call Days used to be joyous occasions, but not in 1987 and a number of years following, because not all the men were assigned. It was bittersweet to see.

The Planned Giving Program was taking off, so more Planned Giving Counselors were called. There have been many financial blessings from our Lord through this program.

We had 18 missions, served by 16 men in 1988. There were 872 communicants in those congregations. From reading the history of our district there once was a time when the communicants and mission congregations were doubled. Lack of money curtailed mission work quite considerably. Missoula became self-supporting. A chapel was being built at Milbank, SD. Custer, SD purchased an existing building to worship in and Hot Springs, SD received a parsonage. CEF dollars gave our district missions land, parsonages, and chapels. Places for exploratory were Saskatoon and Regina, Saskatchewan and Kalispell, MT. Groups in Sidney and Dickinson, ND; Redfield and Webster, SD, were being served by local pastors.

The District Board for Parish Services was formed to offer assistance to the parish pastor as he trains and encourages the congregation to render God-pleasing service. The 1985 Synod Convention set up the Board for Parish Services. Pastor Curt Seefeldt was elected as the first chairman of our district’s board and is still the chairman at the writing of this paper. The Board for Parish Services was created to help congregations with Evangelism, Parish Education, Special Ministries, Stewardship, Worship and Youth Ministries.

Total enrollment in our Christian Day Schools in our district in 1988 was 364. Mandan, ND planned to open a school in the fall of 1988 in rented facilities.

The Evangelism Committee presented “Gearing Up For Evangelism” to 161 participants in eight of nine workshops. The 1989 theme would be “Getting Everyone Involved.”

Special Ministries developed the Committee on Counseling For Called Workers. The reason for the establishment of this committee was to help called workers and their families cope with the stress and strain of the preaching and teaching ministry in the society in which we live.

The Synod felt in 1987 that there was an urgent need for renewed zeal for spiritual growth and thus have renewed zeal for serving the Lord. I attended the presentation in the Southeastern Wisconsin District. There were ten of us at the table and eight had been in the D-M District. President Mischke was one of the eight. A

couple of times the presenters reminded us to keep quiet and pay attention. We were “spiritually renewed.” Simply and seriously, to be spiritually renewed spend more time in God’s Word. The Holy Spirit will make your faith in the Savior grow.

Aid Association For Lutherans started giving block grants to our Synod instead of giving grants to specific programs. The Coordinating Council set up guidelines so that we would not become dependent on those grants.

“Reaching Out” reached into our hearts and by June 30, 1988, there was \$20.9 million offered. The churches that were organized in 1980-1989 were as follows: Helena, MT; Calgary, Canada; Gillette, WY; Milbank, SD; and Custer, SD.

The District Praesidium remained the same as in 1986. This too, would soon change.

1990-1995

1988-1990

The theme for the 35th Biennial Convention of our District at Watertown, SD, was: “Heirs Together Of The Grace Of Life.” This theme, taken from 1 Peter 3:7, was chosen to bring to the foreground what Holy Scripture says concerning the right relationship between husbands and wives. Christian men and women are “heirs together” of the gracious gifts of God – forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus Christ alone. Jesus died for the sins of men and women alike. Professor Wayne Mueller of the Seminary presented a paper properly entitled “Heirs Together.” The devotions throughout the Convention carried that theme that all Christians are “heirs together of the grace of life.”

District President Reginald Pope gave his report and outlined all the work before the Convention. Discussion was held concerning the feasibility of our current prep and college locations, the “Lift High The Cross” offering, the Mission-Vision Statement, and a possible arrangement with the Lutheran Home at Belle Plaine, MN, to purchase the Prairie Home in Watertown, SD, which could be used as a nursing home and an Area Lutheran High School with dormitory space.

Pastor Pope reported that candidates K. McKinney, B. Mueller, J. Heitsch, and R. Rardin were ordained. Three pastors entered our district. Pastor P. Vander Galien was one of them. Twelve pastors left the district and three pastors and two teachers resigned.

Notice that I mentioned above that Pastor Pope was the District President. Instead of going into lengthy detail of what happened, may it suffice to say that Pastor Ed Werner had gotten into serious trouble with the law. The Vice-Presidents, Secretary, and involved Circuit Pastors dealt with the situation in a Scriptural manner. In his explanation of the situation, Pastor Pope urged the district to keep the Werner family and the affected congregations in their prayers. They should still be included in our prayers. It was a difficult time in our district’s history, but once again, the Lord provided a wise, strong, faithful District President in Pastor Pope and our Lord once again, preserved His Word and His Church.

In 1990 we had 20 mission congregations out of 78 congregations in the district. Mitchell became interest-subsidized and Wetaskiwin became a self-supporting congregation. The Organization/Planning/Accounting Manual was introduced to the mission congregations. Mission congregations could not request operating subsidy through the “Mission Program Grant Agreement.”

Some of our District’s mission congregations were not making their monthly mortgage payments to CEF. The Board for Home Missions and the WELS Board of Trustees began looking for solutions to the lack of monthly mortgage payments. They came up with the A.D.A.M. (ADopt A Mission) Project, in which congregations throughout the district took an offering for a district mission congregation, which was designated by the Mission Board. The money was sent to the DMB. This money would then be used for that designated mission congregation’s mortgage payment to CEF.

Professor Jerome Spaude took a “Sabbatical In Ministry” and assisted the pastor and congregation at Calgary, Canada. God blessed this effort. Pastor Wayne Schulz became our District Mission Counselor.

“Builders For Christ” assisted congregations build a parsonage, church or some other building in the hope of saving the congregation money. They were in the midst of a two year pilot program.

