

Reasons Why  
St. Paul's Lutheran  
Wonewoc, WI  
Joined the Wisconsin Synod

CH3031

By Paul Jansen

December 12, 2005



In 1869, nestled in the hills halfway between LaCrosse and Madison, a group of German Lutherans joined together in Wonewoc for their first service together. The church grew and grew to become one of the largest congregations in its area. It remained an independent Lutheran congregation for 100 years until it joined the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1969. Why did they join the Wisconsin Synod? Why then? This paper is a brief article on the reasons why St. Paul's Lutheran Congregation joined the Wisconsin Synod.

Wonewoc began small and never grew too large. It always has been primarily a farming community. The advent of the railroad tracks in the early 1870's and a Rayovac battery and light plant brought more jobs into the town itself. Yet in the recent years, the railway has moved away. The plant closed its doors in 2001. Business is not what it once was, but the town still has not changed much. It is a tight-knit community, where everyone pretty much knows everyone. It is unfortunate that one of the town's most well-known features is its century-old Spiritualist Camp on the bluffs overlooking St. Paul's Church and School. Past Kenneth Wenzel wrote a paper entitled, "A Christian Study of Spiritualism and its Wonewoc Camp" in 1994, which can be found in the WLS library, discussing its dangers.

St. Paul's congregation has seen its fair share of anniversaries over the last 135 years, both for its church and its school. Therefore it has had many occasions to reflect on the blessings with which God has blessed their congregation. The members assembled a few booklets which give a good summary of the church and school. There is a Ninetieth Anniversary book for the church from 1961, as well as a centennial booklet for the school from 1980. Both of these booklets can be found in the Wonewoc file in the WLS archives. Much of the following history has been gleaned from those two booklets. The dates for graduations and the seminaries from which these pastors came were found in "Pastors and congregations of the antecedent synods of

the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod 1850-1917 (The Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Nebraska synods): with a listing of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary graduates, 1863-1929.”

### **The Pastors**

If the Wonewoc congregation did not belong to a synod, from where did they get their pastors? A study of the origins of the men who shepherded this flock for a century may help explain why Wonewoc finally joined the Wisconsin Synod, and not another synod.

The first service was held in the home of Henry Talg on November 14, 1869. There were three baptisms. Pastor August Rohrlack (Rohrlaack) conducted this first service, and arranged to return every six weeks. At the next meeting on December 27, a congregation was organized. It has always been a confessional Lutheran church. It used “the Bible as the true Word of God and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as its foundations.”<sup>1</sup> Pastor Rohrlack was the shepherd of St. Peter’s Lutheran Church in nearby Reedsburg, a Missouri Synod church which itself was only one year old at the time. Rohrlack, born in Prussia, studied at Leipzig. In 1858, J. K. W. Loehe sent him to America.<sup>2</sup> He was an itinerant pastor until 1869 when he accepted a call to St. Peter’s. It was in the same year that the German Lutherans in Wonewoc invited him to conduct their services.

The services continued in private homes until 1880. In that year, the congregation extended a call to Pastor Christian Sauer. He accepted, and was installed as the first resident pastor on July 18 of the same year. Pastor Sauer was a graduate that year of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Milwaukee. He served his first call in Wonewoc until the fall of 1884 when he accepted a call to Montello, WI.

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<sup>1</sup> Booklet assembled for the Ninetieth Anniversary, p. 3

<sup>2</sup> For a history on Rohrlack, see [http://704-garek.washburn.k12.nd.us/My\\_Web\\_Sites/Lutheran\\_Church\\_Missouri\\_Synod/www.lcms.org/cyclopedia/a/r.html](http://704-garek.washburn.k12.nd.us/My_Web_Sites/Lutheran_Church_Missouri_Synod/www.lcms.org/cyclopedia/a/r.html)

The next shepherd was Pastor August Schlei, who was installed the same year Pastor Sauer left. He was another seminary graduate, this time fresh from the Springfield Seminary of the Missouri Synod. He worked hard for seven years, increasing the size of the congregation and planting new ones. He founded a congregation in LaValle to the south-east, which presently belongs to the LCMS, and a congregation in Elroy to the west, which presently belongs to the WELS. He too accepted a call to Montello, WI in 1891.

Pastor Ernest Mayerhoff replaced Pastor Schlei. The congregation installed him on December 20, 1891. Mayerhoff received his training at the Missionary Training School in Halle, a Mission Society initially dedicated to sending pastors to the Americas. Halle was known for a tendency toward pietism until the Civil War. Mayerhoff was accepted into the Wisconsin Synod in 1864. He served until 1900, when he resigned due to his advanced age.

The congregation next called Pastor Henry Gieschen of Somers, near Kenosha. He accepted on October 21, 1900. He began a string of five pastors, all of whom were graduates of WLS, whatever campus it may be. Pastor Gieschen was an 1886 graduate of WLS while it was still in Milwaukee. Ever since Wonewoc's school had been started in 1880, the pastor had been teaching the children. A theological student came to teach for two full months during the summers of 1902-1903, but until 1906, there was no established teacher besides the pastor. The first teacher called by the congregation was Herman Kroll, a graduate from New Ulm. New Ulm had been the training school for the Minnesota Synod. The Minnesota Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, and the Michigan Synod merged in 1892, forming the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Other States. Therefore by 1906, this was the school for producing Wisconsin's teachers. So in the early twentieth century, St. Paul's Wonewoc,

though not officially a member of the Wisconsin Synod, was calling its pastors and teachers from Wisconsin's worker training schools.

