

HISTORY OF THE MICHIGAN DISTRICT

I.

The history of the Michigan District of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and of the Michigan Synod which preceded it, comprises a total of some 125 years. Actually its roots reach back to the year 1833, when Pastor Frederick Schmid came from the Mission House at Basel to Washtenaw County in Michigan, to become the first German Lutheran pastor in the state. He organized the Salem congregation in Scio Township west of Ann Arbor, which this year can observe its 135th anniversary.

Schmid was a very energetic man. His activities extended over most of the lower half of Michigan, resulting in the organization of some twenty congregations.

In the early forties two additional pastors were sent to Michigan. These three organized the first Michigan Synod. Interestingly enough it was called "The Mission Synod," because Schmid and his congregations had in mind to do mission work among the Michigan Indians. Pfarrer Loehe in Germany, who had been instrumental in bringing over the Franconian Colony, committed his Indian Mission to the supervision of the Michigan Synod. The men whom Loehe had sent -- Hattstaedt of Monroe, Trautmann of Adrian, Lochner of Toledo, and Graemer of Frankenmuth -- became members of the Michigan Synod. Sad to say, it was shortlived. It soon became apparent that the confession of the synod was on paper only and of little worth. False practices impelled Craemer, Lochner, Trautmann, and Hattstaedt, and their congregations, to withdraw from the synod. Schmid joined the Ohio Synod for a short time, and then stood alone until 1860.

With the arrival of Stephan Klingmann and Christopher L. Eberhardt from Basel, Schmid revised the Michigan Synod. On December 10 and 11, 1860, there were assembled "in the small study of Pastor Mueller in Detroit eight pastors and three laymen who united to organize the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Michigan and Other States."

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The new synod correctly recognized/its chief purpose, home mission work, which was actually "Sammelarbeit," consisting in gathering and serving scattered Lutherans and organizing them in congregations. Pastor Eberhardt was chosen as the itinerant missionary -- a most fortunate choice. If any one left the stamp of his character and influence on the Michigan Synod, it was he.

Eberhardt served the synod, which he had helped to found, as secretary, president, vice-president, and trustee. He is the "father of the Seminary," having not only been instrumental in its founding, but to a large extent responsible for its continued existence and physical well-being, even after his death.

The results and fruits of this man's tireless work were very meager, the reason being the lack of manpower. The synod neglected the most essential need of that period, the establishment of an educational institution where pastors could be educated and trained. It had to content itself with pastors who offered their services or were sent out from Basel; but it had no guarantee as to the fitness, faithfulness, and confessional soundness of these men. This was a real sore spot. Among those who offered their services to the young synod were many who were a disgrace and a deterrent to its growth and welfare. In the first ten or twelve years about one-third of its pastors defected to the United Evangelicals.

Another evil was the practice of some congregations to divert part of their mission offerings to other church bodies, particularly to the United Evangelicals. This was done especially by the Washtenaw County congregations. Small wonder that the United Evangelicals made such inroads on Lutheranism in that area! The amount of money thus diverted might have gone a long way to maintain a modest but adequate seminary.

The election of Pastor Stephan Klingmann in 1867, to succeed Pfarrer Schmid, brought about a more conscious and confessional Lutheranism to counteract the United Evangelical leaven that had intruded itself. At the same time, the Michigan Synod affiliated with the General Council in the hope of relieving its acute manpower problem. In this its was sadly mistaken. The only redeeming feature of this move~~d~~ consisted in the recognition of the need of more intensive study of the Scriptures and the Confessions, in order to be able to take part in the doctrinal and practical discussions of that time.

It must be remembered that the old Pennsylvania Synod had issued a call in 1866 to all Lutheran Synods "that adhered to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession," to meet for the purpose of organizing a general Lutheran body "on a truly Lutheran basis." Thirteen synods were represented at a meeting held at Reading, Pennsylvania, in December of 1866. Pastor Klingmann represented the Michigan Synod. The theses submitted by Dr. Krauth were unanimously adopted by the assembled delegates. Each synod desiring membership was asked to ratify the doctrinal basis of the new body, whose name was to be "The General Assembly of the Ev. Lutheran Church in America."