The Commission on Evangelism reported that 151 people attended the 1990 workshop entitled “Prospect Witness and Nurture.” “Locating the Lord” was to be the 1991 presentation. A district-wide outreach effort entitled “Go ‘91” provided prospects for our congregations, made our members personally aware of the Great Commission, and informed the public about the WELS.

The Evangelism “School Of Outreach” was held at the Seminary in June of 1990. Pastors received materials for Evangelism Sunday and congregations were urged to subscribe to the “Prospect Newsletter.” The congregations were encouraged to plan “Festivals Of Friendship.” “Precious Is The Child” was to be a Christmas greeting to the nation from the WELS on television for Christmas 1991. The Stewardship Program for 1990 was entitled “Encourage One Another.”

The Commission For Communication and Financial Support reported that they were suggesting a 4.2% increase in offerings in 1991, 1992, and 1993. In 1989, of our 77 congregations, 35 exceeded their mission goal, 17 met their goal, and 25 were unable to meet their goal. Five of the 12 districts had a Planned Giving Counselor. The “Lift High The Cross” offering was going well.

Northwestern Prep and Northwestern College celebrated their 125th Anniversary on September 13-15, 1990.

Our district said that the amalgamating of our two colleges “would be precipitous.” We also encouraged the Synod to keep the prep schools where they were at.

Our district recommended more study on the 50/50 balance of voting delegates at Synod Convention, the establishment of a new synodical conference, and further study of “staff ministry” by the Board for Worker Training to see if it was really needed. The name of the Alberta-Montana Conference changed to the Rocky Mountain Conference. They were to have two circuits in that conference.

Pastor Pope was elected District President. Pastor John Ruege, Sr. and Pastor Bill Russow were the Vice Presidents and Pastor Wayne Rouse was elected Secretary, again!

The sun was again shining on our district. But there would be weighty matters to consider in the future.

1990-1992

The major thrust for our 36th Biennial Convention was “Christ – The Cornerstone of the Christian Family.” Mr. Fred Matzke from Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services discussed this matter with the delegates. It was really quite enjoyable. Mr. Matzke’s presentation was only strengthened by the devotions of the Convention: “Christ is the Cornerstone in Marriage, in Establishing Priorities, in Discipline, in Forgiveness, in Crisis, in Death, and in How the Church Grows.” Pastor Pope even mentioned the U. S. Vice President and how much trouble he got in when he said the problems of society can be traced to broken homes.

God richly blessed the outreach efforts of the District. Many congregations had “Friendship Sundays.” Our South Dakota State Fair booth handed out an amazing amount of material. The high point of this biennium was “Go ‘91,” which was a monumental outreach effort with the Gospel. A good number of prospects were found for Adult Information Class. Our district grew by 46 communicants during the biennium.

At the time of the Convention there were two pastoral vacancies. One was at Mandan, ND. The other was Clear Lake, SD. There was one teacher vacancy in Billings, MT.

Pastor Pope reminded the Convention that the mission offerings were steadily decreasing. Many congregations, mission as well as self-supporting were having a difficult time meeting their budgets. Re-payment of CEF loans was a particular problem of our mission congregations. It still is.

The District Convention was videotaped and a 15-minute video highlighting the convention was available for viewing. Speaking of videotapes – “The Promise” was shown to us. This video presented the Lord’s work that He wants us to carry out.

Eight men came from the Seminary to our District. Pastors Hohenstein, Reich, Hadler, Oehlke, Nelson and Weigand are still serving our Lord in the district at the time of this writing. Pastors R. Eggert, D. Lemke,

Niermeier, Ristow, and J. Schulz entered the district from other districts. Pastor D. Neumann and I returned to our district. Eight pastors left, one teacher and one pastor resigned. Three pastors went into semi-retirement. One teacher moved into our district while three left the district. Two congregations closed during this biennium – Bethlehem of Hauge Township, Willow Lake, SD, and Christ of Wilmot, SD.

The congregation at Terry, MT, went self-supporting. Jamestown and Valley City were “non-subsidized” missions. Missoula, Mitchell, and Yankton went interest subsidy. Those on Mission Status were Bozeman, Great Falls, Helena, Melstone, and Winnett, MT; Hot Springs, Custer, Huron, Milbank, and Pierre, SD; Calgary, St. Albert, and Saskatoon, Canada; and Gillette, WY. We had two exploratory missions – Calgary II and Edmonton, Canada.

Only because of the “Lift High The Cross” offering and special gifts designated for mission expansion were new missions begun. “88% of our District’s SMO is returned to our own district’s missions in some form of subsidy.”

The “Parish Leadership” magazine was a consolidation of “Tell,” “Youthink,” “Partners,” “Notes and News,” and “Focus On Worship.” As a pastor, I am thankful the Synod’s Board for Parish Services consolidated all of those publications into one, because it was getting ridiculous with all these specialized publications coming to my mailbox.

1450 copies of our district’s newsletter were printed each time. When I was in another district, I subscribed to the D-M Newsletter and learned more about what was going on in the Synod than I did from the other district’s newsletter. Keep up the good work.

The Commission on Evangelism stated in their report that during the five year Evangelism workshops 40 separate workshops were held. More than 800 attended the workshops. The Evangelism Commission was working on the “best of the best” workshops to be used in our congregations. “Soul Search,” a video to be used with prospects was shown.

