

**A ROSTER OF CONGREGATIONS
INVOLVED IN
THE PROTESTANT CONTROVERSY**

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INTRODUCTION

Professor Edward C Fredrich in his book, The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, writes that the Protes'tant Controversy is "the most turbulent and tragic episode in Wisconsin Synod history begun over three score years ago and still running its course and causing its controversies." But still many don't know much about the Protes'tant Controversy and which congregations were involved in it.

This paper is an attempt to provide a listing of the congregations in the Wisconsin Synod that were involved in the Protes'tant Controversy, then and now. It also lists where the Protes'tant congregations are today. This paper intends to give a point of reference from which to start when studying the Protes'tant Conference.

The congregations are grouped according to the categories listed in the table of contents. For additional information consult the documented sources and look at the bibliography.

PROTES'TANT CONGREGATIONS

ALPINE, CA

New Creation

Joined the Protes'tant Conference in the late 1980s. New Creation was started as a break off group from Alpine Lutheran (WELS) in Alpine, CA. Pastor Terry Nuckolls was declared not in fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod and removed as pastor of Beautiful Saviour Lutheran Church (WELS) in Carlsbad, CA in November of 1987.¹ Terry Nuckolls had contact with the Protes'tant Conference as early as February of 1988.² There is no Protes'tant pastor in Alpine. The congregation of under 50 souls is served occasionally throughout the year by Protes'tant pastors who come to Alpine from their own congregations in the Midwest and stay for a week or so. The rest of the time the lay leadership reads sermons to the congregation from *Faith-Life*, sermons Protes'tant pastors may send them, and even have read some sermons of Dr Siegbert Becker (WELS) from The Word Goes On published by Northwestern Publishing House in Milwaukee, WI.

¹ *Arizona-California District Proceedings*, 1988, pp 6-7.

² *Faith-Life*, July-August 1989, p 4 and September-October 1989, pp 22-23.

GREEN BAY, WI

St James

St James was formed by people who left St Paul Lutheran (WELS) of Green Bay, WI. Pastor Robert Christman declared his fellowship with the Protes'tant Conference in November 1980.³ The congregation has a membership of approximately 200 people and maintains a Lutheran elementary school.

MARION SPRINGS, MI

St John

Pastor Gerhard Ruediger was serving St John when he was called to the Wauwatosa Seminary. He sided with the Protes'tants and was dismissed from the seminary in 1927. The congregation called him back and he remained as pastor there until he retired in 1959. Joel Hensel currently serves this congregation of about 50 members.

MELROSE, WI

St Paul

St Paul is a daughter congregation of Christ, Burr Oak, WI. The congregation joined the Protes'tant Conference in 1928 when their Pastor

³ *Northern Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1982, pp 8-9, 66-67.

Martin Zimmermann broke with the Synod.⁴ Pastor Floyd Brand currently serves the approximately 100 souls of St Paul.

MILWAUKEE-WEST ALLIS, WI

In home congregation

This small congregation of about 10 people gathers to meet in a home in the Milwaukee area. Pastor Albert Meier, a former WELS missionary to the Apache in East Fork, AZ, served this congregation which included some second generation Protes'tants. The people who gather to worship in small groups such as this as well as in the other small Protes'tant congregations look forward to worshipping with a larger group of people of the same fellowship when the Protes'tant Conference meets during the year. The beginnings of the West Allis congregation reach back to the 1930s.

PLYMOUTH, MN

Bethany

In the mid-1980s the Protes'tant congregation in Wabasso, MN which was being served by Pastor John Springer, a former Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod elementary school teacher in Ohio, declined in membership. The congregation was unable to support him so he moved to Plymouth, MN, a western suburb of Minneapolis, MN to find employment.

⁴ *Western Wisconsin District Report of Documents and Correspondence, 1928, pp 70-71.*

He holds worship services in his home. Attendance is about 10 or 12 people. The congregation bears the name of his former congregation in Wabasso.