It is evident that the Michigan Synod ~~was~~, from the beginning of its affiliation with the General Council, ^{was} concerned about correct practice. The first convention of the Council was held at Fort Wayne, Indiana, in November of 1867. The Missouri Synod was not represented. The synods of Ohio and Iowa were represented, but not ready for union. The Ohio Synod requested a discussion of four points: Chiliasm, Lodgery, Pulpit ^{Fellowship} and Altar Fellowship. These four points were referred to the district synods for study. Incidentally, the Wisconsin Synod was a charter member, but withdrew in 1868 because of the lack of a clear stand and positive position on the part of the Council.

The Michigan Synod resolved in 1868 as follows: "1) that we reject Chiliasm as does the 17th Article of the Augsburg Confession; 2) that we reject altar fellowship with those not in agreement with us; 3) that we reject pulpit ~~fellowship~~ fellowship with the sectarians; 4) that we reject lodgery as being opposed in spirit to Christianity.

In 1872 the General Council adopted the so-called "Akron Resolutions." These, too, left room for unsound practice. The "Galesburg Resolutions" of 1875 were no better. Dr. Krauth was asked to present theses "which would prove that the regulations, without exceptions, are taken from the Word of God and the confessional writings of our church." Krauth's theses were clear and convincing, and the Michigan Synod had high hopes for the future of the Council. In the face of the adopted regulations, the so-called "English" synods, as well as the Council, tolerated pulpit fellowship with sectarian churches. On the occasion of the 1884 convention of the General Council, held at Zion Church, Monroe, Michigan, several pastors preached in the local Presbyterian church, giving grave offense to Zion congregation and the delegates of the Michigan Synod. The latter presented a formal protest which, however, was given scant attention. The officers held the protest in abeyance till the offending pastors had left the convention, and when it came up for consideration in a late evening session, it was tabled. The protest was renewed and intensified at the 1886 convention, but without success. The Michigan Synod sent no delegates to the convention in 1887. The Council did nothing to satisfy the Michigan Synod. Thereupon, in 1888, the Michigan Synod withdrew from the General Council.

Thus a union which had lasted 21 years was dissolved, not, however, prematurely, hastily, or rashly, but because of a principle involving true Lutheran confession

and practice. It serves to show that the Michigan Synod took a sound stand for true Lutheran practice regarding the "Four Points", and that its withdrawal from the Council was a matter of conscience. However, the synod was not minded to stand alone; affiliation with the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference was its goal.

In the meantime, in 1885, the synod had established a seminary at Manchester, Michigan, where a member of the congregation, George Heimerdinger, placed a roomy, two-story brick building at the disposal of the synod for two years. The seminary was opened with six students; two more entered in October, and two others in 1886.

A number of congregations had asked that the seminary be located in their community. Among these were the congregations at Adrian, Saginaw, and Saline. All made special promises, if their city would be chosen. Originally, in 1886, Adrian was selected by the synod. However, at a special meeting of the synod, held in Lansing in January 1887, this resolution was reconsidered, voted down, and Saginaw was chosen instead of Adrian by a vote of 25 to 9. The official minutes do not indicate why the change was made. Eberhardt, however, in a notebook which he kept, dwells on this matter in detail. At some length he compared the offer of Adrian with that of Saginaw and showed that the synod ^{was} saved \$3,487.00 by building in Saginaw. This saving seems to have induced the synod to choose Saginaw, for it had previously ~~been~~ resolved not to assume a debt of more than \$2000.00. A saving of nearly \$3,500.00 represented a huge amount to the synod, considering the fact that in the years 1885 to 1888 the entire collection had never reached the sum of \$2,300.00. One thing is certain, besides the financial advantage of building at Saginaw, it was of great value for the school to have Eberhardt nearby, not only because of the aid he gave in teaching, but more so because of his mature and well-considered advice and his sound Lutheran stand.

Several sites were offered in Saginaw for the seminary, but after due consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of the various sites, the Board of Trustees of the synod chose the land that Eberhardt proposed and donated. This was a tract of land comprising about 2½ acres on Court Street. Construction got underway two months after the site was acquired, the ground-breaking taking place April 30, 1887. The main building was erected at a cost of \$7,000.00. The total cost of the building, equipment, barn, etc. amounted to \$8,871.61. In 1892 Eberhardt added another acre to the plot.

The new seminary was dedicated August 28, 1887, while the synod was in session in Saginaw. It served as recitation hall, dormitory, refectory, and residence of the director. Dir. Lange with his family were the first to occupy it and shortly thereafter the students came, 14 in all, of whom eight had been at Manchester.