401 students attended our Christian Day Schools in our district. The District’s Commission on Parish Schools presented their “Purpose Statement and Objectives.” They were established to assist our congregations that had early childhood educational programs, Lutheran Elementary Schools and to help our district High School Association. The CPS was also established to administrate the Student Aid Fund, work with government officials as a liaison for our congregations, and promote and procure materials for our schools. Much work went into fighting the state rulings which often hindered the God-given mission of our South Dakota LESs. God blessed our efforts and positive results were enjoyed. Because of our dealings with the SD state government, a South Dakota Christian School Association was formed which included other church bodies. The first president of this Association was Teacher Dan Schmal. The main purpose of this Association was to provide communication, cooperation and representation among the non-public schools in SD as they monitor the state educational government rulings. A preschool conference was held in 1991 at St. Peter, MN. About 36 people attended.

Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal – our first WELS hymnal since 1916 was completed, but was not to be available for sale until after the 1993 WELS Convention. Each delegate at Synod Convention was given a free copy of the new hymnal.

The Commission on Youth Discipleship reported some amazing statistics. 67% of those children we baptized, we confirmed. Only 43% of those we confirmed remained in the church through their twenties. Only 29% of those children we baptized would be lifetime members of the WELS. 70% of those who attended LES remained in the church. 9% if they attended public school. “Our kids do need better training.”

The 1992-1993 Stewardship program was entitled “My Heart And My Home.” The 1993-1994 stewardship program was entitled “We’re HIS Disciples.”

The Great Plains Lutheran High School Association reported that at their May, 1991 Annual meeting, it was voted to “Call a Director of Institutional Advancement when the general fund reaches \$45,000.00.” This Biennium saw the following activities take place in the GPLHS Association:

May, 1990

The “Train-A-Child Land Fund” drive was adopted.

June, 1990	The site sign was unveiled at the District Convention and a presentation was given at the Minnesota District Convention.
September, 1990	An informational meeting was held at Marshall, MN.
January, 1991	Special Education Sunday Service was held in many congregations. First land payment made.
March, 1991	A student enrollment survey was taken.
May, 1991	The name of GPLHS was chosen.
August, 1991	GPLHS literature was at the WELS Kingdom Workers' Mission Fair in New Ulm. The City of Watertown made proposals for constructing detention ponds for storm drainage control.
January, 1992	Another Education Sunday. The second land payment was made.
February, 1992	The Directors viewed the Gary School facility.
March, 1992	New logo ideas viewed.

Throughout all this time many presentations were given at district congregations.

The fall of 1992 saw Northwestern Prep drop the first year of Latin, so that the students had only three years of Latin.

Our district encouraged the synod's members to return to God's Word for spiritual renewal; that the Long Range Planning Committee "re-list the objectives of the MOV statement, placing the recruiting and training of candidates second instead of fifth;" that MOV 2000+ not be used by our Synod when it comes to decisions concerning worker training; that all the members recommit themselves to support the Synod with increased Mission offerings, that the Coordinating Council restore the lost portion of the Synod budget to Worker Training; that we, as a Synod recruit more young men and women for the preaching and teaching ministry; and that we encourage the Board for Worker Training to establish a committee to monitor school staff needs. Our District "affirmed" the Feasibility Committee's report that stated that NPS and MLPS be amalgamated in Watertown, WI, and that NWC and DMLC be amalgamated in New Ulm, MN.

The district praesidium became younger with the election. President – Pastor R. Pope; VPs – Pastor Peter Naumann and Pastor Doug Free. Pastor Wayne Rouse was elected Secretary, again!

Before I get into the 1992-1994 Biennium, I would like to mention some of the events and decisions that took place at the 1993 Synod Convention. It was my first Synod Convention. It was an historical Convention, not because I was there, but because of what took place there.

President Carl Mischke, a Dakota-Montana son, retired from the ministry. Pastor Karl Gurgel was elected Synod President.

Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal was dedicated and presented to our Synod. Pastor Kurt Eggert, who served as the Hymnal Project Director, joined the saints and angels of heaven before the Hymnal was dedicated. He once served the Lord in the Dakotas. His wife tearfully accepted our Synod's thanks on his behalf. This, too, was an historical event.

The biggest decision at Synod Convention was not the moving of the Convention from the first week in August to the last week in July. For some this change will affect their attendance at PPFAs. Pastor Bill Leersen and I were at the microphones when someone called the question. Obviously, that gentleman never heard of PPFAs. (Please note Appendix III: PPFAs)

But the biggest decision made by our Synod was to amalgamate NPS with MLPS on the Watertown, WI, campus and to join NWC and DMLC on the New Ulm, MN, campus. There was much discussion, comments, and glances toward heaven. The vote was so very close. Less than 20 votes separated the two sides. The votes passed to amalgamate the schools. I voted against the amalgamation. Later on, Pastor “Jeb” Schaeffer wrote that “no one danced on the grave.” There were 500 people in that gym. When the results were read, it was so quiet in that gym that you could hear tears running down the faces of some of the men present. I, too, cried. The Watertown campus was my home for eight years, as it was for many of our pastors. What has helped me resolve my feelings about this historical change was what District President Kell wrote in 1980. The Gospel wasn’t taken away from us. “If we think it is that bad,” he wrote, “then what do you think the apostle means when he says, ‘All things work together for good to them who love God?’” He wrote that a year after our beloved Academy was closed. Trusting in the Lord in every matter of life is not always so easy because of our sinful nature. Only by God-given faith can we and will we say “Thy will be done.”

1992-1994

“Sing To The Lord A New Song” was the theme of the 37th Biennial Convention of the Dakota-Montana District at St. Martin’s School in Watertown, SD. It was time to sing a new song. The new hymnal was being used in most of our congregations. We were on the eve of our district’s 75th Anniversary. Our district spread through the Dakotas, Wyoming, and Montana up to the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Soon, by God’s grace, we would be in Manitoba, Canada.