RICE LAKE, WI

In home congregation

Although the Protes'tant Conference had a congregation in Rice Lake at the very formation of the conference it (First Lutheran) became a member of the Missouri Synod. In the 1960s Michael Meier, the son of Pastor Albert Meier, came to town. A Protes'tant congregation was formed and the group consists of about 10 people today.

SHIOCTON, WI

First Lutheran

Pastor Louis E Mielke left the Synod and his flock at First Lutheran in Shiocton followed him.⁵ This congregation of approximately 150 souls is being served today by Pastor Gerald Hinz.

⁵ *Northern Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1938, pp 9-10.

VALDERS, WI

Grace

Paul Hensel was the pastor of this congregation and also Trinity in Liberty, WI when he declared his fellowship with the Protes'tants and was put out by the Synod in the 1930s.⁶ After he served the congregation his son Philemon Hensel succeeded him and currently serves its approximately 50 members.

PROTES'TANT CONGREGATIONS WHICH ARE NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE

KLONDIKE, WI

Mission congregation

Pastor Philip J Schroeder, one of the first Protes'tants, served a mission congregation in Klondike, WI. He was suspended from the Synod in the late 1920s. The Klondike congregation was even a site for one of the Protes'tants' conferences. Pastor Schroeder accepted back into fellowship

⁶ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol 16, No 9, p 143.

with the Synod in the mid 1930s⁷ and went on to be a professor at the LCMS seminary in St Louis.⁸ The congregation appears to have dissolved.

LACROSSE, WI

Faith-Life

In December 1927 the Protes'tants met in Marshfield, WI. At this meeting they established a treasury, a board, an editorial committee, and a LaCrosse mission.⁹ This mission, which was carried out on both the north and south sides of the city, was headed up by Pastor William Beitz whose conference paper, "God's Message to Us in Galatians: The Just Shall Live by Faith" was a catalyst for the controversy. When a rift developed within the Protes'tant Conference in the 1960s, Pastor Beitz left their fellowship and the mission in LaCrosse died out.

NEILLSVILLE, WI

Grace

This congregation was shepherded by Pastor Karl Koehler. He had resigned his professorship at Northwestern College in Watertown, WI because the NWC Board of Control reversed some disciplinary action of the faculty. Pastor John P Koehler also settled in Neillsville with his son Karl

⁷ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol 24, No 19, p 302.

⁸ Jeske, Mark. *A Half Century of Faith-Life*, p 37. See WI Lutheran Seminary essay file.

⁹ *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, by E C Fredrich, Milwaukee: Northwestern, p 161.

after he had been ^{suspended} put out by the Synod for ^{Fellowshiping} siding with the Protes'tants.

After the Koehlers died the congregation faded away.

OCONOMOWOC, WI

In home congregation

After St Matthew, Oconomowoc returned to the Synod in 1932 a small group of members who declared themselves to be in fellowship with the Protes'tants met under the guidance of suspended pastor William Haas. The group gradually dwindled and passed from existence.

STURGEON BAY, WI

In home congregation

Often the number of Protes'tant congregations was less than the number of Protes'tant pastors. During the Great Depression jobs were scarce so some of the men who were trained to be pastors became farmers. Alex Hillmer, a former missionary among the Apache in Bylas, AZ,¹⁰ became an organic farmer in Sturgeon Bay, WI. Other Protes'tants lived in the Sturgeon Bay area and would meet together.

¹⁰ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol 17, No 2, p 28.

TAUNTON, MN

Bethlehem

Bethlehem, Taunton and St John, Boyd were both served by Pastor Henry Albrecht. When he declared his fellowship with the Protes'tants the Taunton congregation left the Synod.¹¹ In the early 1980s the congregation of about 75-100 members dispersed because they were unwilling to have their Sunday worship services at two o'clock in the afternoon which was the earliest the Protes'tant pastor from Wabasso could get there.

