

# **A Time Worth Remembering in the Northern Wisconsin District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod**

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by *Morton A. Schroeder*

## **Preface**

The Northern Wisconsin District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has had a long, interesting, and sometimes turbulent history. Other than the late Pastor Armin E. Engel, it seems no one gave much thought to recording that history. The late Pastor Gustav E. Bergemann, who would have been the man for the season, was mildly encouraged by the Winnebago Conference to undertake the task. But because no firm time limit was ever set, his other responsibilities took precedence, and the work was most likely never even started, much less finished. Mr. Keith D. Lauber, an instructor at Winnebago Lutheran Academy, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, who undertook the thankless task of trying to track down the work, could find nobody who had ever even heard of it. And so this history is a work that has needed writing for a long time.

I was pleased when Pastor Bruce A. McKenney, in his capacity as the Northern Wisconsin District's expeditor for the "Forward in Christ" celebration, asked me to serve on what would become the history subcommittee of the larger group. I was honored when events unfolded and I was asked to write the history.

Although this may seem self-evident, permit me to say that I have, with all due diligence, tried to be scrupulously honest, fair, and circumspect in reporting the events that shaped the district. Older readers will know that some of those events caused the most personal emotions, which are ordinarily kept in check, to surface and sometimes alter forever close human, even family, relationships. I have not gilded the lily; nor have I gone out of my way to sensationalize it. My status as a newcomer in the district—other than the last ten years, I spent my entire adult life and teaching career in the Western Wisconsin and Minnesota districts—has enabled me to reach some degree of probity.

To give the narrative credibility and authenticity—and at the same time lend it an air of immediacy—I have, whenever appropriate, used the words from minutes of meetings held at the time I was writing about. To give proper credit, I have used quotation marks freely, condensing the quotations only when such action would not alter the meaning of the text.

I have one lasting regret. Conferences in the Northern Wisconsin District were deeply interested in the German Lutheran Church of the Diaspora, often referred to as the Polish Mission or the Mission in Poland. Their minutes frequently mention the mission and the work of Missionary William Bodamer and his American contact, Pastor Alfred Maas, and Bodamer was not an infrequent visitor at conference and district meetings. However, lack of substantial and meaningful copy or material from the 1930s and the 1940s forestalled any worthwhile report. The work Pastor John Trapp and Professor Delmar C. Brick did a generation later is largely forgotten today.

Someone should be encouraged to continue the work begun with *A Time Worth Remembering* in order to reconstruct more fully the history of the Northern Wisconsin District, to correct any errors that have managed to insinuate themselves into the text, and to expand it to do justice to the work the district is carrying out as it moves "Forward in Christ" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## The Seed is Sown

The *de jure* history of the Northern Wisconsin District (NWD) of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) began on July 18, 1917. On that day, the new entity exchanged its former status—that of one of the three districts which had made up the original Wisconsin Synod—for its new position as one of the six districts of the recently formed Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, the name which the new body, after several minor changes in its constitution and by-laws, finally adopted in 1919.<sup>i</sup>

The *de facto* history of the district predates its legal history by more than half a century. Records of the oldest member congregations in the district date back to the early 1850s, according to the *Statistical Report of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod* for 1999. Two congregations in the Manitowoc, Wisconsin area were organized soon after the 19<sup>th</sup> century reached its mid-point: St. John in 1851 and Trinity in 1853. Two others were formed shortly thereafter, in 1855: First German, in Manitowoc, and St. John, in Maribel, Wisconsin.<sup>ii</sup> (Unless otherwise indicated, hereafter all Towns [townships], villages, towns, and cities mentioned in this history are in Wisconsin.)

These pioneer congregations were threads in an expanding web of gospel action spinning out from Milwaukee, the nexus of the infant synod. Because barter, trade, and commerce, together with their concomitant handmaids, railroads and highways, had not yet determined the movement of people, much of the settling of the state was governed primarily by geography. Rivers especially, but also Lake Michigan and its appendages like the bay of Green Bay, were not barriers impeding settlers' movement. Instead, they were—as they have been since time immemorial—highways that help people, with all their earthly possessions, reach their distant goals and realize their cherished dreams.

One strand of this Milwaukee web, which found Lake Michigan's shoreline more accommodating than the densely forested lands which lay to the west, already in 1851 began to follow what was called the Green Bay Road. This strand went northward toward and, subsequently, through Cedarburg, Port Washington, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Two Rivers, and Kewaunee. Preaching stations, which would later develop into full-fledged congregations, were begun in these and additional localities. When Ahnapee, later called Algoma, became home to St. Paul Lutheran Church as early as 1862, the gospel had traveled northward 125 miles in twelve years.

This strand, which quite rightfully can be called the Wisconsin Synod's first outreach venture, largely spun by Pastors Johannes Boding and Philipp Koehler<sup>iii</sup>, is described in greater detail in following paragraphs. Suffice it to say at this point that this undertaking was in its own way every bit as trying, terrifying, and traumatic as the African safari of Pastors Arthur Wacker and Edgar Hoenecke, which it preceded by almost 100 years.

When terrain forced detours, this northward-moving strand of the gospel moved inland and proceeded through Forestville, Valmy, and West Jacksonport, finally halting at Liberty Grove, some two miles south of Baileys Harbor. There, in an almost virginal setting, the most northerly congregation in Door County, Christ Lutheran Church, was begun in 1876. The gospel had moved another 75 miles northward in only another dozen or so years.

Other strands which formed the web turned westward from bases in Granville, Freistadt, and Kirchhayn, focusing their earliest outreach efforts on Fond du Lac, Mount Calvary, Appleton, and Green Bay. Preaching stations, many of which would later develop into congregations, were formed in these communities during this same time: from about 1855 to about 1868. (Trinity, the congregation whose location is given as "Appleton" in the 2000

*Yearbook* and the 1999 *Statistical Report* but is located about five miles north of the city, was not organized until 1874. It is interesting to note that Trinity's recorded distance from the city diminishes as the city expands northward in its direction.)

Trinity Lutheran Church, Town Forest, Fond du Lac County, typifies the kind of congregation that flourished at the various stops the missionaries chose as they made their wandering and tentative way through the countryside. The first Lutheran family settled in this general region as early as 1850, finding good ground and drainable, tillable soil in the middle of marshes, ponds, lakes, and meandering creeks and streams. Others joined the original pioneers, and some two years later services were conducted among them and for them by traveling missionaries. The group organized as a congregation on October 1, 1860; the first church building, a white frame structure typical of that time, was dedicated a year later. One of the missionaries responsible for founding the congregation was Ernst August Gottlieb Fachtmann, a Spirit-driven crusader whom we shall hear more of later.

All of the toil and tribulation these early "tramps-for-God" endured was not the result of blind chance. Behind the fears and the failures of these feeble men stood the almighty Lord, the King of Kings, the Master of the untamed wilderness, empowering them and using them as his instruments to further his kingdom. Prominent among these pioneers—and perhaps even preeminent—was Carl F. Goldammer, a man of like spirit with the early disciples, one whose *Weltanschauung* was founded on, built around, and supported by the Great Commission and its promise.

Goldammer's birthday is sure: February 9, 1821. His birthplace is doubtful. According to John Philipp Koehler's *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, Goldammer was from Ursperg, Saxony, Germany. Other church histories repeat Koehler's information. All other sources, including that of the German Information Bureau at the United Nations in New York, place Ursperg (or Ursprung or at least six other variant spellings) in Bavaria. These sources also indicate that Ursperg was not, as first thoughts would lead one to believe, a village or town or city, that is, an incorporated or legal community, but merely some kind of loose communal organization which had formed around a suitable monastery. Through the years, the commune took its name from the monastery, most likely so it could be properly identified for pilgrims, merchants, and other travelers, adopted, and, if and when necessary, defended from haphazard attack.

Goldammer's initial ministerial training was not successful, and he left school because he was unable to master foreign languages. However, when he had determined to travel to America, and forcefully made that determination known, he was given additional training and then declared fit for the ministry. When he arrived in Milwaukee, he was "licensed," according to Koehler's *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, and sent to Newton, near the hamlet of Manitowoc.<sup>iv</sup> Although no known documentation exists, the assumption is that Johann Muehlhaeuser, the first president of the original Wisconsin Synod, was the sole authority behind the license and the assignment. Muehlhaeuser's relationship with newcomers and veterans alike was that of a benevolent despot, the patriarch who usually, if not always, knows best. His wishes were seldom disputed; they were never ignored.