It was time to sing a new song to our Lord because there were no controversies to deal with. It was time to sing a new song to our gracious and loving God because Great Plains Lutheran High School Association resolved to Call a director and with God’s blessings open our high school in Watertown, SD, in the fall of 1995 – 15 years after our Academy was closed. It was a time to sing a new song to the Lord for all the exciting happenings in the missions in our district – telecommunications and exploratory work in Sheridan, Cody, Powell, and Lovell, WY; the “storefront ministry” in Red Deer, Canada; exploratory work in West Fargo, ND; the increase in God’s kingdom in Calgary, Springbank, and Carstairs, Canada; and the assistance of summer vicars in Springbank and Wyoming. It was time to sing a new song because the South Dakota Lutheran Elementary Schools were going to have their accreditation reinstated. It was a time to sing a new song to God for leading 411 children into our district’s schools. It was time for us to sing to the Lord a new song. And we did!

Pastor Pope pointed us to our 75th Anniversary. He reminded us of what anniversaries mean to us Christians. He wrote: “Anniversaries by their very nature are a time to pause and consider our course. They afford us opportunity to remember the past and consider the future, however, God may lead us.... For 75 years our gracious God has kept our Dakota-Montana District a confessing Church, may it be our resolve and our prayer that our God and Lord will preserve our district in this manner to His glory alone. How will our district be strong in its confession? Only by its constant study and restudy of God’s Word. God’s Word will keep a church from seeking the things of the world. Our Lord has said for all time, ‘Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.’ Such study should be zealously pursued by us all.” May we take these words to heart, act accordingly, and ask God to keep us strong in our confession of His Word.

Pastors Tony Hansen, Jon Baumann, John Hildebrand, and Ken Bittorf were the latest crop of Seminary graduates to come to our district. Pastor Pieter Reid was Commissioned as a missionary to Indonesia on January 31, 1993. Thirteen teachers were installed. Three pastors transferred into our district while we said farewell to six men. Two teachers left the district. A Christian Victory Service was held for Mary Sue Pless. One teacher

resigned. Milbank and Summit, SD formed a dual parish as well as Bowdle and Roscoe, SD. Mound City, Akaska, and Tolstoy, SD formed a tri-parish. The exploratory in Edmonton was discontinued.

Councilmen's Conferences were to be offered throughout the district in January and February of 1995. 1700 copies of the newsletter were being printed.

The School of Outreach was changed to the Satellite School of Outreach. "Presenters travel to different Districts to provide the School of Outreach to a broader base of congregations."

In March of 1994, the first Principal's Workshop was held in Pierre with five of the six principals in attendance.

Work began on *Christian Worship: Altar Book* and *Christian Worship: Occasional Services*. Plans were being made for a national conference on worship and music for the summer of 1996.

Pastor and Mrs. Tony Hansen were developing useful lessons for young children. These lessons were available for free to congregations in our district.

The stewardship program for 1994-1995 was entitled "Christianity: A Whole New Way Of Looking At Things."

The Commission for Communication and Financial Support reported that 28 congregations of our district had not sent in any offerings through the first quarter of 1994. May we storm heaven in asking God to open the hearts of our people so that our mission offerings may meet the needs of the opportunities to spread the Gospel.

Our district's Long Range Planning Committee discussed eight ideas, but they felt that the District Council would "have a better understanding of the needs of our district and the direction in which our district is headed."

We encouraged the Synod's Board for Ministerial Education to continue to study the concept of "regional centers," and proceed with caution so our Prep School wasn't hurt by these "regional centers." As a district we supported the Synod in amalgamating the schools and that we agreed with the Conference of Presidents that a special convention should not be called to reconsider the amalgamations.

By God's grace, we celebrated 75 years of God's grace July 9 and 10, 1995, at Mobridge, SD. Pastor Pope was the guest preacher. The service was held at Zion Ev. Lutheran Church in Mobridge. An anniversary book was prepared. The thanks offering project was to be the district's Student Aid Fund.

Thus far in the 1990s, only two congregations were organized. They were Abundant Life in Saskatoon, Canada in 1992 and Mighty Fortress in Red Deer, Canada in 1993. St. Paul's in Carstairs, Canada was a preaching station.

We have always been called or classified as a "mission" district. The early pioneers of our district, like Christian Boettcher and Pastor Wittfaut, went to every little hamlet, village, town, and city with the Gospel, because they knew there were lost souls in those places who needed to hear about Jesus. They didn't consider the cost. If they did, they would not have spent weeks away from their families and literally spent hours bouncing in a buggy over unpaved trails for hundreds of miles just to bring the Word of God to people saved by Jesus Christ and to those who didn't yet know Him.

These early pioneer pastors and their families put up with a lot of hardships and made great sacrifices for their Lord. Sometimes I think we have it too easy in our day and age.

The unchurched are still with us. As Christians, we have been given the responsibility to go and tell the "good news" of Jesus Christ. Because of our modern conveniences – automobiles, paved roads, phone, faxes, telecommunications, and computers – we should be able to reach even more people with the saving Gospel than our early pioneers did. But are we? When we compare the number of pastors in our district back then with now and the population back then and now, we will see that we are not reaching out to more people, but to less.

History can help us live the future. Things really haven't changed. There are lost souls. By God's grace we have the Gospel. The Great Commission hasn't changed. We need to pray to God to give each pastor, each teacher, each member of our congregations an ever greater zeal for the Gospel and desire to proclaim that Gospel.