PROTES'TANT CONGREGATIONS WHICH RETURNED TO THE WISCONSIN SYNOD

BURR OAK (MINDORO), WI

Christ

Christ, Burr Oak left the Synod when it followed its pastor, Martin A Zimmermann who had been put out for his fellowship with the

¹¹ *Minnesota District Proceedings, 1936, p 13.*

Protes'tants.¹² The most recent Protes'tant pastor to serve the congregation was Pastor Floyd Brand. The congregation of over 200 members is the most recent to renew its fellowship with the WELS. They reentered the WELS in 1994 and are currently calling for a WELS pastor.

ELROY, WI

Zion

Zion, Elroy was a dual parish with St Luke, Town of Glendale shepherded by Pastor Paul Lutzke who joined the Protes'tant Conference in 1928.¹³ The congregation returned when they called a Missouri Synod pastor who applied for membership in the Wisconsin Synod in 1938 and the congregation made an official application for membership in 1940.¹⁴

GLOBE (NEILLSVILLE), WI

Immanuel

Immanuel, Globe became involved in the heat of the controversy when Pastor Oswald Hensel of Marshfield installed Pastor W Motzkus as their pastor in 1927, and both men were suspended for going ahead with the installation against the wishes of the Western Wisconsin District

¹² *Western Wisconsin District Report of Documents and Correspondence*, 1928, pp 70-71.

¹³ *Western Wisconsin District Report of Documents and Correspondence*, 1928, p 60.

¹⁴ *Western Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1938, pp 12-13, 1940, p 20.

president.¹⁵ Immanuel reestablished fellowship with the Synod in 1940.¹⁶ The congregation is listed as Immanuel, Neillsville in WELS publications.

LIBERTY (MANITOWOC), WI

Trinity

Trinity, Liberty along with Grace, Valders were both served by Pastor Paul Hensel when he joined with the Protes'tants in the early 1930s. However, Trinity soon voted him out in 1935 and rejoined the Synod.¹⁷ The congregation is listed as Trinity, Manitowoc in WELS publications.

MANITOWOC, WI

Immanuel

Pastor Theophil Uetzmann and the Immanuel congregation left the Wisconsin Synod and became part of the Protes'tant Conference in 1938. After there was a rift among the Protes'tants in the mid 1960s the congregation began to talk to the Northern Wisconsin District about reentering the WELS in 1966 and was finally accepted into membership at the 1970 district convention.¹⁸

¹⁵ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol 14, No 12, p 188.

¹⁶ *Western Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1940, pp 22,36.

¹⁷ *Faith-Life*, November-December 1993, See Paul Hensel's "Why I am a Protes'tant."

¹⁸ *Northern Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1966, p 63; 1968, pp 7-8,46; 1970, pp 12,14,56-57.

NELSON, WI

Grace

Pastor Erwin Abelmann was pastor of this congregation as well as St John, Alma, WI when he left the Synod and joined the Protes'tants in the late 1920s. Grace renewed its fellowship with the Synod in 1944 when they gained the services of a Wisconsin Synod pastor.¹⁹

OCONOMOWOC, WI

St Matthew

Pastor William P Hass was one of the first to be put out by the Synod in 1927.²⁰ The congregation reestablished its fellowship with the Synod in 1932²¹ and installed a new pastor that summer.

PLATTEVILLE, WI

St Paul

Pastor Robert Ave-Lallemant joined the Protes'tant fellowship in 1928. St Paul had severed its connection with the Wisconsin Synod by asking the Missouri Synod district president to supply them with a pastor but the congregation reapplied for Wisconsin Synod membership in 1935.²²

¹⁹ *Western Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1944, pp 18-24.

²⁰ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol 15, No 10, p 159.

²¹ *Western Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1932, pp 12,22.

²² *Western Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1936, p 11.

PROTESTANT CONGREGATIONS WHICH ARE NOW MEMBERS OF THE LCMS

MARSHFIELD, WI

Immanuel

Pastor Oswald Hensel of Immanuel was one of the original Protestants. He was suspended by the Western Wisconsin District in 1927.²³ In 1932 the congregation joined the Missouri Synod.²⁴ It still belongs to the LCMS.