Goldammer was the fifth pastor to sign the original constitution of the original Wisconsin Synod. Ordained during the second meeting of the Wisconsin Synod held at Grace Church in Milwaukee in 1851, Goldammer was a busy and restless man, leaving his imprint everywhere on the history of this and other corners of the spreading web. He served groups in Newtonburg (Town Newton), where he remained until he was succeeded by Wilhelm Streissguth, also called

William Streisguth, in 1855, Manitowoc, Barington, Sheboygan, Burlington, Jefferson, Green Bay, Maple Grove, and additional unnamed and unnumbered preaching stations in between.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Town Liberty, Manitowoc County, is a special case in point, illustrating vividly the positive influence St. John had on this area. For the first 38 years of Trinity's existence, it was served by St. John's pastors: Goldammer, Streissguth, and seven others. According to Trinity's histories, the children of the congregation slogged through sleet and snow and tramped through sunshine and rain to Newton for confirmation instruction. Some children, the histories report, roomed and boarded with members of the Newton congregation.

The development of this congregation in Manitowoc during the Goldammer era illustrates what was happening on a broader scale throughout the region that was to be the home of the Northern Wisconsin District. In 1848, Goldammer began serving a homogeneous group of German Lutherans in the hamlet. Estimates regarding the size of the group are varied and inconclusive. According to a private census, 89 people lived in the village of Manitowoc in 1847. The 1850 national census gives the population of Manitowoc County as 3,712. The village, according to one count, numbered 2,185 by 1855.

Between the last two dates, in 1853, these German Lutherans purchased a lot in the village for \$110.00. To be the site for the fixture church building, it was deeded to the "Trustees of the United Lutheran and Evangelical Church in the Village of Manitowoc, Wisconsin." The congregation adopted a constitution in 1855 and organized as Ev. Lutheran Trinity Congregation of Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Other name changes, some of which even involved the state legislature, were to follow. Goldammer then moved from Newtonburg to Manitowoc and became the congregation's first full-time resident pastor. But ever the restless spirit, Goldammer left Manitowoc in August 1858. He had accepted the call to Burlington.

Most of the people whom Goldammer originally ministered to were sheep without shepherds. Before he arrived in their midst, many of them had discovered that feeding on God's Word, even without a shepherd to lead them to green pastures and still waters, was spiritually more satisfying than unwelcome fasting. They considered Hebrews 10:25 an important directive: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another." Others had organized themselves into loose groups which today would probably not be recognized as congregations.

Whether organized or not, membership in some of these groups was not infrequently a mixed bag, a conglomeration of "unalikes" which strikes contemporary sensibilities as not quite right or not precisely legal. The Germans have a word for a legitimate situation or condition: *echt*; the Yiddish equivalent, adopted by the English language and familiar to many, is *kosher*. "Old" Lutherans, "New" Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Reformed often worshipped together, and sometimes they were joined by Episcopalians. This duke's mixture truthfully reflects the tenor of the time. The Reformed, according to available records, were especially faithful in attending Sunday worship services held in Newtonburg. They did not, however, partake of the Lord's Supper. Goldammer served both homogeneous cadres and heterogeneous groups in Manitowoc and Newtonburg.

Goldammer was not the only pastor in the area who was assigned to, or called by, and subsequently preached to mixed assemblies. The Wilhelm Streissguth who succeeded Goldammer at Newtonburg, after Goldammer had moved into the village of Manitowoc, had studied at Basel, Switzerland, was ordained there, and then sent to America by the Evangelical Church Commission in Switzerland. When he arrived in America in 1848, he was sent to New Glarus to serve a Reformed congregation. The congregation built a log church and dedicated it in

June of 1850 as *Die Reformirte Schweizergemeinde* (Swiss Reformed Church). Although Streissguth is reported to have served the New Glarus congregation until 1854 or 1856, he attended in 1854, 1855, and 1856 the conventions of the Wisconsin Synod at Granville, Milwaukee, and Manitowoc, respectively. Streissguth was accepted as a member of the synod at the Manitowoc convention. Nine years later he was elected its fourth president. After serving one term, he declined re-election and was replaced by Bading, who, elected the second time, held the office from 1867 to 1889.

In spite of what appears to be a sometimes indifferent attitude on Goldammer's part with respect to strict adherence to *echt* Lutheran doctrine, a position and frame of mind which apparently did not extend to the Lord's Supper, Muehlhaeuser seemed to place unlimited trust in him. When Bading, who would later be the Wisconsin Synod's second president, arrived in Milwaukee in July 1853, Muehlhaeuser promptly sent him to Goldammer, then in Newtonburg.

Goldammer's first assignment for Bading boggles the modern mind. The novice, who was fresh from polite, conventional society in Germany, was sent to work the territory to the west of Manitowoc and to establish a field there. The land between Manitowoc and Lake Winnebago, referred to as "the territory west," was uncharted, unmapped, and largely untraveled. It was wilderness; it was primitive, and it was raw. It was peopled by Indians who understood little English and far less German, a smattering of farmers busy clearing fields for what they hoped would in some distant future yield some kind of harvest, and some folks intent on biblical-sized catches of fish from the big water.<sup>v</sup>

In the beginning, Goldammer's zeal proved to be both a blessing and a bane to the infant synod. It was a blessing because many Christians, especially those who existed on the fringes of civilization, were found, preached to, baptized, and communed. It was a bane because efforts to find capable and God-fearing pastors willing to serve the ever—and rapidly—growing number of preaching places, parishes, congregations, which were makeshift at best and desperate at worst, simply were not and did not meet the growing demands.<sup>vi</sup> Later, that ardor became a second blessing. The pastor-shortage problem led in God's good time to the decision to build a worker-training school in Watertown.

Goldammer served other congregations after his Burlington charge, retiring from the active ministry in 1896. After he preached his last sermon on Palm Sunday in Beaver Dam, where he had been pastor, he moved to Omaha, Nebraska, to live out his days with his son. There he died on June 29, 1896.

Goldammer's life, beliefs, and professional career can be summarized in two sentences: one, he was not strongly confessional; two, he was a Spirit-driven soul whom God used to found many congregations.

During the summer of 1855, Bading and Koehler, who had arrived in Milwaukee on December 2, 1854 and was ordained at the synod convention in 1855, undertook the exploratory outreach trip referred to above. When Koehler had arrived in America, he, after a series of more or less hit-and-miss assignments, was assigned to a congregation in Town Addison, near West Bend. Using that familiar place as their home base, those two hardy men traveled in a northeasterly direction, slowly working toward Lake Michigan. Because necessity frequently makes strange bed fellows, they found themselves, when they were in New Holstein, the guests of so-called "Forty-Eighters," free-thinkers who had participated in the 1848 Revolution in Prussia. The Forty-Eighters had little or nothing in common with the missionaries, but they were gracious hosts, and they gave their guests food, shelter, directions, and other useful information. Best of all, they furnished the missionaries with a wagon and oxen so they could continue their

journey. When “road”<sup>vii</sup> conditions degenerated to nothingness and made further travel by wagon impossible, the missionaries continued as they had begun-on foot. They eventually reached Ahnapee. Like Joshua and Caleb of old, they returned with a glowing report: the land is largely open, the soil is good, and the people are amenable. “Let us go up,” they urged. All of this is territory which will in 1917 become an essential part of the Northern Wisconsin District. No report of the Bading-Koehler exploratory trip, as far as this writer knows, is extant. Most likely, none was ever written.

Ernst August Gottlieb Fachtmann and Eduard Moldehnke, like Goldammer, Bading, and Koehler, were enthusiastic proponents of outreach in a region that later became an integral part of the Northern Wisconsin District. A mere skeletal outline of Fachtmann’s activities shows him to be a man on the go, one who was in tune with nature, travel, his fellow man, one who had a burning desire to wed his special gifts to the service of his Lord. In September 1857 he obtained leave of absence from his congregation to make a self-funded solo mission tour north of Milwaukee. Other tours followed. His success in reaching the unchurched and the churchless in the Lake Winnebago area in east-central Wisconsin prompted the synod during its 1858 meeting at St. John’s Ev. Lutheran Church in Milwaukee to call him as its first *Reiseprediger*. A rough but usable English translation of this German word is “missionary-at-large” or “traveling vacancy preacher”.<sup>viiiix</sup> The work at hand was to be done on a part-time basis only.