The course of study covered about seven years. Very few students, however, remained the full seven years. Most of them, especially the older ones, were sent into their fields of labor much sooner. At the close of the first year, July 28, 1888, two candidates for the ministry, the firstfruits of the Seminary, were sent out to labor in the vineyard of the Lord.

Dir. Lange remained with the Seminary only one year after its removal to Saginaw. At the convention of the Synod in 1888 it became evident that he disagreed with the Synod in the doctrine of the ministerial call. With deep regret -- for Lange was highly ~~respected~~ respected for his knowledge and teaching ability -- the Synod felt obliged to remove him from office. He was succeeded by Pastor F. Huber.

The years 1887 to 1892 were good years for the Seminary. They constituted a period of peaceful development. During these five years 14 men were graduated and entered the ministry.

The first period of the Synod's history concluded with the Synod's withdrawal from the Council in 1888. The withdrawal was a matter of conscience. However, the Synod was not minded to stand alone. Affiliation with the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference had for a long time been its cherished objective. Although the Michigan Synod was in complete doctrinal agreement with the Synodical Conference, it did not want to be hasty about such affiliation. The doctrinal position of the Synodical Conference was clearly and positively presented at the Saginaw Seminary and unreservedly represented in the newly-founded publication, DER SYNODAL-FREUND.

The five years following withdrawal from the Council were marked by quiet development and sound growth, inwardly and outwardly. From 1880 to 1892 the Synod received 12 pastors from its seminary and a like number from other sources. The inward progress was evidenced by diligent promotion of sound doctrine and by earnest effort toward eliminating the existing evils with regard to practice. Another factor which contributed much toward this inward progress was the inauguration of visitation. The Visitors were held to visit each of their respective congregations once every three years, if possible, on a ~~Sunday~~ ^{Sunday} to enable them to hear the preaching. They were to address the following questions to the congregation: Is church discipline practiced, and in what manner. Are the divine services well attended? Are there any persistent abuses in the congregation? How are the contributions divided? Is the synodical publication read?

The inward growth of the Synod was evidenced by the acceptance of a new constitution. The constitution adopted in 1865 was not only abbreviated and inadequate but it also contained statements that might easily be misunderstood. The new constitution grew out of several years' work and exhaustive deliberation. However, it was still faulty, being too detailed and therefore too narrow and, in spite of all precautions, ambiguous statements crept into it. For that reason it was later revised and finally adopted in 1903.

In the year 1892 the cherished affiliation with the Synodical Conference was consummated. In the previous year the Minnesota Synod proposed the merger of the three synods of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan. The proposal was considered by the Michigan Synod at its Pastoral Conference in 1892. The general aspects of the plan drawn up by President Albrecht and Prof. Schaller of the Minnesota Synod were favorably received. The determining factors for the Michigan Synod were the acquisition of a promising mission field in the West, which was needed, if the Saginaw Seminary continued to produce pastors, the inward and outward ^{growth} to be expected, the better training of pastors and teachers, and the more energetic support of charitable causes. The merger of these three synods was quite natural, because they stood on common ground and had undergone a similar development. The representatives of the three synods met on April 21, 1892, to draft a prospectus for the conventions to be held soon thereafter.

The convention of the Michigan Synod in 1892 occupied itself with two questions: Affiliation with the Synodical Conference and merger with Wisconsin and Minnesota. With regard to the first question it was resolved that "inasmuch as we are one in doctrine with the honorable Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference, and are earnestly engaged in eradicating all unsound practice among us, we herewith address an application for membership to the Synodical Conference which meets in New York later this summer."

Following a lengthy and exhaustive discussion, it was also resolved "that the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Michigan, realizing the practical advantages, concur in a merger with the synods of Wisconsin and Minnesota."

The Synodical Conference accepted the application for membership at its 1892 convention. Thus the condition for a merger with Wisconsin and Minnesota was met. A convention of the three synods was held in October 1892 in Milwaukee. The Michigan contingent numbered 22 pastors, 1 teacher, and 6 lay delegates. The merger was

there consummated. Michigan had promised to give active support to the activities of the Joint Synod, and to abolish the theological department, converting the seminary into a preparatory school. But what happened?