Pastor Gieschen accepted a call to Jerusalem Congregation in Milwaukee, WI in October of 1907. Pastor Otto Kuhlow replaced him the same year. He was installed on November 24, 1907. Pastor Kuhlow was a 1902 graduate of WLS, which was then on the Wauwatosa campus. He served for six years before going to Northwester College in Watertown, WI in 1913.

The next pastor was Pastor John Mittelsdeadt, another graduate of the Wauwatosa campus seminary of 1901. The congregation installed him on April 27, 1913.

He was succeeded by Pastor Martin Glaeser, who was installed on June 29, 1930. Pastor Glaeser, a 1918 graduate, was the last pastor that St. Paul's Wonewoc would get from the Wauwatosa campus.

His successor, Pastor Wilbert E. Schulz, was installed in 1948. A 1935 graduate of WLS in Thiensville, he served until August 14, 1961 when he accepted a call to Denmark, Wisconsin.

The next pastor was Pastor Alfred Schubring. It was under Pastor Schubring that St. Paul's Wonewoc joined the Wisconsin Synod. He did not come through WLS as the previous five pastors did. The 1953 Proceedings of the Thirty-third Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States lists him as a candidate from Concordia College, Springfield, IL to be received into fellowship with the Joint Synod.<sup>3</sup> He was granted a membership in the Joint Synod, and received a call to Woodville and Hersey, WI. He later received the call to Wonewoc, and was installed in January of 1962. Due to health reasons, he resigned on May 24, 1970.

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<sup>3</sup> Proceedings of the Thirty-third Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States. Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI 1955. P. 22

In overview, Wonewoc through 1970 has had pastors who came from: Germany/Missouri Synod, WLS, Springfield, Halle, five from WLS, then another from Springfield who immediately joined the Wisconsin Synod. This overview of the origins of the pastors shows good reasons of why Wonewoc had close ties with the Wisconsin Synod. The change to go from independent to joining the WELS was a logical step.

### **The Discussions**

Joining a synod is not a small thing. Surely much discussion and thought must have gone into the decision to finally join. Confessions and doctrines must be examined to see if they agree. New congregational mission offerings affect the budget. The pastor and the congregation must adjust their schedules to allow for time to meet with others in the Synod. The congregation must analyze the new blessings available to them now that they are on the same path with other like-minded Christians. Surely months of consideration went into this decision. To find out what those discussions were, minutes must be consulted, questions must be asked.

At first, it was surprising how little I could find in the minutes about joining the Wisconsin Synod in the months around 1969. This was not so surprising after a key interview with one of the congregation's older and wiser members.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Norbert Talg, a lifelong member of St. Paul's Wonewoc. Throughout his eighty-nine years on in this world, he has never missed a Christmas in Wonewoc, including the three years that he was in military service. He and his family have always been very active in the congregation. It was at his grand-father's house that the first services with Pastor Rohrlack took place. Norbert Talg was the recording secretary in 1969, the

time of the congregation's admission into the WELS. A transcript of the interview in its entirety is attached in the appendix.

In some talk before the recorded interview, Mr. Talg told me why I was having so much trouble finding minutes from the Elders and the Council at the time. There are none! Yes, there are minutes from all of the voters' meetings throughout all the years. There are Council minutes after 1972. There is also an untitled booklet with some minutes for the School Board, Council, and quarterly voters' meetings from the mid 1950's through 1961. It seems though that this booklet was not an official set of minutes, but was probably Pastor Schulz's personal record book. Therefore from the time he left until official minutes were kept starting in 1972, only the voters' meetings have minutes.

What Mr. Talg then said in the interview was even more surprising. Even if there had been recorded minutes, they would not have mentioned any prior discussions about joining the Wisconsin Synod. On July 29, 1969, the St. Paul's Wonewoc had a quarterly meeting. Norbert Talg recorded the minutes. One of the entries reads as follows:

Dane Nash made the following motion: In view of the modernism and changes that have taken place in the past few months in other Lutheran Synods, I move we join the Wisconsin Synod. Seconded by Rodger Short. A ballot vote was taken. Results: 32 yes, 2 no.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Talg says, "I can remember that [motion to join] clearly... It kind of surprised me when he made the motion, because it was... it was just a kind of a surprise. Because I know there was not prior talk to it, as far as I was concerned. I didn't know about it."<sup>5</sup> He was not alone. The general consensus among the members of the congregation is that it was a surprise to everyone.

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<sup>4</sup> See attached copy of minutes

<sup>5</sup> Appendix p. 3, CD Track 2

The only exceptions seem to be the obvious ones: Dane Nash, who made the motion, and Pastor Schubring. Mr. Talg says, "As far I know, there was nobody talked about it. I kinda' think that...Pastor Schubring talked to Dane about it. The Nashes were quite instrumental in church work. And consequently, Eileen, his wife was too. So they probably discussed it a little bit."<sup>6</sup> The nature of these discussions are unknown. Unfortunately, Pastor Schubring has passed away, and Mr. Nash is not able to comment. Dane's wife Eileen says she remembers some discussion with her husband about joining the synod, but she knew very little. Besides, times and details are faded in thirty-five years of memory. All the dynamics behind the reasons for the motion may be lost in memory, but it may be possible to deduce what some of those dynamics were.