A *nonpareil* fisher of people, Fachtmann made an early journey that took him from Milwaukee north to Port Washington and Sheboygan, which was then a booming lakeport, west to Fond du Lac, north to Oshkosh, Menasha, Neenah, and farther west to New London and Hortonville.<sup>x</sup> On this trip, he organized St. Peter Lutheran Church in Fond du Lac with the considerable assistance of the Findeisens, who were Episcopalian, and the Grommes. Both wealthy and prominent Fond du Lac families, they were eager to help gospel outreach in any way they could. The Rat River, one portion of Fachtmann’s highway from Neenah to New London, is so piddling today one wonders what its draft was in the 1850s and 1860s. The second and much more navigable leg was the Wolf River. Both the Wolf and the Embarrass River, which is today little more than another minor creek in this region, were used between the 1850s and the early 1900s for travel and cruising timber. Other expeditions took the peripatetic Fachtmann as far north as Algoma, completely around Lake Winnebago, only its extreme northern shore excepted, to Appleton, a new town founded with the help of Lawrence Institute (later “university,” then “college,” and today again “university”), which itself had been founded in 1847, and then to the country church at Town Ellington northwest of Appleton.

Excursions beyond the confines of what is today the Northern Wisconsin District took Fachtmann to Watertown, Columbus, Beaver Dam, Hustisford, and Horicon. The journey which found him leaving Wisconsin, never to return, took him to La Crosse. There, in what was to be his last Wisconsin charge, he stayed less than two years. Pulling him ever westward was his soul-dominating *wanderlust*. That personal westward-ho drive finally ended in the St. Paul-Minneapolis-St. Anthony, Minnesota area. His duties as pastor of old Trinity Church, St. Paul and acting president of the Minnesota Synod severed further relations with the Northern Wisconsin District and his further inclusion in this history.

Eduard E. Moldehnke, his wife, and their child came to America in the fall of 1861. Since he had been ordained in Germany, he was able to begin work with the Wisconsin Synod immediately upon arrival. His three-fold assignment staggers the imagination and stretches the bounds of credulity almost to the breaking point. Called first to succeed Fachtman as *Reiseprediger*, Moldehnke left eastern and central Wisconsin to work the Mississippi Valley

beyond the territorial limits of what would be the Northern Wisconsin District. By 1863 he was reporting for 22 preaching stations. His letters to the folks on the home front provided general clues to the number of people who were reached by the *Reisepredigt* program. Second, he was the only theological teacher at the school set up in Watertown. Third, he was editor of the German-language periodical which the synod began publishing in 1865: *Gemeinde-Blatt* (congregational letter or congregational news).

When Moldehnke experienced discipline problems at Watertown, the board of directors of the school felt it necessary to call an “inspector” (dean of students) to help fix that problem. Adolph Hoenecke was called to be that inspector and also theology teacher. Moldehnke took the offered relief to be overkill he could not in good conscience accept, and in 1866 he abruptly left the Wisconsin Synod, leaving his duties as traveling vacancy preacher, theology professor, and editor in someone else’s hands. After a brief tour of duty in Prussia, the siren song of the New World proved to be too sweet to ignore. He returned to America and became an important and prominent member of the New York Ministerium, serving commendably as pastor, writer, and administrator. He later served two terms as president of the General Council. Humanly speaking, the New York Ministerium’s great gain was, beyond all question, the Wisconsin Synod’s great loss.

Others were willing to accept the call or assignment as *Reiseprediger*. A Pastor E. Mayerhoff began working in the northern reaches of the state in 1879.<sup>xi</sup> Three years later, Pastor Gottlieb A. Thiele was called. He reported that he served twelve mission stations in the mining area that lay on or near the boundary between Wisconsin and Michigan’s upper peninsular. Statistics regarding the number of people involved in these mission stations are no longer available, but there is reason to believe, basing calculations on rough, incomplete population projections by civil authorities, that the numbers were small. After two stints as *Reiseprediger*, Thiele accepted a call into the congregational ministry. Following several pastorates, he was called to the seminary where he served from 1887 to 1900.

Pastor Herman Monhardt succeeded Thiele. Born September 9, 1860, in the Canton of Bern, Switzerland, Monhardt came to America with his family and settled in Sheboygan. After his ordination on November 18, 1883, he began serving some fifteen preaching stations in and around Escanaba, Michigan. An almost tireless pilgrim in the wilderness, Monhardt kept detailed records of the distances he traveled to carry God’s Word to distant, isolated, forgotten settlements. According to his log, he covered nearly 3800 miles in the first seven months: 3012 by railroad, 508 by horse and buggy, 102 by boat, 175 on foot. In 1885, he accepted a call to Caledonia. Monhardt died two months after his 76th birthday. He had served 53 years in the preaching ministry.

Pastor Johannes Ziebell, who succeeded Monhardt as missionary-at-large in 1885, worked in Michigan’s upper peninsula and also in northern Wisconsin around the crossroads community of Naugart. Apparently not a very fertile field at that time, today Naugart seems to be little more than a name on the map about a dozen miles southwest of Merrill and six miles southeast of Hamburg. Inquiries directed to the church (or, quite possible, misdirected) were not answered. Nonetheless, according to the 1999 *Statistical Report*, St. Paul, a congregation which today belongs to the Wisconsin River Valley Conference of the Western Wisconsin District of WELS, was founded there in 1861. Most recent figures show that St. Paul has about 137 baptized members, and its average Sunday attendance is about 47. Ziebell’s later travels took him to Chilton in Winnebago County, the area Boding had visited, serviced, and left some 30

years earlier. Ziebell also surveyed several other sites which are outside the boundaries of what is today the NWD.

There was tare in the wheat. In 1863, a Pastor L. Nietmann “had to be suspended from the office of the preaching ministry, He is guilty of various criminal infractions not only here but also in Germany. He was forced to make a confession because he could no longer hide his misdeeds with lies. As a result his congregation in Newton let him go.” Nietmann, if nothing else, was a persistent fraud. But he must have been a charmer, too. After he declared himself unfit for the ministry and promised never to seek work in any Wisconsin Synod congregation, “he worked his way into the congregation at Golden Lake, which just last year took up membership in our synod. Repeated attempts to rescue the congregation from the claws of the wolf were fruitless, because the congregation declared it would rather have nothing to do with the synod than to dismiss Pastor L. Nietmann.”

The hardships these early missionaries-at-large experienced lie beyond our comprehension. They are even outside our competence to imagine, simply because most of us, by and large isolated from hardship and trauma, enjoy the good life of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a precious and priceless gift bestowed on us by our gracious God. Most of these men, and the brave women who exchanged the relative comforts of the Old World for the unexpected indignities of the New to become wives, mothers, and jilts-of-all-trades, came from backgrounds that in no way even tentatively began to prepare them for what lay ahead.

The simple fact is this: These early gospel porters—and many other early settlers—were hoodwinked by the railroads and their partners in deception, large eastern banks who financed the projects and slick land agents who were glib enough to persuade a deer to leave a salt lick. Anxious to sell millions of acres of land which the federal government had awarded them, the railroad barons and the land agents described America in glowing terms. They painted it as a welcoming, friendly, and open land of promise. Their advertising posters were crude and blatant deception.

The eager immigrants came to a new land whose geography and topography were not only unknown but downright hostile. The weather was brutal; none of these early arrivals had ever heard of, much less experienced, North America’s continental climate: the searing heat of its summers, the numbing cold of its winters.

Footpaths, alleyways, and streets were not uncommon and generally passable in villages, towns, and cities. However, until the automobile made its appearance, roadways or highways were few and far between; in many areas, they were non-existent. And even after cars were fairly common, inter-city roads were woefully ill-built and ill-kept. They were muddy in spring, dusty in summer, and snowbound in winter. The neatly-printed and even romantic-sounding words on today’s road signs—“Plank Road” and “Military Road” are two that come to mind—belie their true nature at the time they were originally coined and used. Contemporary transportation machines—trains and boats, which robbed people of their privacy, and wagons pulled by oxen or horses—were slow and unreliable. More often than not, foot power was the basic and best medium of travel power. (Please confer Endnote 7.)