The Michigan Synod now had some bitter experiences. In addition, the synod suffered its most severe loss in the death of Pastor Eberhardt. His wise counsel, prestige, and influence, which could have served so well during these hectic years, were now lost to the synod. Although the synod had unanimously agreed to convert the institution at Saginaw from a theological seminary into a preparatory school, it soon became evident that a small group, notably the members of the Saginaw faculty, were dissatisfied with the arrangement. They desired a temporary continuation of the theological department at Saginaw. It would have been better if Michigan had simply rejected the petition and demanded fulfillment of the agreement. But the Joint Synod was moved by the hope of gaining the dissenters to make the following concession: "It will be extremely difficult to achieve a desirable theological training in the institution at Saginaw. However, due to the existing circumstances, we must leave the adjustment of the matter to the honorable Synod of Michigan."

The hoped-for results were not realized. An evil partisanship arose, which grew more and more bitter until finally it involved not only the administration of the seminary but also the administration of the synod. A complete change in synodical officers was made in 1894, Pastor Carl Bohner being elected in place of Pastor Lederer. The change was not a happy one. The other party soon voiced complaints concerning the administration, and became more expressive of its lack of confidence. The cleavage grew wider, and the group that insisted on retaining the theological department at Saginaw began to entertain the thought of severing the bonds with the Joint Synod. In the spring of 1895 it seemed as if the breach might be healed. A peace conference was held at Saginaw between representatives of both parties and the president of the Joint Synod, Dr. A. F. Ernst. Those present agreed to work toward the adoption of a resolution that the institution function as a theological seminary for a period of three years and then be converted into a preparatory school. However, the Michigan Synod convention of 1895 resolved that all students enrolled should receive their theological training there, and petitioned the Joint Synod to approve this proposal. A minority protested, declared that it had no confidence in the leaders of the synod or of the seminary, and left the meeting.

The minority then brought charges against the administration of the Michigan Synod and its seminary before the convention of the Joint Synod at St. Paul in 1895. The Joint Synod upheld the charges, rejected the petition for retention of the theological department at Saginaw, and the threatened break became a reality. The minority refused to remit contributions for the support of the Michigan Synod's treasury, whereupon the ten pastors comprising the minority were suspended. The suspended pastors met immediately at Sebewaing, organized, and resolved to send delegates to the 1896 convention of the Synodical Conference to file charges against President Bohner of the Michigan Synod and his supporters. The Michigan Synod was not represented at this convention. The Synodical Conference appointed a committee to deal in the matter and submit a report at the next convention. At a convention of the Michigan Synod at Sturgis in September of 1896, it was resolved to sever relations with the Joint Synod, to step out of the Synodical Conference, and exclude the suspended pastors. These latter speedily organized as the Ev. Lutheran District Synod of Michigan, and maintained contact with the Joint Synod and the Synodical Conference. The commission sent by the Synodical Conference, with the Michigan Synod was denied a hearing.

Regrettably, the Michigan Synod was soon persuaded to affiliate with the Augsburg Synod by those who led in the split with the Joint Synod and the Synodical Conference. The Augsburg Synod was actually a conference of pastors serving unattached congregations in various parts of the country. As early as 1896 negotiations with Augsburg leaders were started by the representatives of the Michigan Synod, and a delegation

of Augsburg representatives was present at the Michigan Synod's convention of that year. At a meeting of representatives of both synods at Saginaw, May, 1897, a doctrinal basis was adopted, and the Michigan Synod, in convention at Lansing the same year, ratified the union with Augsburg. A General Synod with two districts was established, but by 1900 the unnatural union was dissolved. It had become apparent that Augsburg tolerated false doctrine and practice on the part of some of its pastors and refused to discipline them.

During this time some of the leaders in the controversy with the Joint Synod had left the Michigan Synod. As early as 1898, the synod manifested its attitude toward its leaders by making a change in officers. Leaders in the move were pastors F. M. Krauss, W. Bodamer, J. Gauss, and J. Westendorf. At the same time the synod realized its mistake in withdrawing from the Synodical Conference and entertained the hope of reaffiliation. Beginning with 1900, efforts were made to realize this hope. Circumstances prevented hasty action. Many hindrances needed to be removed. To this end a number of free conferences were held with pastors of the Missouri Synod and with pastors of the Michigan District Synod from 1904 to 1906.