This was not the first time that the notion of joining the Wisconsin Synod had arisen. In the booklet for the Ninetieth Anniversary, it says in the section on Pastor Sauer, "It is interesting to note too that at this meeting of January 16, 1881 [to elect school trustees], the matter of joining the Synod was proposed, but declined because the congregation was still too weak."<sup>7</sup> It did, after all, just get its first pastor a year before, and hadn't had time to grow real strong under their new pastor. But which synod? Pastor Sauer, their pastor, was fresh out of WLS. It was probably the Wisconsin Synod. (This was before the 1892 merger of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan Synods). But Pastor Sauer had only been there a short time. They had been shepherded by a Missouri man, Rohrlack, for eleven years. I suppose one could argue that it was the Missouri Synod, though the Wisconsin Synod seems more likely for reasons that follow.

Twenty-five years later, the topic came up again. The Wonewoc congregation has an English translation of minutes from their voters' meetings. A copy of the English version of the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 4, CD [Track 6](#)

<sup>7</sup> Ninetieth Anniversary, p. 4



minutes from 1905 and 1906 is attached at the end. The entire minutes from a voters' meeting in the summer of 1905 consists of one line, "Jul 9- Discussed joining synod, but decided to reconsider at annual meeting."<sup>8</sup> Again, which synod did they discuss joining? This time the pastor since 1900 was Pastor Gieschen, a WLS-Milwaukee graduate. The minutes from the beginning of 1906 tell what transpired at the annual voters' meeting to which the July 9 minutes referred. The meeting began on January 14, but was adjourned to January 28. At the first day of this January 14 meeting, the congregation voted to call a full time teacher, who, as stated prior, would be Herman Kroll out of New Ulm. Then the entire January 28 minutes read as follows: "Jan. 28- Continuation of An. Meeting: Present 51. Voted not to join synod at this time – ballot, 23 for, 41 against." Even without the extra thirteen mystery votes (twenty-three plus forty-one equals sixty-four votes from the fifty-one present!), the motion to join still would have failed. Based on their WLS graduate pastor and their subsequent call to a New Ulm graduate, it is fairly safe to say that "the synod" referred to the Wisconsin Synod. Based on the thoughts of joining Wisconsin in 1905 and 1906, it would also be safe to say that the synod which they had considered joining twenty-five years prior also was the Wisconsin Synod.

What had changed between 1906 and 1969? Sixty-three years is a long time. No one knows why the congregation voted not to join in 1906 and what their reasons were. In speculation, an old phrase comes to mind. "Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?" St. Paul's Wonewoc enjoyed the fruits of Wisconsin's worker training schools for a long time. I wanted to explore that relationship that Wonewoc had with the Wisconsin Synod prior to their membership in 1969. So I asked Mr. Talg, "Before you did join the Wisconsin Synod, I know that you were getting Wisconsin Synod pastors. How did that work out? Did you go

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<sup>8</sup> See attached copy of minutes

knock on some Wisconsin Synod doors and say, ‘Would you like to be our pastor?’”<sup>9</sup> His response was surprising. “No, it worked out just about like they do it today. They go to the Synod, and the Synod would send you the man in charge of this district, the District President, and he would come, or he would appoint someone to meet with the congregation’s voting members. They discussed it, and he would bring a list of delegates, and they would vote on it.”<sup>10</sup>

I was fascinated that a non-synodical congregation was getting pastors through a District President, so I asked Mr. Talg, “How do you think that the Wisconsin Synod considered Wonewoc St. Paul’s before 1969? Here was a congregation that kept getting Wisconsin Synod pastors and teachers and doing that through the district president. Did they kind of consider Wonewoc to be [Wisconsin] Lutheran not in name, but in fact?”<sup>11</sup> He answered, “No, I think it was just like that prospective Christian. If we treat them right, they’re a part of us. That’s the way I think it was.”<sup>12</sup> We both agreed that if that was the case, in retrospect it worked out nicely.

Such treatment by the Wisconsin Synod bore good fruit. Mr. Talg talked about the discussions on whether or not to join at that 1969 voters’ meeting. He said,

Because we always got, it was brought up, we always got our pastors from the Wisconsin Synod. And school being new, we were getting our teachers from the Wisconsin Synod. We was asking Wisconsin Synod to furnish us with teachers... They was all coming out of New Ulm. So we thought we were kind of obligated to join the Synod rather than to be independent, because we were relying on them to do the things that we needed.<sup>13</sup>

The Wonewoc congregation would now have a new opportunity to support the training of the pastors and teachers which they were receiving.

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<sup>9</sup> Appendix p. 6, CD [Track 8](#)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 6, CD [Track 9](#)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 7, CD [Track 11](#)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 7, CD [Track 12](#)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 3, CD [Track 4](#)

Of the other core ministry of a synod is mission work. This apparently was not a weighty reason to join a synod for Wonewoc. Mr. Talg indicated that they saw their Christian day school as an important mission tool. In response to the question whether mission work was a large factor, he said, "I don't think it was a large factor. Because we feel like with the school, we do a lot of mission work right in our own community. And that way... school is a big expense to a congregation. We teach our children, we're doing mission work all the time too."<sup>14</sup> Many in the congregation share the same feeling. Mission work was not a large factor of joining, while worker training was. But that wasn't all.