Money should not dictate where we take the Gospel. Yes, we are to be good stewards, but wasn't it Jesus, our Savior, who said, "Go, and make disciples of all nations.... And lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the age?" Wasn't it Jesus who sent His disciples out without any gold and silver, bag or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff? The Almighty Son of God has not changed. He keeps His promises to be with us. In order for us to continue to be a "mission district" we need to ask the Holy Spirit to increase our trust in Christ's power, promises, presence, and blessings, as we go and proclaim the Gospel to the people of our district and to the people of our world.

In 1994, Pastor Peter Naumann was elected District President. Pastor Doug Free and Pastor Wayne Rouse were elected to serve the Lord and our District as Vice Presidents. Pastor Paul Marggraf was elected Secretary.

In 1920, when our district began, there were 55 congregations in our district. 7000 souls, 3500 communicants were served by 32 pastors. In 1970, when our district celebrated its 50th Anniversary, there were 11,275 souls, 8061 communicants, and 40 pastors serving 72 congregations. At the end of 1994, we have 12,192 souls, 9252 communicants, 438 students in our district Lutheran Elementary Schools. There are 80 congregations and preaching stations served by 53 pastors. At the time of this writing, the largest congregation in our district is St. Martin's of Watertown, SD and the smallest congregation is St. James of Tolstoy, SD. We have grown, but there are still many souls who need to hear about our Savior.

The Future

What does the future hold for our District? The small rural congregations will become multiple parishes or close their doors. We've seen some of that already in recent years. Some of our pastors will once again become *Reisepredigern* – in essence, circuit riders. Great Plains Lutheran High School will become the jewel of our district just as the Academy once was. To establish the school and keep it running won't be easy, but anything worth while is never easy. There will still be a larger than normal turnover of pastors in our district. History tells us that. By the grace of God, we will still remain a "mission" district because reaching out with the Gospel is so important to us. Because of the close fellowship of our brethren in the District we will remain the envy of many districts. PPFa will survive even though Synod Conventions will be held at the same time. By the grace of God, we will continue to serve as the best training ground for young "whippersnappers." And, by the grace of God, we will remain firmly founded in God's Word and the conscience of the Synod amid Satan's attacks to lead us into false doctrine and heresy. We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future, so let us trust in the Lord to be with us and bless us.

Conclusion

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the Seminary Library and Pastor Wayne Rouse for providing me with the District's Proceedings from 1968 to the present. I can't forget to thank my wife, Carolyn, for helping me to gather information for this history. I would also like to thank our son, Joey, for copying and putting this paper together.

In July of 1980, I was ordained and installed in Hazelton, ND. In October of 1986, I followed the Call to Wisconsin. In June of 1992, I was brought back to the District. I am thankful to our Lord that He did bring me back to the Dakota-Montana District. A day after I accepted the Call to Gillette, Pastor Wayne Rouse called me to inform me that I was going to be a delegate to the Synod Convention. At the end of the conversation he said, "Al, we are looking forward to welcoming you home." At the District Convention in 1992, many brothers welcomed me with the words, "Welcome home." Thank you!

I have grown to love the beautiful woman called the Dakota-Montana District. She truly is a beautiful woman. Take a look at her beauty – from western Minnesota, across the plains to the Black Hills to the Big Horn Mountains and Yellowstone, to Missoula and Glacier National Park to Banff to the Badlands to the Red River Valley. A beautiful woman. Her heart is full of love for her own. And those who stay here, in essence,

marry her. Some fall in love with her, but soon leave her for another district. Most of the time, they don't return to their first love. A few, by the grace of God, return to her. She is a special woman and we should never take her for granted.

Pastor Otto Engel, who sent me a letter about his father's work and the work of our early pioneers in our District, wrote something in his letter that is worth retelling. He said that as we review the "labors of our fathers" that an old proverb comes to mind. He wrote the German, I will provide his English translation. "What you have inherited from the fathers, acquire it anew, in order to possess it." He continues by saying, "Let us study it for the sake of acquiring it anew, thank God for it and ask Him to help us to guard it jealously and pass it on undiminished to our children. Grace received is grace to share." Let's hold on to what we have in our District and by God's grace pass it on to generations to come.

It's time to say, "Amen." I have enjoyed reliving the history of our beloved District. Doing this labor of love has made me appreciate the work of our early pioneer pastors, the uniqueness of our District, and most of all, God's grace as it has been shown to us in our District through our Lord Jesus Christ. May our Lord preserve our beloved District that we may always glorify His name. The Holy Spirit will always build His Church and use us to proclaim the Gospel, so that the borders will be extended, and the stones will be added. My dear brothers, "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.... Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" 2 Timothy 4:2 & 5.

SOLI DEO GLORIA!

Appendix I

Pastor Arthur Paul Carl Kell

Most of the pastors in our district never had the opportunity to meet Pastor Kell. He was a faithful servant of God, born in Pomerania, Germany in 1906. At the age of 20 he entered DMLC – their high school department. He went to Concordia College in St. Paul, MN and from there went to our Seminary, graduating in 1935. He served the Lord at Hutchinson, MN; East Fork Indian Mission; Battle Creek, MI; St. Clair, MN; Bethlehem at Watertown, SD, St. John’s at Rauville, SD; and for a time, Grover, SD. From 1974-1980, he served St. Paul’s in Hazelton, ND. He served the Church at large in many capacities in many places. But what he will be remembered for is his time as President of the Dakota-Montana District from 1966-1980.

Those are the cold facts and stats about Pastor Kell. Pastor Kell was a gentle giant with a booming voice who often ended potentially long discussions at meetings, conferences, and conventions with only a few well chosen, wise words. He loved the people God gave him to care for. He loved his family, his work, the Word of God, his Savior, and his district. Someone once said that his initials “A.P.C.” stood for “Always Preach Christ.” Pastor Kell did.