As early as 1904 the Michigan Synod in convention at Bay City considered the question: "How are we to view our withdrawal from the Synodical Conference?" It gave the following answer: "We must now declare that step to have been unjustified and hasty, because we must now say to ourselves that neither conscience nor need compelled us to take such a step, and therefore we had no real reason for our action. We can only express our deepest regret that we denied the commission of the Synodical Conference a hearing and spurned their efforts to serve us; we must deeply deplore the peremptory manner in which we dismissed the commission." The differences with the Joint Synod as well as with the Michigan District Synod were composed in a meeting with the excluded group at Bay City in 1906 by a mutual acknowledgement of wrong.

Action was forced upon the Michigan Synod by conditions at the Seminary. Pastor Linsemann had resigned as director in 1902. His successor was Pastor F. Beer, formerly professor at the theological Seminary in Kropp. Pastor Beer was a learned man and an able teacher, and had been recommended as representing the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod. The synod looked forward with high hopes to great improvement in the seminary. Instead, conditions grew worse. Until 1902 there had always been some 20 students at the school, but from then on there were never more than 12. At the beginning of the school year 1906-1907 the number had dwindled to eight, and at the convention of the Synod in May, 1907, Dir. Beer reported that only seven students remained. Soon after this session of the synod four more students declared that they were leaving, two graduated, and a single student was left.

What brought about this near collapse of the seminary? The history of 1910 passes over it in silence. The minutes of the Board of Control and the reports of the synod likewise do not shed much light. There is, however, in the report of 1903 an indication of a growing dissatisfaction, and this becomes more and more evident in subsequent reports. There was on the part of Dir. Beer an unevangelical attitude toward the students, a tendency to enforce a very strict, nearly Prussian military discipline, a lack of understanding of our American youth. His relation to his colleagues likewise became more and more strained. This manifested itself, among other things, in his refusal to participate in the final examination of a student in 1905. He refused to deal in person with the Board of Control, which had been authorized by the synod to adjust matters. In consequence of all this the board finally, on August 10, 1907, declared that the Seminary was closed, and that the office of director ceased to exist. Thus the first era of the seminary came to an end. During its existence 40 young men entered the work of the church.

For three long years the buildings and grounds of the seminary stood deserted. After the Michigan Synod had again become a member of the Joint Synod of Wisconsin, in August,

1909, it was resolved that the seminary at Saginaw be reopened as a preparatory school. It was Dr. Ernst who proposed the name Michigan Lutheran Seminary, for historical and especially sentimental reasons. When Eberhardt's old bell with the motto: ORA ET LABORA, again rang out after a silence of three and one-half years, the sound was greeted with mixed emotions.

During the twenty-odd years that lie between the union of 1892 and the amalgamation of 1917, the districts of the Joint Synod enjoyed a decided external growth. This occasioned many difficulties, due principally to the great distances which separated many of the members from the place of meeting, and the like. The necessity of a reorganization of the synodical structure became more and more apparent, and the desire for a closer union of the four synodical bodies was voiced with increasing frequency. The first proposal for the amalgamation of the four districts was made in 1903. The convention of 1905 temporarily rejected this proposal. The Joint Synod of 1911 again rejected a memorial which urged amalgamation. However, it urged the individual synods and conferences to study the matter during the next two years and to appoint committees to make proposals to the Joint Synod at its next convention.

At the convention of 1913 the Joint Synod resolved that the now existing synods unite to form one synod by transferring all rights to the Joint Synod, which should then divide itself into districts geographically, disregarding the existing synodical boundaries; that all institutions, as well as other properties, of the individual synods be transferred to the Joint Synod, and that each synod be responsible for its present indebtedness and should liquidate the same.

At the convention of the Joint Synod in Saginaw, August 24, 1915, the new constitution was unanimously adopted. This constitution became binding upon ratification by the several districts. In 1917 this constitution was subjected to one more revision and finally accepted at New Ulm in 1919. The official name of the synod was "Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States." The Synod embraced six districts: Northern Wisconsin, Southeastern Wisconsin, Western Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Nebraska. Two further districts were added later: the Pacific-Northwest District in 1918 and the Dakota-Montana District in 1920. In the late fifties Arizona-California was added as a district of the Synod.

II.

With the amalgamation of the synods in 1917, the Michigan District became a district of the Joint Synod. At that time the district numbered 52 pastors and 65 congregations.