RICE LAKE, WI

First Lutheran

This was the congregation that Pastor Beitz shepherded in the 1920s. Pastor Herbert Parisius, a former NWC professor who resigned in protest in the 1920s, also served the congregation. In the 1940 *Western Wisconsin District Proceedings* the president's report indicates that a Missouri Synod pastor installed a seminary graduate from St Louis as pastor of First Lutheran. The congregation was formally accepted into the Missouri Synod in 1944.²⁵ It is still a member of the LCMS today.

²³ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol 14, No 12, p 188.

²⁴ *Western Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1934, p10.

²⁵ *Missouri Synod Convention Proceedings*, 1944, p 37.

WABASSO, MN

Bethany

Pastor Erwin E Baumann was serving Bethany when he was ^{suspended from} put out of the Synod in 1936.²⁶ In the mid-1980s the congregation was being served by Pastor John Springer. The congregation was declining in membership and unable to support him so he moved to Plymouth, MN, a western suburb of Minneapolis, MN to find employment. Many of the members reorganized Bethany as a congregation of the LCMS in 1985. It remains LCMS today.

WHITE, SD

Zion

Frederick Reuter, the pastor of Zion, White, was suspended by the Dakota-Montana District in the mid 1930s. The congregation withdrew from the Synod.²⁷ In the mid 1940s the congregation joined the LCMS among protest from the Wisconsin Synod that they not be accepted. The congregation is still a member of the LCMS.

²⁶ *Minnesota District Proceedings*, 1936, p 14.

²⁷ *Dakota-Montana District Proceedings*, 1938, p 9.

PROTES'TANT CONGREGATIONS WHICH ARE NOW MEMBERS OF THE ELCA

ALMA, WI

St John

St John was a mission congregation served by Pastor Abel Mann who also served Grace, Nelson, WI. He was put out by the Synod because of his fellowship with the Protes'tant Conference in the late 1920s. Pastor E Abelman joined the American Lutheran Church in the late 1930s²⁸ and the congregation followed. St John is still listed among the congregations of the ELCA, the product of the LCA-ALC merger, in their 1994 yearbook.

ELROY (TOWN OF GLENDALE), WI

St Luke

St Luke joined the Protes'tant Conference in the late 1920s under Pastor Paul Lutzke who was pastor of Zion, Elroy. In the 1950s the congregation was member of the ALC but in the 1960 Western Wisconsin District Proceedings St Luke was welcomed back to the WELS. The last we hear of the congregation is that the congregation sent a letter dated November 13,

²⁸ *Report of the Wisconsin District of the American Lutheran Church, 1938, p 6.*

1976 stating that [^]were joining the ALC.²⁹ St Luke is not listed in the ALC yearbook in any of the years that follow. The congregation had only about 40 members in the mid 1970s. It is possible that many of those members wound up joining the ALC church in Elroy.

MILWAUKEE, WI

Golgatha

In the late 1920s Pastor Gustav A Zeisler resigned his call in Minocqua, WI and accepted a call from Golgatha, Milwaukee. Two notices appeared in *The Northwestern Lutheran*. One stated that the congregation was no longer in fellowship with the Synod³⁰ and the other stated that Pastor Zeisler had been suspended.³¹ About 1950 Golgatha merged with Gloria, an ALC congregation in Milwaukee, to form Memorial Lutheran.³² Memorial is a member of the ELCA today.

MOSINEE, WI

St John

Pastor Otto Kehrberg was put out by the Synod in 1928 for his fellowship with the Protes'tants. The congregation followed him. St John joined the ALC in 1956.³³ Today the congregation belongs to the ELCA.

²⁹ *Western Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1978, p 5.

³⁰ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol 14, No 3, p 44.

³¹ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol 16, No 6, p 92.

³² Jeske, Mark. *A Half Century of Faith-Life*, p 37. See WI Lutheran Seminary essay file.