The times and the wording of the motion to join by Mr. Nash seem to indicate other reasons why the congregation might join the Wisconsin Synod. Remember that Pastor Schubring had been the pastor since 1962. He was called straight out of Concordia, Springfield into the Wisconsin Synod in the early 1950's. By this time, the rumblings in the Missouri Synod had grown louder. Pastor Schubring would have been quite aware of what was going on when he was at Springfield. Wisconsin and Missouri were still in fellowship at his graduate, so perhaps one should not read too much into his joining the Wisconsin Synod right away. But one can't help but wonder, what did he think about what was happening in Missouri? On May 19, 1969, John Tietjen became president at Concordia, St. Louis. This campus had grown decidedly more liberal in the previous decade. Five years later Tietjen would lead the Seminex out. What was going on in confessional Lutheranism?

Could this have been what Mr. Nash and Pastor Schubring discussed in their private meeting? The wording of the minutes seem to say so. "In view of the modernism and changes that have taken place in the past few months in other Lutheran Synods, I move we join the Wisconsin Synod." Mr. Talg is quite sure that the "other Lutheran Synods" referred to Missouri.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 12, CD Track 15

Pastor Schubring perhaps saw where St. Louis would go with their newly elected president.

Perhaps it was time for Wonevoc to take a stand in where it stood in confessional Lutheranism.

With all of these elements combined, perhaps it was not so surprising that the congregation decided in a single day to join the Wisconsin Synod. The vote was overwhelming, thirty-two to two. Looking back, Mr. Talg thinks it was the right decision at the time, and thinks that most of the congregation would agree with him.

## Bibliography

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**Appendix**  
**Interview with Norbert Talg**

**[Jansen (J)]** Well today is Saturday November 26<sup>th</sup>, two days after Thanksgiving, and I'm visiting with Norbert Talg, who has been a member of St. Paul's Wonewoc for all of your life, right?

**[Talg (T)]** Right. Born in Wonewoc.

**[J]** May I ask what year?

**[T]** What year? 1916.

**[J]** 1916. So you've seen quite a bit.

**[T]** Quite a bit.

**[J]** I was looking through a Centennial book...

**[T]** I was just thinking about this; if I go to this Christmas program here, that will be every Christmas program since I was old enough to... they took me. I haven't missed a one.

**[J]** Every single one.

**[T]** Yeah, that includes three that I was in service, and I was home for Christmas, every three years. All three years.

**[J]** Wow.

**[T]** That doesn't happen very often.

**[J]** No, not when your in service. Over the holidays.

**[T]** Yep.

**[J]** You served in World War II, right?

**[T]** World War II.

**[J]** Infantry?

**[T]** No. Army Air Corps.

**[J]** I think I knew that.

[T] The first year I was in Atlantic City. The second year I was Lincoln Nebraska. And the third year, that was after the war was over, I was in Deluthfield Illinois. Then I came home. I came home on a three day pass two of those years. You can't make it on a two pass. Three day pass. Unless you have good train connections. I had train connections I could make in 24 hours I could go back.

[J] Was that pretty special to be able to get back to this congregation every year for Christmas?

[T] Yeah. We're family here.

[J] I was looking at this book that was put out at the Centennial of the school, which would have been 1980, 100 years in 1980, and it has a short history of the school, and it goes all the way back and it's talking in 1869 with pastor Rohrlack, at the first service in Wonewoc, included three baptisms on November 14, 1869 in the home of one Henry Talg. Any relation?

[T] My great-grandfather.

[J] Your great-grandfather. So your family has been tied to this congregation since its very first service. And you are a wealth of knowledge...

[T] No.

[J] Yes you are. [laughs] I started talking about this paper, and everybody said, "Go talk to Norb."

[T] Well I've been on the church board for many years. And the elders of the church too. A few changes during my tenure here in the church.

[J] When did you first start participating on councils, on boards? Can you recall?

[T] I asked the lady that was writing the history, I asked her to check it up, see when I started as a member of the church council. I started before I went into service, that I know. And then several years after I come back, then I went back into service as a member of the church council.

[J] How long were you on the council, about?

[T] Until... Reverend Martin. Or not on the council. I was on the... served six years on the board of Elders with Martin. I was on the church council with Kuske. I started with Reverend Glaeser. I was instrumental, I was on the school building ... member of the school building... Well, prior to that, Reverend Glaeser told me I was supposed to take care of any funds that started for the school project.

[J] So you were the treasurer for the school?

[T] Well, kinda' a treasurer. I was supposed to record it and all of that stuff. But then I went, I think that was before I was in the service. I wasn't married at that time. I know Reverend Glaeser married us. I think it was before, or it was right after I was married, because it was only two years before I went into the service, after I was married. But I was recording secretary a long time, I remember that.

[J] I know that you were the secretary at the time that I'm going to be talking about, in 1969, too. I see that your name appears there.

[T] The secretary in '69?

[J] I have some... two copies of some minutes that I pulled out, and one of them I thought you might be interested here, is the July 22, oh, I'm sorry, the July 29, 1969 quarterly meeting, and it has your name down there as recording secretary. I have a couple of copies if you want to take a look at that. That was the meeting in which, and this is the only mention I can find, this is the only written record I can find. But in the middle there you see, Dane Nash made the following motion.

[T] Yeah, I can remember that. I remember that clearly.

[J] You remember that day?