The history of the district is intimately bound up with the Seminary at Saginaw. This imparted to the district a unique character which has always been referred to as the "Michigan Spirit." It is not easy to define; it is something that needs to be experienced. For those of us who grew up in the district it is ^{even} more than an experience; it is a "flesh-and-blood" thing. We are part of it, and it is part of us. It was stamped indelibly upon our being and life. As I see it, the "Michigan Spirit" was characterized by an almost fierce loyalty, a burning zeal, and a congenial comradeship.

This spirit may be traced back to Eberhardt and the early students and graduates of the Seminary. Men of the stature of John Westendorf, George ^{Wacker} Emil Wenk, John Gauss, F. M. Krauss, and a little later O. J. R. Hoenecke, were imbued with the "Michigan Spirit" and imparted that spirit to those who came into the district during their careers. A considerable number of us were sons of the district, which did much to keep the "Michigan Spirit" alive and active. To us the district, the synod, the church came first; all other considerations were secondary. Our fathers were an example and an inspiration for the younger men, whom they instructed, admonished, and guided.

From the moment we young pastors became members of the district, we were their brethren; we were encouraged to take an active part in the discussions at conferences and conventions -- corrected if we were out of step, commended if we were able to contribute something of value. The men referred to were not just our elders, they were our confidants and comrades -- truly our brethren. There was among us a togetherness such as is seldom seen elsewhere.

It is my considered opinion -- and I challenge contradiction -- that it was the "Michigan Spirit" which made our district unique in many ways. I believe also that it was the "Michigan Spirit" that produced the aggressiveness and progressiveness which has characterized our district through the years. I believe also that the Seminary at Saginaw was the rallying point of the district. Of the three synods that formed the Joint Synod, the Michigan Synod was the last to consider the founding of a school for the training of future workers in the church. From the early forties until 1885, the Michigan Synod depended almost exclusively on men who drifted into it from Germany. It was Eberhardt who recognized the fact that the old course could no longer be pursued, if the Synod was not to disintegrate. He was largely responsible for moving the Synod to found a seminary at Manchester in 1885, and the building of the institution at Saginaw in 1887. He remained its guiding spirit to his death in 1893, and his influence was felt for years after that.

As stated earlier, the old Michigan Seminary became the Michigan Lutheran Seminary, a preparatory school of the Joint Synod in 1910. The beginning was not very auspicious -- there were four students in the first class. Fourteen new students entered in 1911, bringing the total enrollment to eighteen. The old recitation hall now began to appear inadequate; it had served as classroom building, dormitory, refectory, quarters for the inspector, and dwelling for the housekeeper and her family. But that old building brings a feeling of nostalgia to us who lived in it. We were a closely-knit family, as was the district.

In anticipation of a still larger enrollment for the third year, the Michigan Synod at its meeting in Lansing, June, 1912, considered the matter of erecting a boys' dormitory, with a residence for the inspector attached to it. This may require some explanation. Although the school itself was conducted and maintained by the Joint Synod, the property remained in the hands of the Michigan Synod, which had to take care of all repairs, improvements, plus any necessary additions in the form of buildings. This agreement, at times, caused some difficulties between the two treasurers. As a rule, however, since the treasurer of the Michigan Synod was more adamant and tenacious, the treasurer in Milwaukee met the financial obligations. This arrangement remained in effect up to the time of the reorganization of the Joint Synod in 1917. The property, however, remained in the name of the Michigan Synod until 1941. To meet the legal requirements, the Michigan Synod went through the formality of convening at the occasion of each district convention.

The Michigan Synod resolved in 1912 to expend up to \$25,000.00 for the erection of a combination dormitory and inspector's residence. The two sections were erected separately. The residence was begun in 1912 and built at a cost of \$5,120.00. The dormitory was constructed for \$19,914.00. The new structure was dedicated September 14, 1913.

The early years of Michigan Lutheran Seminary saw a great fluctuation in enrollment. At one time the low enrollment caused a movement in the other districts to close the institution. Through the efforts of Dir. Hoenecke and others, it was demonstrated that Michigan Lutheran Seminary, and the district, had produced a higher percentage of church workers than the other schools and districts of the Synod. In the forties the enrollment climbed to more than a hundred for the first time. We all know what it has been since then.

The history of the district from 1917 to the present time has been one of steady growth, inwardly and outwardly. There were some sore spots in the district, which had to be removed. We had several sizeable congregations which presented a problem with regard to lodge membership, openly tolerated in them, notably Adrian, Monroe, and Saline. However, in each instance a change in the pastorate resulted in a salutary change of conditions.