Almost every other aspect of ordinary life posed overwhelmingly difficult problems: planting, growing, and storing food; obtaining a basic education; getting medical and dental help. The fundamental events in an individual’s life—birth, maturation, courtship, marriage, parenthood, old age, death, burial—were problems difficult to deal with. Not one of the particulars in this catalog mentions the original inhabitants then called Indians, now Native



Americans—who, when put upon, retaliated silently and swiftly to keep what they deemed theirs.

### **Sprouts Appear: Conferences Form**

The seeds Goldammer, Streissguth, Bading, Koehler, Fachtmann, Moldehnke, and the others had sown began to sprout. Congregations were formed in widely different and differing kinds of localities, places which stretched from lakefront Manitowoc on the east, urban Fond du Lac on the south, rural Fremont on the west, and remote Marquette, Michigan in the north. The pastors of these congregations, in order to experience each other's burdens and savor each other's blessings, formed conferences. The kinds they created depended entirely upon the experiences they brought to bear, local situations, and prevailing circumstances. The original names of these conferences were the Southern Conference, which centered around Fond du Lac, and the Northwest Conference, later called the Northern Conference, which pivoted around Manitowoc. The latter name was short lived; in 1922 the conference petitioned the synod to permit it to change its name to the Manitowoc Conference. The petition was granted, and the new name was approved and adopted.

The clergy scheduled regular *pastoral* conferences to study in depth doctrinal matters and to deliberate thoughtfully on what in the early days were commonly referred to in circuit and conference minutes as “questions of casuistry”.<sup>xii</sup> Also on the agenda were matters of synod-wide concern: missions, both stateside and foreign; finances; education; and the seemingly never-ending problems of classroom and pulpit-supply-and-demand.

Lay members of member congregations and the clergy met at delegate conferences to discuss matters of doctrine, practice, and business affairs which concerned their local congregations and the synod and the church at large.

Some years later, depending upon the number of Lutheran elementary schools in a given area, *pastor-teacher* conferences were formed. The Fox River Valley Conference, as far as this history was able to determine, was the first to approach this idea. The minutes of November 14, 1961 state, “The visitor [the title given the chairman, the president, or the presiding officer of the conference] brought up the matter of a Pastor-Teacher Conference and the motion to have such a conf. prevailed.”

It is strange that so many years had passed before this concept was adopted, for it was then and remains today in harmony with one of the very first resolutions ever passed by the original Wisconsin Synod some 111 years before: *congregations shall do everything within their power to foster Christian education*. The first of this kind of conference in the NWD was held seventeen months later, on April 29, 1963. The place was Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Appleton. The attendance of 61 teachers and 26 pastors was considered praiseworthy. Area Lutheran high school teachers would be included later.

A social variation of this concept was fostered in the Rhinelander area. Pastor-teacher picnics were held in an effort to bridge whatever interpersonal relationship gap actually did exist or was merely thought to exist. In the Manitowoc area, pastor picnics had been mentioned for many years. In the mid 1950s, pastor-teacher picnics were broached.

Sunday school teacher *institutes*, attended by lay people eager to hone their native but unpolished teaching skills, were held in some of the conferences in the district. They were known to attract a large, diverse, Spirit-driven constituency. At times, speakers were brought in from some distance to satisfy the desires and needs of the teachers.

In February 1955, the Fox River Valley Conference proposed the idea of a high school conference, one that would be separate from that of the elementary schools conference. The conference resolved the following: “We furthermore hold that they should endeavor, if necessary, to call into being a Luth. High School Teachers’ Conference for upbuilding and uplifting in their arduous tasks.”

This organization has evolved into a nation-wide group, embracing the faculties of the 24 existing schools: 21 area high schools, one alternative school, and two preparatory schools. It meets each February in Milwaukee. The principals of these schools also meet annually. Their meetings, basted each year by a different school, are held in March.

Two more high schools are in the planning stage today: Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School near Denver, Colorado and Southern Lutheran Academy, which owns a 70-acre parcel of land between Orlando and Tampa, Florida. Whether the school will be located on this site remains to be seen. Neither of these projected schools is yet listed in the *WELS 2000 Yearbook*.

Whether pastor-teacher conferences were a success or a failure is an open question. Minutes of various meetings tell a story which defies definitive answer. Perhaps the answer lies in the actions which were taken. The Fox River Valley Conference, for example, discontinued these meetings after an eminently fair appraisal. During the meeting in September 1989, the group adapted a motion to have the secretary poll the faculties of the Lutheran elementary schools to determine how the teachers felt about the annual pastor-teacher conference. The poll results were announced during the January 1990 meeting. Twenty of 24 faculties responded to this question: “Should we continue our April Pastor-Teacher Conference?” Eight faculties responded favorably, ten negatively, and two tied. The teachers as individuals voted 81 to 50 to drop the conference. A motion to discontinue the joint conference carried.

Dropping these meetings surprised few members. For a number of years people had been asking an uncomfortable, vexing question: “Has the pastor-teacher conference fulfilled its purpose?” Two comments found in the conference minutes seem to provide an answer: “Pastors tend to monopolize the discussion” and “Women teachers seldom participate in the discussion.” Perhaps the seeds of dissolution had been planted already in May 1962 at Grace Lutheran Church in Sugar Bush. Forming a program committee of two pastors and two teachers was a positive step, but its egalitarian quality was most likely negated by the action taken regarding conference officers: “The motion carried to have the Pastoral Conference officers serve as officers for this conference.”

There is a sadness connected with this turn of events. During 1976, 1977, 1978, and 1980, the average attendance at the joint meetings was 112 teachers and 36 pastors and vicars. Sectional meetings, introduced in 1978, boosted the number of teachers who attended to 126.

Matters considered primarily at pastoral and delegate conferences will be discussed in detail in a later chapter called “Conference Concerns.”

The 153 congregations that make up the five conferences of the Northern Wisconsin District in the year 2000 should not be considered the once-and-always membership of the district. Doctrine, location, geography, transportation, and proximity are reasons that cause change. And so, through the years, conferences in the Northern Wisconsin District changed in name, shape, size, and number—this when a conference divided or when congregations and their pastors and teachers transferred from one conference to another, when congregations changed their synodical affiliation, when two or more parishes merged to form one, or when congregations simply ceased to exist.

Major conference alignments occurred in 1986 and 1987 when nine congregations and their pastors and, later, the schools and their teachers transferred from the Winnebago Conference to the Fox River Valley Conference: 1. Bethel, Menasha, Donald Ninmer; 2. Grace, Neenah, Richard Frost; 3. Immanuel, Neenah (Town Clayton), Dale Zwiig; 4. Trinity, Neenah, Douglas Engelbrecht and Greg Otterstatter; 5. St. John, Fremont (East Bloomfield), Norbert Gieschen; 6. St. Peter, Weyauwega, Leonard Pankow and Paul Huth; 7. St. Paul, Winneconne, Philip Gieschen and Jeffrey Schone; 8 and 9. Zion, Readfield and St. Peter, Larsen, John Brandt.

At the far northern end of the district, Immanuel Lutheran Church in Saulte Ste. Marie, Michigan, founded in 1900, was for almost eight decades a member of the Northern Wisconsin District. Today it is a member of the Michigan District. According to Pastor Gordon Peters, its petition and that of Our Savior in Cedarville, Michigan were considered and granted by both districts in 1996.<sup>xiii</sup> The Lake Superior Conference, reduced to only 19 active pastors, was reorganized from three to two circuits during the district convention of 1998.

St. Lucas Lutheran Church in Kewaskum is a perfect example of a congregation which changed conference membership because transportation patterns changed. The Rev. Timothy A. Henning, pastor of St. Lucas, described the change in e-mail dated March 2, 2000: "St. Lucas was a member of the Northern Wisconsin District until the district convention of 1992. Although we are in Washington County (by about 1 mile) and the county line was the border between districts, Kewaskum went with Northern Wisconsin because that was the way the railroad went. According to the stories I heard from older members here, it was easier to get to Fond du Lac on the Chicago and Northwestern, than to go to Milwaukee.