The first time I met him was on Call Day at Seminary. At the meal the night before, Pastor Kell got up, as all of the Assignment Committee did, and introduced himself, talked about the district, and then said with his German accent: “My next door neighbor told me that I was the biggest Lutheran minister she had ever seen. Well, she hasn’t seen anything yet.” I had a feeling I was going to the Dakota-Montana District. When my name and assignment to Hazelton, ND was read, the assembly chuckled and I hunted for a map.

Afterwards we talked at length about the congregation and the district. His eyes sparkled as he talked about the district. I knew then and there that I was going to love the Dakota-Montana District.

I could tell you more stories about Pastor Kell, but I won’t. Those who knew Pastor Kell respected him and loved him.

I attended the Christian Victory Service at Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church in Watertown, WI. Pastor Kell left the District and Hazelton, ND on July 1, 1980. He entered the glory of heaven on November 18, 1980. Pastor Walter Schumann, pastor of Trinity and former president of our district, based his sermon on 2 Timothy 2:1 & 3: “You, then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.... Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”

As we were walking away from the graveside, someone said to me, “It’s a shame we didn’t bring along any dirt from the Dakotas to sprinkle on his casket, so he would feel at home.”

The last paragraph in Pastor Kell’s funeral bulletin sums up the life of this humble, faithful servant and the life of every Christian. “Pastor Kell always looked upon his life and the events here chronicled as an uninterrupted and unmerited blessing of his Lord. Sola Deo Gloria!”

Appendix II

Pastor Reginald E. Pope

As you can see from what took place at the 1994 Convention, Pastor Reginald Pope was not re-elected District President. After 42 years in the full-time ministry, he retired. To my knowledge, he is only the second Dakota-Montana District President to do that. Pastor Kell was the other pastor to retire as our District President.

Pastor Pope entered the ministry in 1952 in our District. Over the last 25 years I have often heard him and his wife, Pat, speak of their love for our district, their district. Their eyes sparkle when they tell stories of their years on the prairie.

Pastor Pope is a theologian, a pastor's pastor. Every time I called him for advice and guidance, and there were many such calls, he always listened. He always gave me advice that turned out to be the right advice. He never made me feel foolish or stupid.

When we served the vacancy at my home congregation when I was a senior at Seminary, he talked me out of quitting because I felt that I didn't have the intelligence to be a pastor. That discussion took place as I was about to teach Adult Information Class. He asked me, "What do you have in your hand?" I said, "The Bible and the Catechism." What he said reassured me that I could serve the Lord in the ministry, by God's grace. He simply said, "What more do you need?"

After I had been elected circuit pastor, which took place ten days after I returned to the district, I talked to Pastor Pope about resigning as circuit pastor because I felt I didn't have the qualifications to be a circuit pastor. Once again, he gave me a helpful piece of advice. He said, "As long as you are on the side of Holy Scripture, you are always right."

Pastor Pope served his Lord well. Pastor Pope was on the side of God's Word during the troubled '50s and early '60s. He was instrumental in keeping many of the pastors and congregations in the WELS during those troubled times. God made him the right man to lead our district during those troubling times in 1989 and 1990. Over the years he practically served on every committee in our district. God certainly used His humble servant, Pastor Reginald Pope.

Pastor Pope and his family have been friends for many years. The Dakota-Montana District was their home. My wife and I visited them as they were loading their moving truck for their move to Wisconsin and to retirement. Before we said our farewells, I thanked Pastor and Mrs. Pope for all of their advice, concern, guidance, and Christian love that they had shown to me and my family. Pastor Pope said, "Oh, but we want to thank you for suggesting our name for Mitchell. If it hadn't been for you, we would never have had the opportunity to come home." No thanks necessary, except to the Holy Spirit, who alone brought this all about.

How fitting it was at the Convention, after Pastor and Mrs. Pope had received the District's heartfelt thanks and gift, that we sang, "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow." It was a time to sing to the Lord a new song.

Appendix III

PPFA

The history of our beloved District would not be complete without some mention of PPFA.

The year was 1962. (Maybe) Pastors Werner, R. Zimmerman, D. Zietlow, K. Lenz, and maybe C. Spaude, R. Strobel, and N. Meier and there may have been others, went fishing in the pristine mountains of Montana. To locate the best stream for the best fishing, they hiked a long time. They crossed a mountain. And there, right before their eyes was the stream of their dreams. God's creation was truly spectacular! They discarded their coats and unneeded equipment. God filled their creels. But then the fun and frolic came to an end – abruptly! A game warden quickly pointed their attention to a sign that said: “No Fishing! Yellowstone National Park.” He then made the statement: “Only dumb preachers wouldn't be able to read the sign.” You see, the sign had been hidden by their coats. Fines were not levied. Fish were not taken. There was no jail time served. But Poaching Pastors Fishing Association was born. This story has come to me by way of a nameless, reliable source. If it isn't true, so what. It makes a great story. If it is true, then great! If it is partially true, then it is a legend.

Over the years certain men have received a special mantle and have served as Guide Supremes for the austere Association. Having been a part of this I recall names of great Guide Supremes. Men who proved their tracking skills in finding big fish, cool drink, and good food. There was D. Neumann, J. Engel, B. Leersen, G. Blobaum, R. Froehlich, M. Lindloff, and D. Biebert.

Over the years great campfires heard great stories of elk hunts, long walks, bearbells, bear sightings, Michael Keaton, guns, knives, B.B.Q skewers, card games, and special songs. There have been men who have driven thousands of miles to be with fellow brothers in the ministry. Everyone is greeted with a warm handshake and farewells are quiet occasions. Only the Lord knows if we will see each other again on this earth.