[T] Yup. It kind of surprised me when he made the motion, because it was... it was just a kind of a surprise. Because I know there was not prior talk to it, as far as I was concerned. I didn't know about it.

[J] Really?

[T] Yeah. That surprised me. But after it was talked, discussed it, it was pointed out that our congregation didn't belong to any church, and I think Reverend...

[J] Schubring at the time.

[T] Schubring, at one time, I think his schooling came from the other synod.

[J] From Missouri?

[T] I think he was a Missouri man, and went into the Wisconsin Synod from the Missouri Synod. And he came to us as a Wisconsin Synod pastor, that I remember. Because we always got, it was brought up, we always got our pastors from the Wisconsin Synod. And school being new, we were getting our teachers from the Wisconsin Synod. We was asking Wisconsin Synod to furnish us with teachers.

[J] They were all coming out of New Ulm.



[T] They was all coming out of New Ulm. So we thought we were kind of obligated to join the Synod rather than to be independent, because we were relying on them to do the things that we needed.

[J] Providing you with teachers and pastors.

[T] In other words, it wasn't a big issue at all, I mean, and after somebody brought it up it was, it fit.

[J] That was going to be one of my questions. There wasn't a lot of discussion about it before that day, that meeting.

[T] As far I know, there was nobody talked about it. I kinda' think that [?] Pastor Schubring talked to Dane about it. The Nashes were quite instrumental in church work. And consequently, Eileen, his wife was too. So they probably discussed it a little bit.

[J] You mentioned that Pastor Schubring used to be Missouri Synod and turned to Wisconsin Synod.

[T] I wouldn't be absolutely sure, but that was kind of my opinion, that at one time he got his schooling from the Missouri Synod.

[J] I will check on that.

[T] You do that.

[J] But right now, I just wonder, if that is indeed the case, I wonder...the fact that he made a switch from one Synod to the other would tell me that he was probably very aware of the differences. I don't know how up-to-date you were on the differences at the time.

[T] At that time we were a little bit... we might have talked about it a little bit. But when this motion came up, that was kind of out of the blue, as far as I was concerned.

[J] Did you know that this wasn't the first time that talk of joining the synod had come up?

[T] Oh it had come up before. I'm sure it was talked about in prior years, in earlier years. I'm sure. I know that they talked about the differences between the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod. That sometimes was discussed. When this happened it was kinda' out of the blue.

[J] There must have been some pretty convincing arguments. If you take a look, the vote was overwhelmingly to join the synod.

[T] Yes, only two no's.

[J] Thirty-two to two. It must have been some pretty convincing discussion going on there. I happened to find...

[T] If you look, these minutes, you see how short I always made them. I didn't make anything lengthy. Did you notice? "Meeting opened with a Scripture reading." I didn't put the Scripture reading or what it was, just "opened with a Scripture reading." That was all.

[J] Well, it could have been shorter. I brought along something else for you to take a quick look at. These are minutes that have been translated from....

[T] Oh, translated! German, huh?

[J] You have the day and the month on the left, but every once in a while you had the year. 1905, 1906. I thought it was fascinating back in 1905, you have on July 9, all of their minutes are one line. "Discussed joining synod but decided to reconsider at annual meeting." That's all the minutes they have for that day. So you thought you kept them short.

[T] So what was this? This was translated?

[J] No, this is the translation of early minutes that I found over in Steve Fick's place. He had them stacked away in the attic from when he was president. I returned those to the church, but these are from 1906, minutes that talked about joining "the synod". I have know idea which synod they were talking about. I could assume Wisconsin, but there were a number of synods at the time. This wasn't the first time it had been brought up.

[T] No, I'm sure it wasn't the first time it was brought up. Here it says, July the 9<sup>th</sup>, discussed joining synod but decided to reconsider at annual meeting. As you mentioned, yeah.

[J] Go down three, January 28<sup>th</sup> of 1906. "51 were present, voted not to join the synod at this time. The ballot was 23 for, 41 against." You do the math...

[T] [chuckles]

[J] You had an extra, oh, 13 votes thrown in there, or 13 more votes than people present. I don't know how that works out, but... Before 1969...

[T] Oh this is a continuation at the annual meeting.

[J] Yep. That's what the previous one pointed to. Before 1969 when they joined the synod, was there a lot of strength that this congregation thought being an independent Lutheran church?

[T] I don't think it was brought up very often.

[J] Would you say it was more a feeling that there just wasn't a strong reason to join the Synod?

[T] I think so, I think that was it. That was that's what, probably... because I knew it was probably brought up at different times. But this is way back in 1905, right before my time. 10 Years.

[J] And I'm sure that there's other minutes that mention that I haven't been able to...

[T] Oh I'm sure that there's probably, there might be just a one line deal some place.

[J] I would be interested in knowing what synod they were thinking of joining, but I don't think there's going to ever be a way to find that out.

[T] I don't think so either. There probably was a few each way.

[J] Let me glance down at my questions here. How many did – that's an interesting question. Before you did join the Wisconsin Synod, I know that you were getting Wisconsin Synod pastors. How did that work out? Did you go knock on some Wisconsin Synod doors and say, "Would you like to be our pastor?"

[T] No, it worked out just about like they do it today. They go to the Synod, and the Synod would send you the man in charge of this district, the District President, and he would come, or he would appoint someone to meet with the congregation's voting members. They discussed it, and he would bring a list of delegates, and they would vote on it. And then sometimes they would accept, of course, and sometimes they wouldn't. One time we had voted three or four times, but most of the time, got them the second time or the third time.