"However, in the late 1980's a four-lane bypass on Hwy 45 was built around West Bend. This cut about 15 minutes off the trip to Milwaukee. It is now about 45-60 minutes to anywhere in Milwaukee. It is much easier for called workers to attend conferences in the Milwaukee area than to drive up to Rhinelander, etc. Another factor is that we are virtually a 'suburb' of West Bend and it is good to be in the same district as they are."

Conference membership also changes when congregations, for any number of reasons, dissolve or, as one local historian puts it, "become defunct." Trinity Lutheran Church, Town Vinland, Winnebago County, was founded with high hopes in 1904, buying its house of worship from a sectarian group which had dissolved. Through the years the congregation worshipped in its modest home located at Mears Corners at the intersection of Highway 45 and County Trunk GG. The hopes of the founders were never realized. When changing economic conditions forced farmers to leave their land, they transferred to city congregations. By 1962 membership was reduced to seventeen families, some of whom were fourth and fifth generation families, with 31 communicants and fewer than a dozen children. The congregation voted to close shop—suddenly, according to some members—and the last service was held on February 4, 1962. Because the congregation did not want its abandoned church building put to any demeaning use, it was razed. Passers-by are not aware that God Himself was present at that spot for 58 years.<sup>xiv</sup>

Passers-by are also unaware that once upon a time a Wisconsin Synod church, one-half of dual parish of Greenleaf-Kasson, graced the northwest corner of the intersection of County Trunk K in Calumet County and Long Lake Road, the county-line road running north and south between Calumet and Manitowoc counties. Abandoned by its members and forgotten by almost everyone else when the congregations merged, its location was pointed out by a woman who had lived in the neighborhood for some years. Little more than large pieces of foundation stone and oversized bricks that had formed the lower part of the outside walls remained scattered about

when a researcher for a WELS periodical visited the site in December 1997 to gather information on the life and times of Pastor Wilmer Valleskey.

Sometimes common sense and pragmatism played major roles in a congregation's demise. Town Forest in Fond du Lac County had for as long as the oldest members of the community could recall supported two congregations: St. John and St. Paul. On December 31, 1950, St. John held its last service in its own church building. Its members had decided it would be a wiser move to affiliate with St. Paul, its sister congregation, than to try to maintain its own church building which, located four miles southwest of St. Paul, was in immediate need of major repairs. "Four miles" was once a far cry, especially when winter's blasts roared across the prairies or spring rains turned the roads into quagmires. By 1950, when almost everyone owned at least one automobile, it had become merely a stone's throw. The origins and early history of St. John are, it is tragic to report, lost. Most of the church's records were destroyed by fire. The few that remain indicate that the congregation existed at least as early as 1859. This would be about the time Fachtmann was scouring this part of the wilderness.

The crossroads hamlet of Zittau is 24 miles southwest of Appleton on State Highway 110. Originally platted in Town Winchester (and so reported in early literature), but because of realigning and renaming in 1873, now in the Town of Wolf River, Winnebago County, it is the home of Immanuel Lutheran Church. Founded on February 25, 1860 and accepted into membership by the Wisconsin Synod on June 17, 1862 during the convention held at Columbus, Immanuel is an interesting example of a change in conference membership caused by synodical change. It is absorbing because of its connections with one of the revered patriarchs of the Wisconsin Synod. Today a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), Immanuel was the home church of Johannes Peter Carl Meyer, the place where he was received into the kingdom of God through baptism. Born in Zittau in the rudest of parsonages to Pastor Johannes Meyer and his wife Meta nee Behnken, this member of the church triumphant is known to many Wisconsin Synod members as Prof. Joh. P. Meyer, who for 44 years was a much respected and venerated teacher at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Members of the Meyer family who fell victim to an epidemic of what was called "black pox" are buried in the humble church cemetery. Their headstones are illegible, defaced by the ravages of time.

Other mergers and transfers took place, especially in the general area along Lake Michigan between Sheboygan on the south and Manitowoc on the north. The mergers were St. Paul (Newton) and St. John (Newtonburg); St. John (Hika) and St. Peter (Centreville); St. John (Reedsville) and St. James (then Maple Grove, now Reedsville); Fontenoy and Denmark. Churches at Haven and Town Mosel joined the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) because the Wisconsin Synod, for some unknown reason, supposedly failed to supply each a pastor.<sup>xv</sup> A report taken from the Manitowoc Pastoral Conference minutes of February 1955 differs in substance. It states that after Pastor William Pankow retired from the ministry on his doctor's orders, St. Peter joined the LC-MS because "it felt it could be served cheaper this way."

Farther north, Trinity in Minocqua and First Lutheran in Woodruff merged. Trinity held a "last service" service and ceremony as it prepared to vacate its old building in 1973. Less than a year later, it dedicated its new church and parsonage; on May 22, 1977, it held a special mortgage-burning ceremony. The word "Woodruff" is unceremoniously crossed out in the listing of "towns of congregations of Rhinelander Conference" in the minutes ledger of that conference.

These conferences were—and continue to be—a blessing to the church. They stimulate intellectual and spiritual growth and foster camaraderie among "the brethren," a term of affection used almost universally by and amok WELS clergy. Conferences also give the corporate body,

the synod, a convenient method of communicating with its constituent parts. An instance of this occurred as early as 1877. Hoping to exercise stricter doctrinal control over its components, the synod began a system of conference visitations in its eight conferences: Southern, Dodge-Washington, Central, Winnebago, Northern, Northwestern, Mississippi, and Chippewa Valley.

All of these conferences predate the district. Some were organized many years before the present Northern Wisconsin District came into being. The Winnebago Conference is a definitive example. Organized already in 1877, it was a formal entity forty years before the Northern Wisconsin District was formed. And by 1892, 25 years before the district was formed, Winnebago was one of the ten conferences which made up the Wisconsin Synod at that time. The ten were those that existed in 1877 and the two new ones of Milwaukee and Nebraska.

During the same year, on October 11, 1892, the new Joint Synod further organized itself by forming a federal union and then dividing into three districts based on original, state-synod lines: Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. It is important to keep in mind, however, that each district enjoyed its own distinct identity and legal standing for 25 more years. Two years later, in 1894, the final territorial reorganization of the Joint Synod was completed. During this reorganization, all of some but only bits of others of the conferences given in the two rosters above became the three districts which were formed from the original Wisconsin Synod. The boundaries which defined states as political entities within the legal parameters of the United States were not rigorously observed. Part of the upper peninsula of Michigan, for example, was included in the Northern Wisconsin District. Although not an integral part of this history, another illustration is the inclusion of bits and pieces of eastern Minnesota within the Western Wisconsin District. Even more confusing is the inclusion of congregations in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin in the Wisillowa Conference of that same Western Wisconsin District.

The following information, similar to the material given above, is also not an integral part of the history of the Northern Wisconsin District. It is included, however, for the sake of clarity and completeness. During the 1900 meeting of the Wisconsin District of the Joint Synod, a representative of the Nebraska Conference, which was then a division of the Wisconsin District, asked that the Nebraska Conference be permitted to form itself as a separate district. Its request was based on its unique history, one which guarded its independence jealously and zealously and held suspect all forms of centralization. The request was granted, subject to the now-mysterious provision that a commission determine whether the new entity would be a district of the original Wisconsin Synod or a district of the newly-formed Joint Synod. During the meeting held on August 29, 1901, near Firth, Nebraska, the former Nebraska Conference constituted itself as the fourth district of the Joint Synod. Its action was formalized in 1904, and it, as the Evangelical Lutheran District Synod of Nebraska, became an integral part of the synod. Like its siblings—Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin—Nebraska remained an independent body until 1917.

The Fox River Valley Conference, the Manitowoc Conference, and the Northern Conference, which divided and now is two separate and distinct conferences—the Rhinelander Conference and the Lake Superior Conference—also predate the founding of the Northern Wisconsin District. Today, the Northern Wisconsin District consists of these four conferences and Winnebago, referred to above.