PPFA is more than fishing and not washing for four days. It's therapeutic. To see deer, elk, moose, and eagles among the lodgepole pine and mountains and to fall asleep to the babble of the Boulder River is what the tired soul needs. For five years I drove from Wisconsin, a round trip of 2800 miles to enjoy the therapy of the mountains and the warm fellowship.

I want to thank the “early” pioneers and founders of PPFA. They have handed down to us a wonderful tradition. Since 1962 to the present, by God's grace, no one has ever been seriously injured. There were some close calls, but God is always good. To my knowledge, we are the only district in the Synod that has such a tradition. May we continue to carry on this fine tradition.

Appendix IV

Our Congregations (as of the 1995 writing of this history) (Organized By Conference)

Brookings, SD

Our Savior
Pastor Paul Marggraf
Souls: 388
Communicants: 294
Established: 1969

Gary, SD

First
Pastor Bruce Mueller
Souls: 193
Communicants: 163
Established: 1924

Clark, SD

Peace
Pastor Jon Hadler
Souls: 132
Communicants: 101
Established: 1923

Goodwin, SD

St. Peter
Pastor Dennis Lemke
Souls: 133
Communicants: 115
Established: 1898

Clear Lake, SD

Trinity
Pastor Michael Enderle
Souls: 368
Communicants: 278
Established: 1935

Hendricks, MN

Trinity
Vacant
Souls: 70
Communicants: 63
Established: 1890

Dempster, SD

St. John
Pastor Gail Johnson
Souls: 81
Communicants: 64
Established: 1912

Henry, SD

St. Paul
Pastor Paul Vander Galien
Souls: 113
Communicants: 88
Established: 1894

Elkton, SD

Trinity
Pastor Jonathan Hohenstein
Souls: 174
Communicants: 139
Established: 1889

Rural Henry, SD (Grover)

Emmanuel
Pastor Paul Vander Galien
Souls: 72
Communicants: 55
Established: 1884

Estelliune, SD

Mt. Calvary
Pastor Gail Johnson
Souls: 120
Communicants: 114
Established: 1937

Huron, SD

Faith
Pastor Jon Baumann
Souls: 94
Communicants: 61
Established: 1973

Jamestown, ND

James Valley
 Pastor Christopher Oehlke
 Souls: 64
 Communicants: 45
 Established: 1978

Milbank, SD

Peace
 Pastor Timm Meyer
 Souls: 81
 Communicants: 60
 Established: 1983

Mitchell, SD

Ascension
 Pastor Martin Luchterhand
 Souls: 151
 Communicants: 105
 Established: 1974

Moorhead, MN

Ascension
 Pastor Lloyd Schlomer
 Souls: 202
 Communicants: 139
 Established: 1965

Raymond, SD

Bethlehem
 Pastor Jon Hadler
 Souls: 118
 Communicants: 98
 Established: 1884

Sioux Falls, SD

Good Shepherd
 Pastor Norman Seeger
 Souls: 457
 Communicants: 330
 School Enrollment: 72
 Established: 1952

Sioux Falls, SD

Bethel
 Pastor Jim Bolda
 Souls: 278
 Communicants: 230
 Established: 1994

South Shore, SD

Our Savior
 Pastor Dennis Lemke
 Souls: 430
 Communicants: 345
 Established: 1968

Summit, SD

St. John
 Pastor Timm Meyer
 Souls: 80
 Communicants: 61
 Established: 1888

Valley City, ND

St. Paul
 Pastor Christopher Oehlke
 Souls: 100
 Communicants: 72
 Established: 1935

Ward, SD

Immanuel
 Pastor Jonathan Hohenstein
 Souls: 65
 Communicants: 53
 Established: 1886

Watertown, SD

Bethlehem
 Pastor Stephen Ristow
 Souls: 219
 Communicants: 173
 Established: 1956

Watertown, SD

St. Martin
 Pastor John Carter, Jr.
 Pastor Dennis Hayes
 Souls: 1455
 Communicants: 1084
 School Enrollment: 170
 Established: 1886

Watertown, SD (Rauville)

St. John
 Pastor Stephen Ristow
 Souls: 67
 Communicants: 56
 Established: 1889

Willow Lake, SD

Willow Lake
 Pastor John Hildebrant
 Souls: 114
 Communicants: 96
 Established: 1923

Yankton, SD

Prince of Peace
 Pastor Alvin Schulz
 Souls: 58
 Communicants: 46
 Established: 1972

Billings, MT

Apostles
 Pastor Paul Metzger
 Souls: 328
 Communicants: 85
 School Enrollment: 27
 Established: 1969

Bozeman, MT

Shining Mountains
 Pastor Ronald Kruse
 Souls: 72
 Communicants: 53
 Established: 1972

Calgary, Canada

Mountain View
 Pastor Jonathan Schultz
 Souls: 31
 Communicants: 19
 Established: 1994

Calgary, Canada

St. Paul
 Pastor Jeffrey Heitsch
 Souls: 169
 Communicants: 66
 Established: 1982

Circle, MT

Salem
 Pastor Phil Paustian
 Souls: 52
 Communicants: 43
 Established: 1933

Great Falls, MT

Mountain View
 Pastor Timothy Johnston
 Souls: 122
 Communicants: 80
 Established: 1964

Helena, MT

Valley View
 Pastor R. Dennis Rardin
 Souls: 102
 Communicants: 78
 Established: 1980

Lavina, MT

Holy Trinity
 Pastor Paul Metzger
 Souls: 24
 Communicants: 18
 Established: 1959