[J] That's fascinating that you were going through the processes like a Wisconsin Synod church, although you weren't, and that synod obliged.

[T] Yeah. Synod took care of that. Now the teachers of course was a little bit different. They gave a list to the school board. I don't know if they give a list to the school board or not. But that was... was never taken care of. Although our principal always was. I'm sure of that.

[J] The principal was always...

[T] Pretty much always voted on.

[J] Voted on?

[T] Yeah. Mr. Raabe was here twice.

[J] I had him as a high school principal, you know.

[T] Oh you did? He was a wonderful person.

[J] Yes, yes he was. And his wife was my 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher as well, Lillian.

[T] It wasn't too long ago, I saw Lillian. She comes here quite often. She goes to Ruth Schroeder. Do you know Ruth Schroeder? I think Ruth had her, I bet you within two months ago.

[J] I know that she came down my very last Sunday here, and I got to visit with her. They didn't come straight from DMLC though, did they? They didn't come straight out of college? I think he came from elsewhere. I should look that up again.

[T] He was here for a few years. I remember when he first came. He was very young, very young because I helped them unload their stuff at the teacherage the first time. And then another few years. Then we asked him back, and he came back.

[J] That's right.

[T] And he had a misfortunate auto accident.

[J] I remember, that would have been 1995, or '96. I had him as a teacher, and I took a year out for medical reasons, and when I came back he wasn't there anymore. You were saying that you got the teachers in a different way from the pastors? You didn't...

[T] I think so, I think so.

[J] You didn't go through the Synod?

[T] Yes, we would go through they Synod, but they used a different method of employing them.

[J] To call them?

[T] Yeah, to call them. I think the school board took care of that. Instead of going through the whole...except possibly the principal.

[J] Ok. How do you think that the Wisconsin Synod considered Wonewoc St. Paul's before 1969? Here was a congregation that kept getting Wisconsin Synod pastors and teachers and doing that through the district president. Did they kind of consider Wonewoc to be [Wisconsin] Lutheran not in name, but in fact? Any clue?

[T] No, I think it was just like that prospective Christian. If we treat them right, they're a part of us. That's the way I think it was.

[J] Looking back, it seemed like a very wise choice.

[T] It worked, it worked. [laughs]

[J] I might have to try to pursue some people from back then who knew about Wonewoc joining and ask them their view.

[T] Good talk. Dane Nash isn't very well, otherwise I might suggest that you go down and talk to Dane.

[J] I called him, and he didn't seem ready to talk about that type of thing. I do have just a few more. A lot of these you answered by saying that it was out of the blue. One thing I did want to look at. Going back, when I read the minutes, and Dane Nash's motion is as follows, "In view of the modernism and changes that have taken place in the past few months in other Lutheran synods I move we join the Wisconsin Synod." Was that talking pretty much about the Missouri Synod, do you think?

[T] I imagine so. I imagine that's what they were talking about.

[J] The timeframe there, I don't know if you're aware, within just a few years after this, the Missouri Synod really had a rough time with their Seminary, where a large part of the faculty and students were teaching that the Bible is another book that we need to look at critically; Jesus didn't say all these things. They were downplaying the inerrancy of Scripture, and teaching some heterodox, you know, false teachings. And a large group of them had to get kicked out of the Missouri Synod, from the Seminary there.

[T] I think that was going on. I think that was going on when we joined.

[J] The seeds of that were there, I think. The Missouri Synod was saying, "What in the world is going on at our Seminary in [at] Concordia." I wonder if that was one of the things...

[T] It probably was. Since you mentioned, that's probably the reason it was probably brought up, to join the Synod. I know there was something going on at the Missouri Synod. Even before that, there was talk.

[J] About a decade before St. Paul's choice to join the Wisconsin Synod is when Wisconsin and Missouri broke fellowship with each other.. You saw what happened with their Seminary was, some of the fruit of the seeds that had been planted long ago in the Missouri Synod. Wisconsin Synod saw the difficulty with their fellowship, and church and ministry teachings. We don't need to get into all of that. I wonder, I had wondered if that had been a bit of reaction to things going on, where it's good to let people know where you stand.

[T] Well, yes. There were some problems, I remember that too, that there were some problems with Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod, that they split. And I don't know as far as their teaching was concerned, about the teachers, but it's possibly it was developing, it was in the developing stage. And maybe that's what turned the tide too. Possibly that Shcubring saw that thing being developed all the time and probably discussed it with probably Dane and a few other ones.

[J] Sure. And if indeed he did come out of the Missouri Synod perhaps he saw that, the reason he switched to Wisconsin is the reason he said, "We really ought to take a stand."

[T] Yeah. That's probably the truth.

[J] Do you think that at the time...

[T] Did I write those minutes with Dane Nash on there?

[J] Yes you did. Well, that's your name at the bottom.

[T] Okay. That's fine. I was president while Schugring was on, too.

[J] He came in what year, was that in '68?

[T] I don't know. You know, I'm having trouble with my... I tried to look up my church book, and... I don't want to say that, but the last time I had them, I had pictures and everything else in my church anniversary book. And I talked to Linda, Linda Scott was getting pictures and stuff and all that. That's the last I recently remember that. I hope I didn't give them, what do you call it books? I got my pictures back, but I can't find my books.