Conferences which formed on the outer edges of the district suffered unique and serious problems. Attendance at conference meetings was often a major, frustrating, debilitating, and sometimes divisive matter. In the mid and late 1950s, the Rhinelander Conference minutes regretfully reported the following: “Due to only four pastors being present [at Enterprise], there was no session of the conference on Tuesday afternoon.” When the four pastors who did attend

found out that there were “no papers prepared,” they discussed the possibility of going “into a larger conference” and adjourned at 11:45 a.m. On another occasion, the secretary entered this rueful item: “Because pastoral duties prevented several men from coming on Monday, conference was held on Tues. only.” The Tuesday session, which included the dinner hour and informal discussion, was brief; it adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

The Lake Superior Conference experienced the same attendance problems that hectorated the Rhinelander group. The minutes of the October 19, 1932 meeting at Ford River, Michigan state this: The “conference deploras the fact that some of the brethren remain absent from conference [meetings] and do not excuse their absence.” This conference seemed to be less understanding and less tolerant about absenteeism than Rhinelander. The minutes of the meeting held on June 4, 1946 at Crivitz report the following in quite unmistakable terms: “That the Secretary inform all those absent delegates as being recorded as unexcused and to remind them of their Christian duty toward this conference.”

Although not on the fringes of the district, absenteeism was a problem also in the Winnebago Conference. During the meeting of February 3, 1948, the secretary was instructed to send cards to absent members “with the following notation: ‘We noted your absence and lack of excuse.’” Nineteen lay delegates missed the June 1948 meeting held in Oshkosh. This pattern of absences, not only of laymen but also of pastors, continued in following meetings. In the July 1951 meeting, which was also held in Oshkosh, there were present 23 delegates, four teachers, 23 pastors; absent were thirteen pastors, eighteen delegates, and ten teachers. In summary, 45% of the requisite membership was absent. On July 27, 1953, 43% of the required membership was absent. On June 25, 1961, in the midst of synodical and inter-synodical meetings, and during a time of heightened crisis in the synod and the Synodical Conference, the Winnebago Delegate Conference roll call revealed the following: 25 pastors present, nineteen absent; 30 lay delegates present, fourteen congregations not represented.<sup>xvi</sup>

The Fox River Valley Conference was not immune. In a slightly humorous vein, the secretary noted in the minutes of April 10, 1956, “90% of the pastors had trouble finding the place.” “The place” was St. Paul, Zachow. Six years later, only 22 pastors attended a conference meeting held at Valmy. Of the fifteen who were absent, six were regarded as unexcused. As late as September 15, 1970, at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Black Creek, the secretary recorded this plaintive comment: “It was noted that none of the men with regularly assigned papers was ready and present. Looking at the alternates, it was found that only C. Schlei was ready with a report.” The next meeting of the conference did not chastise the secretary for being too forthright.

More than any other conference, the Manitowoc group seemed to be largely insulated from absenteeism and the stigma attached to it. The minutes of any given conference meeting list members who were present and members who were absent from that meeting, but they do not dwell on “excused” or “unexcused.” Surprisingly large numbers are recorded: 90 delegates attended a meeting in 1921. The following year, “about 100” were present. To be expected, bad weather occasionally disrupted normal routines. “Because of cold weather only a few brethren were present [at Two Rivers], thus no formal session in the evening of the 17th [January 1916].” This happened again two years later. Weather became less of a threat as transportation improved.

The gravity of the attendance problem in the past is apparent to anyone who reads even a minimum number of conference minutes. When read from cover to cover, the ledgers appear to reveal a pattern of casual unconcern. Some called workers attended meetings only infrequently; others missed helter-skelter. Some were excused by their peers. Others were sent stern letters of rebuke. Some chided their colleagues when they were rebuked; others even required an

explanation for being rebuked. They asked, "What constitutes appropriate reason for being absent from conference?" For the faithful, those members who "ride fast through night and wind" to get to conference meetings on time, the matter was one of grave concern. But no matter what actions the faithful took, they felt they were regarded by some of the delinquents as super-pious saints who, according to those same delinquents, regard themselves as superior to others.

The Lake Superior Conference considered proper excuses a correct exercise of Christian love. Failure to excuse was cause for reprimand. One secretary was instructed to notify one of the members that the conference did "not understand the character of [his] 'much work.'" On another occasion, the chairman and the secretary were requested to admonish a brother for his negligence in attending conference; the chairman was to reprimand the offender in person, the secretary in writing.

Transportation was another problem for the teachers and the pastors who served on the edges of the district. A note dated January 16, 1929, written by M.W.C. (Melvin W. Croll), who was serving as secretary *pro tem*, and delivered to long time secretary Paul C. Eggert, gives a hint of the woes the early pastors who were located in the northern reaches of the district experienced. Croll wrote, "Never heard why you did not come, but thought the train wreck had much to do with it; also snow." On another occasion, a Rev. Roepke was late "because of train connection."

A footnote Croll appended reveals another unresolved, nagging problem, one which today seems inconsequential: reimbursement for travel expenses. In 1927, those delegates who traveled by rail were told to charge the rail fare. Those who traveled by car were told to charge three cents a mile for themselves and a penny for others who rode with them. This resolution was rescinded later and replaced with a substitute: two cents and a penny, respectively. Croll's note suggested a form of relief: "Travelling expenses were 1.80 per person. The congregation collected 17.35 which reduced the amount considerably." Four years later, when the entire conference decided to travel to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, the secretary, who was in charge of travel arrangements, reported that the equalized expenses amounted to \$3.26 per person.

The problem of traveling expenses, which included train fare, automobile expenditures for those who owned cars, meals en route, riders, and the tricky puzzle of equalization of cash outlays, came to a head on October 19, 1932 at Ford River, Michigan. Then and there the entire matter spread beyond its defined banks and overflowed into the general topic of budgets. It then flooded unchecked to the wider segment of budgetary allotments: equal distribution of synodical funds. The conference, shoring up its own position, pointed out that at that time the Northern Wisconsin District, according to the general treasurer's report, was expected to contribute 22% of the synodical budget. In return, it received only 6.8% of the funds in the home mission treasury: \$17, 000.00, the smallest appropriation of any district. For every 22 sandbags it provided to assist others, it received less than seven from others for any assistance it needed. The members added that they could have asked for more, but they "modestly refrained from applying for the same due to the present financial distress of synod." For the benefit of a wider audience, they appended this note: "The travelling missionaries, as we have them in our district, must labor under the added burden of expence which devolves upon them by reason of extensive automobile" [*sic*]. The resolution ended with this plea: "Our request to the Honorable Board of Trustees is if possible to exempt our missionaries from further cuts."

This same meeting passed a resolution which was eminently reasonable to the people involved. In retrospect, it seems harsh to those of us who read it today: "[We] go on record as being in favor of discontinuing Northwestern Acedemy [*sic*] at Mobridge, S.D. and cut the salary

of Professors, but not that of the missionaries in cutting down expenses of synod because the closing of this institution will not hinder the growth of the Kingdom of God..." This resolution was passed a mere four years after the academy had been opened, and only one class had been graduated. Hans Kollar Moussa (referred to in greater detail in the chapter dealing with area Lutheran high schools), whose brainchild these academies were, must have been appalled.

When this conference tried something novel and quite forward looking in the fall of 1936, the travail of travel returned. The members decided their meetings would be held at Whittler's Camp, Au Train Lake, Au Train, Michigan. Anticipating problems, and simultaneously trying to head them off, the meeting during which the plans were made resolved that the brethren should make an "honest effort to 'double-up' whenever possible." A warning was added: "Any pastor who drives to conference for his own or his family's convenience or pleasure will be given 1 cent per mile." "Convenience," "pleasure," and "1 cent per mile" are underlined in the minutes ledger.

The conferences on the periphery of the synod also experienced difficulties in keeping a full roster of pastors and, to a lesser degree, teachers. With the dual exception of Pastors Fred Bergfeld and Marvin Radtke, pastors and teachers moved into and out of the Rhinelander Conference with almost clocklike regularity. When Bergfeld died August 31, 1977 and Radtke accepted the call as the WELS first mission counselor to the South Atlantic District in the same year, their combined years of service to the conference totaled 65.

Radtke served as pastor of Christ Ev. Lutheran Church, Eagle River, from May 1956 to August 1977. During those 21 years, he served the conference in many different roles and many different capacities. He was elected circuit pastor in 1959, a position he held for three years in his own elected right and then on and off at the beck and call of the district president. Especially vivid in Radtke's heart and mind are two items: 1) his fifteen years as chairman of the mission board of the NTWD, a position he was able to enhance when he got his pilot's license and ferried people hither and yon, and 2) his two terms as pastoral advisor to the national board of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society.