³³ *Report of the Wisconsin District of the American Lutheran Church*, 1957, p 18.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN, WI

St Peter

St Peter left the Wisconsin Synod in the late 1920s with their pastor, William K Bodamer, to join the Protestants.³⁴ He also led them into the ALC around 1960. St Peter is today a member of the ELCA.

WILTON, WI

St Paul

Pastor John H Abelmann and the congregation under his care in Wilton, WI left the Synod in 1928 and joined the Protestant Conference. In 1937 they applied for membership in the ALC.³⁵ Today St Paul is a congregation of the ELCA.

³⁴ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol 14, No 15, p 236.

³⁵ *Report of the Wisconsin District of the American Lutheran Church*, 1937, pp 6,17.

WISCONSIN SYNOD CONGREGATIONS WHICH REMAINED WITH THE SYNOD EVEN THOUGH THEIR PASTORS LEFT

AKASKA, SD

Zion

This congregation is still to this day a dual parish with St James, Tolstoy, SD. In 1950 Pastor Marcus Albrecht left the congregations and joined fellowship with the Protes'tant Conference.³⁶ Zion is still a member of the WELS today.

ALPINE, CA

Alpine Lutheran

Pastor Terry Nuckolls served Alpine Lutheran prior to his taking a call in 1984 to Beautiful Saviour, Carlsbad, CA. Many of the members of the Protes'tant congregation New Creation in Alpine, CA are former members of this congregation. Alpine Lutheran is still WELS today.

³⁶ *Faith-Life*, February 1951 Supplement, pp 1-4.

BELVIEW, MN

St John

St John, Belview, MN is a dual parish with St Paul, Seaforth, MN. When Pastor Gerhard Schéütze left the Synod in 1936 and united with the Protes'tants³⁷ the congregation remained with the Synod. The congregation remains a member of the WELS today.

BOYD, MN

St John

When Pastor Henry Albrecht was put out by the Minnesota District in 1936 for his fellowship with the Protes'tants³⁸ he was serving two congregations. Bethlehem, Taunton, MN left the Synod but St John, Boyd, MN remained with the Synod. St John, Boyd still belongs to the WELS.

BYLAS, AZ

Apache mission

Pastors Arthur Arndt and Alex Hillmer were suspended by the Synod in 1929 for their joining the Protes'tants.³⁹ The WELS continues to maintain a mission in Bylas, AZ today.

³⁷ *Minnesota District Proceedings*, 1936, p 14.

³⁸ *Minnesota District Proceedings*, 1936, p 13.

³⁹ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol 17, No 2, p 28.

CARLSBAD, CA

Beautiful Saviour

Pastor Terry Nuckolls was called to serve this congregation in 1984. They removed him from office in 1987. He served break off groups from the Carlsbad and Alpine congregations. New Creation, Alpine is a group of about 50 people and is in fellowship with the Protes'tant Conference. Beautiful Saviour remains a member of the WELS today.

EAST FORK, AZ

Apache mission

Pastor Albert Meier united himself in fellowship with the Protes'tants in 1929 and was suspended by the Synod.⁴⁰ The WELS still runs a mission among the Apache in East Fork today.

EDGAR (RIB FALLS), WI

St John

In the late 1920s Gerhard Gieschen, the pastor of St John, joined the Protes'tant Conference. The congregation continues to be a member of the WELS today. It is listed as St John, Edgar (Rib Falls) in WELS publications.

⁴⁰ *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol 17, No 2, p 28.

FREMONT, WI

St John

Pastor Floyd Brand was suspended by the Northern Wisconsin District because he united in fellowship with the Protestants in 1980.⁴¹ The congregation has remained with the WELS.

FRIESLAND, WI

Trinity

Pastor Hans W Koch resigned from Trinity, Friesland in late 1927 and joined the Protestant Conference.⁴² Trinity is still a member of the WELS.