[J] Well, ask her.

[T] I don't know. I hate to do that, because... possibly I didn't want to give it to her in the first place! But I can't find them around the house. 'Cause I had several anniversary books that I had kept. You know, they were real nice.

[J] Sure, I was looking through a couple earlier today over in the school. One I have a copy of, the others I wish I had a copy of. They have some of these histories.

[BREAK]

[J] I was looking back in this brief history here, and I had the year wrong. Pastor Schubring came in 1992, um, not '92, 1962. And then we have a call going out to Pastor Kuske in 1970. So Schubring was there about 8 years.

[T] About 8 years.

[J] Maybe a little more. He was there for a good while before the switch to join the Wisconsin Synod.

[T] Ok, ok. This was '67 you said.

[J] '69.

[T] Oh, '69? Just before he left?

[J] A year before he left.

[T] So he worked on that for a few years.

[J] Perhaps. Although it still amazes me that it never brought up prior, that it was just sprung at a quarterly meeting and that it was such an overwhelming vote. I think that's fascinating. But perhaps it just made a lot of sense to a lot of people getting their pastors, getting their teachers.

[T] That's about the time, well, '69, we already had gotten a quite a few teachers, because the school started...when? What year was that?

[J] '80? Well the original...

[T] No this building here was...

[J] '54 sound about right to you?

[T] '54 or '64. '54.

[J] Was it while Mr. Raabe was here?

[T] Schulz was here. Mr. Schulz.

[J] '50, in '50 the congregation created a school planning committee. The cornerstone was laid August 23, 1954, dedication on June 12, 1955 for the school building.

[T] I was on the planning committee. I don't know if I was on the planning committee, I was on the building committee. I was on the planning committee too. The irony of that whole thing was I was in charge of taking care of the money, to start with. I think Reverend Glaeser just appointed me. I'm sure that's what he did. I think I went, I went to the church meetings before I was married, because I know we didn't have enough books for all the people, you know. After I was in high school, graduated, and confirmed, I was one of the ushers that always passed out the books every morning to the guests, so that everyone would have a book to sing. And kinda' a little usher and things. First thing that they started, after they changed the book. Then the new book comes out. We used to have the little ones, about so thin. Real thin. I don't know where they are anymore. But anyways, they got the new songbooks and after that we passed them out, about two or three of us boys. Well I think, well, my dad was on the church council. Not Schubring, Reverend Glaeser was pastor. He and my folks were real, quite close to, I know that, because, oh, they used to take him camping with us.

[J] It's good for a pastor now and then.

[T] And he was a lot of fun. And so... But anyways. Then I think he just appointed me, and that was it. And it was quite surprising, I'm the one that paid the bill. The last one to pay the church or, to pay the school for, to pay for the school.

[J] To pay it off?

[T] I mean I paid the bills, I mean, we had a debt. I wrote out the check, so that was quite a long time that transpired.

[J] What an exciting time though, to be able to build a school building like that.

[T] Yeah. It's a nice school building. That was Schulz's push, although Glaeser started it. I mean, he talked about it, building a school.

[J] Sure. How many students were there about the time where they decided in 1950 to go ahead with building?

[T] You wouldn't believe this. One teacher, just remember. When I was in school there was one teacher. There was from 46 to 52 kids every year.

[J] [laughs] Oh, how do you do that?

[T] Yup.

[J] You need the space, you needed the teachers.

[T] And shortly after I was out of school which would be in 1920... yeah, it would be '28, Mrs. Gurgel's, well, it would be later than that. Mrs. Gurgel's family was kind of, [?] I mean complete... and Mrs. Gurgel went to teach.

[J] That would be Herman Gurgel's wife, right?

[T] Herman Gergal's wife. She went to teach. She taught some grades upstairs.

[J] Going back to the switch into the Wisconsin Synod, I'm going to ask more about some feelings of what was going on. It was an overwhelming vote, thirty-two to two, but there were two! Were there some people... was there a felling, do you think, in the congregation that we shouldn't really be doing this? Or do you think that the vote showed what most people thought? Or do you think that everybody - most people were indifferent to the whole thing?

[T] Well, I don't think they were indifferent. They probably saw our needs, and we didn't want to be left out too.

[J] As far as teachers and pastors?

[T] As far as teachers and pastors are concerned. We saw our needs and which we leaned as far as our faith was concerned. Who knows about the two? We didn't interview them.

[J] [chuckles] Yeah.



[T] They might have felt Missouri, you know?

[J] Perhaps they felt their independence and not send off any support. The human mind that thinks, "If I can get something for free, why offer to pay for it?" But worker training is a big part of the Synod.

[T] We know we have to train our pastors. We should.

[J] Another big part of the Synod though is not ministerial training, but also mission work. Was that ever brought up at all?

[T] Oh yes, oh yes.

[J] The ability to support through a gathering of other churches, to be able to send money to support missionaries. Do you think that was a large factor?

[T] I don't think it was a large factor. Because we feel like with the school, we do a lot of mission work right in our own community. And that way... school is a big expense to a congregation. We teach our children, we're doing mission work all the time too.

[J] Yes you are. Home missions.

[T] Yeah. We try to get local people, local people around, to join our church too, and show them the Lord's way.

[J] It always amazed me that we have more people registered as members of our congregation than there are in the town of Wonewoc. Not to mention there's the Methodist and the Catholic church in town too. Most of the people wonder how in the world that can be when I say that. We get a lot of the farmers from around here, though, too.