The Taped Service Program (TSP) was a Radtke initiative. After the rupture with the LC-MS, Radtke helped research and develop TSP in response to many requests from isolated groups and military personnel. According to Radtke, Pastor Orvin Sommers in Oshkosh was also involved in TSP.<sup>xvii</sup> However, four women in the Eagle River congregation did most of the grunt work. They kept the materials fresh and saw to it that no tape lingered long in town. They are the unsung and unnamed heroines of this project. According to Radtke, over 50 congregations were established through the use of taped services.

Told elsewhere in this history is Radtke's warmest memory: that of the story of the fractured Tomahawk church and the minority orphan group which the Rhinelander Conference adopted.

Radtke and his wife live in retirement in Hayward, and he is still eager to reminisce.

Like Bergfeld and Radtke in the Rhinelander Conference, Pastor Theophil Hoffmann was tenure-unique in the Lake Superior Conference. At the May 1968 Lake Superior Pastor-Teacher Conference, the chairman announced that Hoffmann had spent 40 years at Gladstone, Michigan, serving that congregation and the one in Rapid River, Michigan. But he missed the opportunity to tell a famously good story: When Hoffmann was installed in Gladstone in November 1928, the congregation told him that "they were looking for someone permanent. He took it [the injunction] literally."



There were others who stayed longer than to catch a trout. Pastor Paul C. Eggert was elected secretary of the Lake Superior Conference four years after the district was formed. He wrote the first minutes in impeccable German; later, when times had changed, he wrote the minutes in impeccable English. During the April 1934 meeting he told the conference in so many words, "Enough is enough." He "resisted all efforts to be retained." His successor had impeccable language to follow.

The tenure problems of the distant conferences stand in unmistakable contrast with the tenure longevity of the Manitowoc Conference. From 1891 to 1999, nine pastors, selected at random, served nine congregations 324 years; each spent an average of 36 years in his congregation. The longest span was the 43 years William Schlei served Saint Peter Ev. Lutheran Church, at Collins, 13 miles east of Chilton.

Teacher tenure was also a thing to be prized. Eight teachers, again randomly selected, served eight school 302 years. That is an average of almost 38 years. The two who served the longest were Martin Busse (50 years) and Emil Leitzke (47). They were coworkers for 45 years at St. John Lutheran School, Two Rivers. At the close of the 1999-2000 school year, Dennis Bleick will have completed 33 years at the same school.

Although the Winnebago Conference is not the largest in the district when measured either by number of congregations or baptized souls, it was from earliest times one of the most influential. This may be due to its location. Nearer to the center of the synod than the other conferences—Milwaukee, epicenter of the densest concentration of WELS members; Thiensville (Mequon), the seat of the synod's seminary; and Watertown, for many years the location of the pre-ministerial college and now an active ministerial schools feeder—it could more easily than other conferences call on synod officials for insight, information, and advice. And it could be more readily served by those same officials. Perhaps the reverse may be closer to the truth: it may be due to its members who were reciprocally more easily able to serve the synod than men from outlying areas.

One of those reciprocal servers, the Rev. Gustav E. Bergemann, was president of the Joint Synod for sixteen years, as long as the three presidents who had preceded him. As pastor, longtime conference member, president of the general synod, and ex officio member of numerous influence-wielding boards, he exerted enormous power on individuals and his congregation, conference, community, and synod. During conference meetings, he was called upon to answer all sorts of questions and report on all kinds of synodical matters, both trivial and profound, ridiculous and sublime: methods used in choosing professors for Watertown, conditions in the Arizona mission, details of the death and the funeral of Professor John Schaller, etc., etc., etc. In just one meeting, Bergemann spoke about the deaconess society, the Lutheran Children's Friend Society, and an institution for, of all people, epileptics. His influence on Winnebago Lutheran Academy must have been truly extraordinary; he is the only one of 126 persons listed in the "Teachers through the Years" roster in *Our Dear Academy* who is tendered the title "Director."

Bergemann was busier than usual in 1918. During the course of that year, his synod-wide travels often found him packing his bags for a new trip before he had finished unpacking them from the old. Contemplate this schedule: Sometime from Wednesday, July 10 to Tuesday, July 16, he attended the "first-annual meeting of the South East District" in Burlington. During at least two days of the Pacific and Northwest District meeting, which was held in Yakima, Washington from Thursday, July 18 to Sunday, July 21, Bergemann was present as a visitor but took an active part in district discussions. By Wednesday, August 14, he was back in Wisconsin,

preaching the opening-service sermon of the North-Wisconsin District [*sic*] meeting in New London. The meeting of the District Synod of Nebraska, which opened on Thursday, August 22, found him holding the floor for at least two days in an attempt to explain in historical and pragmatic detail the concept of centralization. Although the Nebraskans did not accept completely the concept until 1904, they did, while Bergemann was in the neighborhood, persuade him to preach at a mission festival service in Clatonia. He also attended the Dr. Martin Luther College Board of Directors meeting in New Ulm, Minnesota on May 21 and the Assignment Committee meeting in Wauwatosa on June 4.

Also contemplate the travel conditions of that time. The following scenario, which describes getting to the Pacific and Northwest District meeting, is simply beyond the grasp of people living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: “Because of the great distances the expense account of travel to the synod is a considerable item in this district. To lighten the burden one pastor and his delegate had come a distance of over 200 miles by automobile; two other pastors with delegate came by automobile over the mountain passes where they found occasion to prove their general fitness by helping the motor mount the steeper grades through the exertion of personal push. Over night they camped in the open, in the morning, refreshed by cold mountain water they moved onward”.<sup>xviii</sup>

Gustav E. Bergemann deserves a biographical sketch of his own, one that will do justice to his person and his work and will also explain why he remains to this day the only incumbent who was defeated when standing for re-election to the presidency of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. One part of the stunning setback may have lain in his inability to settle the Protestant problem. Like a migraine, the controversy refused to submit to the president’s medicine, appearing and reappearing suddenly and unexpectedly. Another part may have lain in his treatment of financial matters, given the dire economic condition the entire country—including the synod—was in at the time. The Manitowoc Conference, for one, flatly rejected one of his proposals. In the darkest hours of the Great Depression, on July 24, 1933, in Manitowoc, the conference passed this motion: “That the proposal of the President be tabled, because we do not regard it as a healthy plan for the solution of Synod’s burdens.” Shortly after this stern and almost impolite rebuff, John Brenner became the synod’s next president.

Other members of the Winnebago Conference were a strong influence on Northwestern College, particularly during its early, formative years. Some were represented on its board, and several of its first professors were drawn from the clergy in the region.

In spite of its pioneering movements and its wholesome influence on the district and the synod, the Winnebago Conference seemed to some to project a self-defeating image. The Rev. Armin Engel, whom the *WELS Historical Institute Journal* called “a life-long student of Wisconsin Synod history” shortly after his death in June 1985,<sup>xix</sup> in commenting about that negative image, told the Winnebago Conference, of which he was then a member, that the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of controversy in the Wisconsin Synod. What must have struck the delegates forcefully was Engel’s contention that many of synod’s “theological debates centered in the Winnebago Conference”.<sup>xx</sup> His thesis was apparently not challenged; if it were, no objection was recorded in the minutes.

In that same monograph, Engel called specific attention to the work of Pastors John Philipp Koehler,<sup>xxi</sup> Johann Heinrich Sieker, and Adolph Spiering.

John Philipp Koehler’s story has been told, and it needs no additional space in this history. However, no matter how the man and the Protestant controversy in which he became embroiled and with which his name is inextricably linked are regarded, his monumental work,

*The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, must be noted and commended. Nobody who writes anything about the history of the synod prior to 1930 writes anything without first consulting Koehler's seminal book. The very fact that both a Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor and a WELS pastor, among others, took the time and spent the effort to evaluate the book says something about its intrinsic value. If any historian ever went to primary sources, Koehler did. He tirelessly chased official records, documents, and letters all over Europe and the Midwest, finding them in closets, attics, forgotten and neglected storage rooms in churches and schools, and in other unlikely places.

It should also be noted that during the tedium of that long, drawn out controversy, many people agreed with the honorable resolution passed by the Manitowoc Conference in its meeting at Louis Corners on August 26, 1929. Then the conference passed the following motion: "That we petition the board to speed up the case of Prof. Koehler, to investigate his position and settle the matter justly."