GIBSON (MANITOWOC), WI

St John

Pastor Otto Gruendemann joined the fellowship of the Protestants in 1934⁴³ and the congregation advised him they no longer wanted him as their pastor. The new pastor arrived on the scene and had to board with members since the Gruendemanns had not vacated the house. Pastor Gruendemann was forcibly evicted from the house in July 1935. The congregation has remained a member of the WELS. It is listed as St John, Manitowoc in WELS publications.

⁴¹ *Northern Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1982, pp 8-9, 66-67.

⁴² *Western Wisconsin District Report of Documents and Correspondence*, 1928, pp 60-63.

⁴³ *Faith-Life*, November 1934, pp 1,7-8.

GREEN BAY, WI

St Paul

The congregation was split apart in the early 1980s when Pastor Robert Christman joined the Protes'tant Conference. The members of the congregation who sided with Pastor Christman formed a Protes'tant congregation in town and named it St James. St Paul, Green Bay has remained with the WELS.

LIVINGSTON, MT

St Paul

When Pastor Gerald Hinz entered into fellowship with the Protes'tant Conference he was suspended by the Dakota-Montana District in 1962.⁴⁴ The congregation still belongs to the WELS.

MARATHON, WI

St Matthew

Pastor Ed Dux was pastor of St Matthew, Marathon when he joined the Protes'tants in 1930. The congregation is still a member of the WELS.

⁴⁴ *Dakota-Montana District Proceedings, 1962, pp 11,16.*

MINOCQUA, WI

Trinity

This congregation was only a mission at the time that Pastor G A Zeisler joined the Protes'tants in the late 1920s. Almost seventy years later the congregation exists as Trinity, Minocqua, still a member of the WELS.

SEAFORTH, MN

St Paul

St Paul, Seaforth, MN is a dual parish with St John, Belview, MN. When Pastor Gerhard Schéutze left the Synod in 1936 and united with the Protes'tants⁴⁵ the congregation remained with the Synod. The congregation remains a member of the WELS today.

TOLSTOY, SD

St James

This congregation is still to this day a dual parish with Zion, Akaska, SD. In 1950 Pastor Marcus Albrecht left the congregations and joined fellowship with the Protes'tant Conference.⁴⁶ St James is still a member of the WELS today.

⁴⁵ *Minnesota District Proceedings*, 1936, p 14.

⁴⁶ *Faith-Life*, February 1951 Supplement, pp 1-4.

WISCONSIN SYNOD CONGREGATIONS WHICH REMAINED WITH THE SYNOD EVEN THOUGH THEIR PASTORS LEFT BUT ARE NOW NO LONGER WITH THE WISCONSIN SYNOD

BARRON, WI

Salem

One of the original Protes'tants Pastor William Motzkus first served the dual parish of Salem, Barron, WI and St John, Cameron, WI before he was called to Immanuel, Globe, WI in 1927. The congregation remained with the Wisconsin Synod but joined the Missouri Synod after the two synods broke fellowship in the early 1960s.⁴⁷

CAMERON, WI

St John

One of the original Protes'tants Pastor William Motzkus first served the dual parish of St John, Cameron, WI and Salem, Barron, WI before he was called to Immanuel, Globe, WI in 1927. The congregation remained with

⁴⁷ *Western Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1962, p 19.

the Wisconsin Synod but joined the Missouri Synod after the two synods broke fellowship in the early 1960s.⁴⁸

PALOUSE, WA

St Paul

Pastor Kurt Koehler served this congregation until he joined the Protestants in 1930. The congregation was reported as being closed in the 1955-1956 Wisconsin Synod Statistical Report.

⁴⁸ *Western Wisconsin District Proceedings*, 1962, p 19.

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I also consulted the many yearbooks, statistical reports, synod and district proceedings of the different Lutheran church bodies.

I asked Pastor Marcus Albrecht, the editor of *Faith-Life* , for some help in the original stages of my research and he sent me a letter in the spring of 1995 listing many of the congregations and many of the men of the Protes'tant Conference.

I called John Springer, the Protes'tant pastor of Bethany, Plymouth, MN in the spring of 1995 and he helped verify some of my research as well as fill me in on some of the more recent Protes'tant history.