[T] Yes there's a lot more land lately vacant from so many farmers. Used to be, well...there was some big families on 40 acres at one time. Finally they're just getting farther and fewer between. And the families aren't as big either.

[J] Yep. Everybody goes away now too. One last point I want to dwell on. It's been 45 years now.. no, 35 years. A little over 35 years since St. Paul's Wonewoc has joined the Wisconsin Synod. Do you think that that was the way to go?

[T] Yeah. Definitely.

[J] Do you think most people in the congregation feel that that was the way to go as well?

[T] I think so. You never hear any opposition to it, as far as I'm concerned. Of course I'm kinda' out of the mainstream. After I was a member of the elders, after that I was asked different times to go back on the church council and go back on the elders. I said, "Oh

there's a lot of younger people. Let them learn the ropes and the way it's run." I had had my time, which was a lot of years. I was kind of... Let's shut that [points to the recorder] off.

[J] I can shut it off. That was the last of my questions, so thank you.

Quarterly Meeting  
July 29 1969

The meeting opened with a scripture and Prayer by Pastor Schubring.

The minutes of the last meetin were read and approved as read.

The treasurers report was given. The auditors reported they found the books in order whereupon a motion was made and carried approving the same.

The financial report was given. The auditors approved whereupon a motion was made to approve the report.

The school report was read as Mr. Raabe was at New Ulm attending a School work shop.

Auditors Next Quarter

1. Dane Nash.
2. Clark Schmidt.

New Members;

Mr. & Mrs. Harold Wegenke. Avvepted by motion made & carried.

Releases:

Mr. & Mrs. Florian Leverenz. To Trinity Luth. Loveland Col.

Dane Nash made the following motion;

In veiw of the modernism and changes that have taken place in the past few months in other Lutheran Synods. I move we jion the Wisconsin Synod. Seconded by Rodger Short. A ballot vote was taken. Results: 32 yes. 2 no.

A motion was made and seconded that we indorse Pastor Schubrings desition in authorizing a slight increase plus hospital insurance to secure a teacher. (Miss Frick) from the synod school to fill a vacancy in our school (note this was to conform with synod min.wage scale.) Motion Carried.

A motion was made and carried to have the School Board submit a new salary schedule at the next meeting.

A motion was made and carried to have the school board and church council investigate and if they feel it is necessary to purchase a vehicle to transport hat lunch etc.

A motion was made to purchase a new mimeograph for the congregation. Carried

The meeting closed with the Lords Prayer.

Roll Call	Norbert C. Talg	R. short
Harold Nash	Rec. Sec.	Wm. Dreschmeier
Dane Nash	Art Voight	H. Schulta
Aug Shaper	John Moll	M. Stanek
Aug. Niebuhr	C Feldman	M. Fick
Alvin Degner	Peter Carr	R. Ott
Clearnce Degner	D Dalke	Wm. Fick
F. Christoferson	ErvinPenshorn	Ken. Demaske
	J. Shanahan	
	R. Kilmer	
	C Herriwig	
	Otto Penshorn	
	H. Jeach	
	R. Schulz	

- Sep. 4- Extra. School dedication set for Oct. 30 - one service to be in English.
- Oct. 20- Candidates chosen for church offices, from which to elect at Jan. meeting.
- Jan. 8- 1 9 0 5  
New members: Emil Reineke, Wm Retslaf, Fred Friede, Wm. Lutz & Herman Lutz. Next election of officers and trustees. Cost of grave digging continued at \$3 & \$2. Annual due increased to \$10.
- Apr. 27- 18 present. New members: John Ripke, Aug. Petersen, John Schultz, & Wm Heine. Voted to borrow money necessary for balance of school cost. Constitution read.
- Jul. 9- Discussed joining synod, but decided to reconsider at annual meeting.
- Oct. 7- New member: Frank Petermann; released: Ed. Winter & Fred Neumann. Ed. Thoenes withdrew to join lodge - M.W.A. Candidates named for elections in Jan. (15 present)
- Jan. 14- 1 9 0 6  
47 present. New members: John Hochmuth, Adolph Nobs, Arnold Stockli & Frank Zunker. Janitor salary raised to \$55 An. Trustees & Officers elected. A.H. Secy., C.T. Treas. Voted to hire a full-time school teacher. Teacher Saxmann called with free residence and \$400 An. offered. Decided to charge 50¢ mo. per pupil with 3rd in one family free. Non-member children \$1 per mo. Adjourned to Jan. 28.
- Jan. 28- Continuation of An. meeting: Present 51. Voted not to join synod at this time - ballot, 23 for, 41 against.
- Feb. 25- Teacher Saxmann had declined his call and now Zautner called.
- Mar. 18- Teacher Zautner also declined. Now decided to call a candidate.
- Apr. 29- Chr. Brockamn appointed to see who must maintain the driveway on South side of our property.
- Jul. 15- 19 present. New members: Henry Reineke, Conrad Meyer & Albert Wolter & families. Decided that our teacher should be installed Aug. 26. (Kroll)
- Oct. 14- Present 28. Candidates named for Offices to be filled in Jan. Decided that where more than 2 children from one family attend a school, those in excess of two go free. Children of non members to pay 75¢ mo. except that sister-congregations to pay only 50¢ per mo. (p. 208)