Livingston, MT

St. Paul
 Pastor Kenneth Nelson
 Souls: 110
 Communicants: 85
 Established: 1948

Melstone, MT

Faith
 Pastor David Neumann
 Souls: 61
 Communicants: 49
 Established: 1958

Missoula, MT

Mt. Zion
 Pastor Martin Weigand
 Souls: 121
 Communicants: 91
 Established: 1977

Red Deer, Canada

Mighty Fortress
 Pastor Steven Persons
 Souls: 23
 Communicants: 15
 Established: 1993

Saskatoon, Canada

Abundant Life
 Pastor Daniel Myers
 Souls: 68
 Communicants: 31
 Established: 1992

St. Albert, Canada

St. Peter
 Pastor D. Thomas Rawerts
 Souls: 76
 Communicants: 59
 Established: 1965

Terry, MT

Trinity
 Pastor Phil Paustian
 Souls: 53
 Communicants: 44
 Established: 1935

Wetaskiwin, Canada

St. John
 Pastor Winfried Schroeder
 Souls: 71
 Communicants: 65
 Established: 1965

Winnett, MT

First
 Pastor David Neumann
 Souls: 57
 Communicants: 39
 Established: 1958

Wolf Point, MT

Good Shepherd
 Pastor Phil Paustian
 Souls: 18
 Communicants: 15
 Established: 1948

Aberdeen, SD

Trinity
 Pastor Curtiss Seefeldt
 Souls: 420
 Communicants: 311
 School Enrollment: 33
 Established: 1954

Akaska, SD

Zion
 Pastor Tony Hansen
 Souls: 72
 Communicants: 59
 Established: 1911

Bismarck, ND

Our Savior
 Pastor Carl Lindemann
 Souls: 255
 Communicants: 195
 Established: 1960

Bison, SD

Christ
 Pastor Kenneth Bittorf
 Souls: 104
 Communicants: 73
 Established: 1937

Bowdle, SD

St. John
 Pastor Gerald Blobaum
 Souls: 155
 Communicants: 133
 Established: 1891

Carson, ND

Trinity
 Pastor Wayne Rouse
 Souls: 98
 Communicants: 89
 Established: 1908

Rural Carson, ND (Paradise)

St. John
 Pastor Paul Heiderich
 Souls: 68
 Communicants: 51
 Established: 1910

Custer, SD

Shepherd Of The Hills
 Pastor Dean Biebert
 Souls: 29
 Communicants: 20
 Established: 1985

Dupree, SD

First English
 Vacant
 Souls: 32
 Communicants: 26
 Established: 1914

Elgin, ND

Immanuel
 Pastor Wayne Rouse
 Souls: 104
 Communicants: 95
 Established: 1909

Faith, SD

St. Paul
 Vacant
 Souls: 46
 Communicants: 37
 Established: 1914

Flasher, ND

Trinity
 Pastor Paul Heiderich
 Souls: 29
 Communicants: 24
 Established: 1912

Gillette, WY

Christ Our Redeemer
 Pastor Alan W. Gumm
 Souls: 124
 Communicants: 87
 Established: 1983

Glenham, SD

St. Jacobi
 Pastor Peter Naumann
 Souls: 110
 Communicants: 77
 Established: ?

Hazelton, ND

St. Paul
 Pastor Steve Nowicki
 Souls: 191 (1992 figure)
 Communicants: 153 (1992 figure)
 Established: 1923

Hettinger, ND

Redeemer
 Pastor Kenneth Bittorf
 Souls: 21
 Communicants: 21
 Established: 1935

Hot Springs, SD

Grace
 Pastor Dean Biebert
 Souls: 58
 Communicants: 47
 Established: 1979

Isabel, SD

Peace
 Pastor John Ruege, Sr.
 Souls: 66
 Communicants: 57
 Established: 1942

Mandan, ND

Lutheran Church Of The Redeemer
 Pastor David Reichel
 Souls: 277
 Communicants: 220
 Established: 1935

McIntosh, SD

St. Paul
 Pastor Paul Heiderich
 Souls: 65
 Communicants: 60
 Established: 1914

Mobridge, SD

Zion
 Pastor Peter Naumann
 Souls: 285
 Communicants: 244
 School Enrollment: 62
 Established: 1912

Morristown, SD

Christ
 Pastor Wilber Niermeier
 Souls: 90
 Communicants: 61
 Established: 1919

Tappen, ND

St. John
 Pastor William Russow
 Souls: 316
 Communicants: 218
 Established: 1924

Mound City, SD

St. Paul
 Pastor Tony Hansen
 Souls: 110
 Communicants: 88
 Established: 1887

Timber Lake, SD

St. Paul
 Pastor John Ruege, Sr.
 Souls: 54
 Communicants: 42
 Established: 1910

Pierre, SD

Redeemer
 Pastor Daniel Reich
 Souls: 102
 Communicants: 77
 Established: 1970

Tolstoy, SD

St. James
 Pastor Tony Hansen
 Souls: 17
 Communicants: 16
 Established: 1924

Rapid City, SD

St. Paul
 Pastor Douglas Free
 Souls: 717
 Communicants: 478
 School Enrollment: 74
 Established: 1942

Zeeland, ND

Zion
 Pastor Steven Nowicki
 Souls: 132 (1992 figures)
 Communicants: 113 (1992 figures)
 Established: 1910

Roscoe, SD

St. Paul
 Pastor Gerald Blobaum
 Souls: 309
 Communicants: 267
 Established: 1893

Spearfish, SD

Hope
 Pastor Lloyd Lemke
 Souls: 120
 Communicants: 90
 Established: 1968

Sturgis, SD

Trinity
 Pastor Lloyd Lemke
 Souls: 177
 Communicants: 118
 Established: 1940