It is interesting to note that in the early years of our district, long essays were the order of the day. I recall one essay by Pastor C. Strasen, entitled: "The Biography of Joseph, the Son of Jacob, with Application to Our Own Lives." This essay ran for three conventions, from 1922-26.

For a time we were known also as a memorializing district. A rash of memorials by individuals, congregations, conferences, and the district broke out, which brought us much unfavorable publicity and caused resentment in the Synod. I remember a remark by the then president of the Synod, John Brenner, who reported on memorials to the convention, adding: "This time I am happy to report that there is no memorial from Michigan." These memorials on our part stemmed from the eagerness to get things done. They also proved the truth of the old adage that the person who does nothing makes no mistakes. And I have a sneaking feeling that our memorials caused resentment which was born of discomfort.

The cause of Christian education also received its share of attention in our district. In 1917 there were 21 schools in congregations of our district, with 18 teachers. At the present time we have 32 schools, staffed by 114 teachers.

During the 50 years as a district, the following have served in the office of president: F. M. Krauss, elected in 1905 as president of the Michigan Synod, continuing as president of the district until 1926; John Gauss, 1926-1936, and 1942-1944; Karl F. Krauss, 1936-1942, and 1944-1950; S. E. Westendorf, 1950-1952; G. L. Press, 1952-1962; Norman Berg, 1962-1968; Waldemar Zarling, the present incumbent.

The cause of missions has always been dear to the heart of the Michigan District. This is evidenced by the great strides in Home Mission Work made through the years. It was from here that the work expanded into Florida, and more recently into the eastern part of the United States. I cannot refrain from paying tribute to my old friend and classmate, Pastor Arthur Wacker, who worked tirelessly for the cause of missions in our district and, for that matter, in the Synod.

In order that the cause of missions might be intensively fostered and furthered, the early thirties saw the evolution of the "Michigan Plan" for the promotion of giving for synodical purposes. This plan was faithfully carried out in our district and brought us to the forefront of giving in our Synod. The real secret of the plan was the vigorous program of follow-up. Without this, no plan of raising monies will succeed. The plan was also adopted by the Synod, but never consistently carried out. At times voices were heard in the Synod, labeling the plan as being tainted with legalism. This I would vigorously repudiate. Whoever presumes to find legalism in such a plan has no right to demand order in any activity that involves more than one person. The execution of such a plan is nothing more than order. The "Michigan Plan" was adopted by the Synod but not consistently applied in the various other districts.

Another program, inaugurated in our district in the early thirties was that of arranging one-day meetings of the church councils of our congregations within a reasonable radius, to which other laypeople were also invited. We can recall with pleasure the fine attendance at these meetings. In most of them men, women, and children were represented. The success of these meetings was due largely to the interesting programs that were presented. The Synod also adopted this program and instructed the Visitors to perfect its organization. This finally led to the program of circuit meetings.

World War II put a crimp in these circuit meetings due to the rationing of gasoline. I note that in my presidential report to the district in 1948, I called for a revival of the circuit meetings.

A great interest in and zeal for the cause of missions has always characterized the Michigan District. For too long a time our Synod was content to concentrate its efforts on home missions. This was also vigorously promoted and pushed in our own district. During these 50 years, 58 missions were started in this district. In 1952 a chapel was built at Livonia without the preexistence of an organized nucleus for a congregation, truly a bold step, not only for our district, but in our ultra-conservative Synod. Early in 1953 the mission was organized with 45 communicant members. Talk about starting from scratch!

In 1954 the first exploratory work was done in Florida. Today this is a flourishing mission field and a conference of our district. In 1963 work was begun in the eastern part of our country. Pastor Leonard Koeninger was given a leave of absence by Emanuel congregation at Lansing, and spent some 9 weeks doing spade work in Arlington, Virginia, just outside of Washington, D. C. The first missionary was called in September of that year. At present we have four missionaries active in the East. Ours has become a far-flung district.

Even more noteworthy and gratifying was the movement toward world missions, which was inaugurated by members of our district, notably Pastors Edgar Hoenecke and Arthur Wacker, at the convention of the Synod at New Ulm in 1945. Pastor Hoenecke broached the matter of foreign missions in his report as chairman of the Executive Committee for the Apache Indian Mission. It was neatly and adroitly woven into the report, but less neatly and more vigorously opposed by some of the synodical leaders. But Pastor Hoenecke, with the loyal, able, and vocal support of the members of our district who were present at the convention, succeeded in getting a resolution by the convention, that a committee be appointed to study the question of our synod's entering upon foreign mission work. The report submitted by the committee at the next convention offered little encouragement. But the Michigan delegation stuck to its guns and succeeded in getting the convention to resolve "that the Synod authorize the expansion of our mission work in foreign fields; and that the General Mission Board be instructed to continue its investigation and explore the most promising heathen fields and report to the General Synodical Committee for further instructions."

The General Mission Board sent a request to the General Synodical Committee, asking that Pastor Arthur Wacker and Pastor Timothy Adascheck be chosen to investigate foreign fields in Northern Rhodesia and French West Africa, called the upper Volta region. Pastor Edgar Hoenecke was chosen as alternate for Pastor Adascheck who declined the assignment. In 1949 Wacker and Hoenecke made preparations for their exploratory trip. A traveling truck was specially outfitted, much of the equipment being furnished by gifts from congregations and individuals in our district. How well some of us remember the solemn service at Wayne, in which we commissioned the two brethren, and then bade them farewell at Scio. Their thoroughgoing exploration resulted in a resolution of the convention in 1951, that our Synod enter upon foreign heathen mission work in the Northern Rhodesia field in Africa by sending two men into the field. Two years later the Synod resolved to begin mission work in Japan by sending two missionaries to that field. It required six years and four conventions to launch our Synod's world mission program. We ought to be very happy and grateful that our district was privileged to pioneer this great program.

A program of relief work was also inaugurated by the Synod in 1946, which grew out of a suggestion made by me in a meeting of the Conference of Presidents in January of that year. The suggestion found favor, and I was asked to head a relief committee and appoint additional members. This was done, and within two weeks we were underway

with a relief program which is now in its twenty-third year and can look back upon a very successful operation. It is interesting to note that the members of the Committee on Relief have always been from the Michigan District.

Another valuable program inaugurated in and by our district was that of mission fairs. One of the most ambitious, extensive, and successful series of mission fairs was that for the Chinese Mission in Hong Kong, which raised \$25,000.00 in our congregations and led to the Synod's adopting this mission at the 1965 convention. Mission fairs are now being conducted by many congregations throughout our Synod.

Several years ago a very progressive and profitable program was launched in our district -- the Laymen's Seminar. Members of official boards in our congregations were invited to attend these seminars which are designed to provide information on the various aspects of the congregational and synodical structure. All phases are covered and stressed in group meetings presided over by leaders who introduce and lead the discussions. The functions of congregational officers -- Church Council, Board of Elders, Board of Education, Stewardship Board -- as well as information on our Synod are discussed extensively and intensively. We are happy to note that similar seminars are now being held in other districts of our Synod. Much good can come from this program, which can only redound to the benefit of our congregational and synodical like and work.

The fact of the matter is, that practically every progressive program in our Synod during these 50 years received its start in the Michigan District. This is not said in the spirit of boasting, but as a statement of fact, well documented, and is also readily acknowledged by leaders in our Synod. I am convinced that this is due to the so-called "Michigan Spirit", to which I alluded earlier. It is born of an intense loyalty to our synodical body, an earnest zeal for our synodical work, an exercise of vision, a determination to go forward for Christ, a profound desire to carry out our Savior's command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. We regard this as our foremost responsibility and our primary purpose, as individuals, as congregations, as a district, and as a synod. It saddens us to see so many open doors that stand unentered because of the so-called lack of money and manpower. This is not quite true. We lack neither of these, we just haven't learned to give them to the Lord! Too often our own congregational needs and wants black out our higher vision, that of looking away from self for awhile and setting our sights on the world of men out there who are dying for want of the Gospel.

The old, time-honored "Michigan Spirit" inculcated in us the love of missions and the promotion of mission work at home and at large. It is my humble conviction that this has been our contribution to the life of our Synod. Everything progressive, constructive, and forward-moving which we have initiated and promoted has had but one moving thought and purpose: the proclamation, preservation, and propagation of the Gospel of Salvation.

To this we have been dedicated and devoted during the 50 years as a district. This is the heritage we have received from our fathers under God. This is the treasure we cherish and champion and desire to pass on to future generations. God help us! Amen.

Carl F. Krauss

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