Almost a month to the day later, the Winnebago Conference took up this troublesome issue and, after spending an entire evening discussing it, resolved to ask August F. Zich, the district president, to call a special meeting of the NWD pastoral conference. This was done. The minutes of the Winnebago Conference which describe this meeting end with these words: "All dealings of the Joint Synod were handled properly according to God's Word." According to the minutes of the various conferences, not everyone agreed with this assessment.

Sieker is a relative unknown in the Northern Wisconsin District. Although his age was callow, his stay short, and his influence small, his birthright as a son of the NWD merits some attention. Born October 23, 1838 or 1839 in Schweinfurth, in the Kingdom of Bavaria, he came to America with his parents when he was ten or eleven years old. The family chose to homestead at Newtonburg. When an article in some church paper piqued Sieker's curiosity, he became interested in studying for the ministry. Regarded by his pastor, who—and this is quite interesting and amusing—later became his brother-in-law, as a "promising young man" and further encouraged by the promise of a \$50.00 annual subsidy from the synod, Sieker attended and was graduated in 1861 from Gettysburg Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

Sieker's first charge was Salem Lutheran Church, Town Granville, Milwaukee County. Although Sieker was still a very young man—really, a youth—he was appointed a member of the planning committee that successfully argued for the synod's new worker-training school to be built in Watertown. Sieker also traveled around the state, seeking funds for the school. His Salem ministry was followed by a call in October 1867 to Trinity, in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he succeeded the venerable Fachtmann. Seven months later, in May of 1868, he was elected third president of the Minnesota Synod, which at the time consisted of 22 pastors, 35 parishes, 53 congregations, and some 3,000 communicants. During his presidency, Sieker played a prominent role in urging the Minnesota Synod to join the Synodical Conference and, of greater consequence to this history, to foster closer ties with the Wisconsin Synod. Although Sieker in 1876 accepted a call to become pastor of St. Matthew's in New York City, his Midwest and Wisconsin Synod roots maintained a strong tug on him. When his three sons finished their schooling at Concordia Collegiate Institute in Bronxville, New York, he sent them to Watertown to complete their college education, this in spite of the fact that he, Sieker, had joined the Missouri Synod in 1881 or 1882 and St Matthew's, the congregation he served, had followed suit in 1885 or 1886.<sup>xxii</sup> Sieker died December 30, 1904.

Another Sieker, Christian H., was pastor at Newton. We do not know whether he and Johann were related.

Although Spiering is also a comparative unknown and infrequently appears by name in histories of the Wisconsin Synod, he was elected the first president of the NWD in 1917. A brief biographical sketch appears in the chapter titled "Presidents of the Northern Wisconsin District."

### Conference Concerns

Many words have been spoken and many topics have been discussed at conference meetings held in the Northern Wisconsin District. Some of these topics were, for lack of a better word, "one-timers." Broached, assigned, and given, they were promptly forgotten. Others appear and reappear—some sooner, some later. Their shapes vary: a chance remark that garnered some response and then the secretary's attention, causing him to record it in the minutes; a question of casuistry; a formal paper. Some of the topics were trivial; why they were ever dignified is a problem for fixture historians to sort out. Others were profound. They resonated and reverberated throughout the conference, bounced into the awareness of the district, and then surged into the sensibilities of the synod. When timely, well thought out, and presented with aplomb, they often resulted in fundamental changes in synod-wide procedure and policy.

Several of these topics, ones that surfaced in several conferences on at least several occasions and, accordingly, appeared to be of some consequence to some of the conferees, are mentioned and discussed here. The order, although somewhat chronological, is arbitrary, and no significance is to be attached to it.

One task conference visitors genuinely disliked was collecting dues for *The Lutheran Educator*, once the educational journal of WELS. Mentioning the subject invariably caused negative reaction of some type. Much was sub rosa; some was audible. Nobody really objected to the tariff, for many years, the magazine sold for a paltry 25 cents. And nobody really objected to its promotion; the Wisconsin Synod has since its inception promoted Lutheran elementary education. Some pastors simply could not understand why they had to subscribe to a periodical which discussed matters outside the realm of their expertise. Their objections were valid, and members of the Board for Parish Education were sympathetic to their distress. No self-respecting plumber, the argument went, would subscribe to *Elements of Electricity*. In 1971, the synod's president was asked if synod's policy was to make subscription mandatory. His answer was "No." But, he added, "The price of the magazine will increase if billing is done on an individual basis." In the 1970s someone suggested combining collecting its dues with that of what is today called *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, the theological journal published by the faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Although the topic was discussed as recently as September 1984, the days of forced subscription and accompanying laments are now in the past.

Another item also relegated to the dust bin of history, of interest only because it reveals something about our fathers, was "sermon critique." Once a routine and important part of the schedule of every conference meeting, it gave way when the brethren decided that criticizing another brother's sermon likely did more harm than good. Sermon critique did not, the brethren decided, make ineffectual preachers better preachers; it did, however, tend to destroy the *esprit de corps* the brotherhood diligently fostered.

Teacher conferences had a comparable monstrosity. It was called "lesson critique." Beginning teachers, placed into a situation which only in the minds of people with rich imaginations resembled a normal situation in a normal classroom in a normal school, were asked to demonstrate their skills in evoking the right answers to rightly phrased questions. What was most often evoked was trauma—usually with that upper case "T."

During the 1950s, the *pink slips*, to be used in the new synodical budgetary remittance books were, if one is to go by the frequency with which they are mentioned in the minutes, extremely annoying and frustrating. They remain infamous in the minds of senior workers. When they were introduced, bureaucrats in synod's fiscal office knew what they were and what was to be done with them. Pastors and congregational treasurers, lacking adequate information and training, did not; several years were to pass before everyone had mastered the correct and proper pink-slip etiquette. Meanwhile, conference meeting minutes were filled with directions for proper usage.

Before this, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, it was the blue slips that had caused equal confusion.

Missions were a persistent and important concern of all NWD conferences through the years. The minutes are full of references to, questions about, and suggestions for home missions; institutional missions; Negro mission in the South; the mission among the "heathen Apaches" in Arizona, which the original Wisconsin Synod had begun before the federation was created in 1917; the Nigerian mission, which was conducted jointly with the LC-MS; and the Polish mission. The validity and worth of the mission to the Apaches was questioned more frequently than any other. This was not true of synod's mission to German-speaking people in Poland. Pastor William Bodamer was, whenever his furlough permitted, a frequent and popular conference speaker. The same is true of William Schweppe, whose connections with the NWD were strong and intimate. His wife was born and raised in the district. And more than any other foreign missionary, Schweppe caught the attention and fired the imagination of his audiences. He was especially effective when speaking to elementary school children. He had that attribute we attach to certain politicians: charisma. Affectionately referred to as "Missionaryschweppe"—there was no break between the two words—he lived and labored for many years in his beloved Africa, only to die there in a tragic vehicle accident.

Another persistent concern was the role *woman* was to play in marriage, society, and the church. Essays were given sundry titles, such as "Marriage," "The Role of Woman in the Church," and "Woman Suffrage in the Church." However, all of them dealt with "the woman's place." The emphasis here is on *place*. As far back as 1925, at Christ Ev. Lutheran Church in Menominee, Michigan, a Rev. George E. Schroeder read a paper with this forbidding and esoteric title: "The place of the woman in the Xtian Church." Fourteen pastors of the Lake Superior Conference heard the paper, but the minutes give no hint about the discussion, if any, that followed Schroeder's presentation. On another occasion, the Rhinelander Conference sought outside help with the subject. In September 1984, at Trinity Lutheran Church, Wabeno, Wisconsin, Carl W. Voss, the district president, presented "Man and Woman In God's World." The matter closed with an empty phrase: "After much discussion...." Another conference discussed women taking jobs in industry. I don't know whether the essayist objected to or was in favor of "Rosie, the Riveter." I do know that women were an important and vocal part of the work force at a battery plant in Madison. That most of these papers are apparently no longer available is regrettable. A thorough, dispassionate, Bible-centered study of them could demonstrate how thinking about this vital matter has evolved during the past 55 years.

Practical matters discussed in various conference meetings included pastors' salaries<sup>xxiii</sup>; social security for pastors; annuity policies for about-to-be retired pastors; the "Widow and Disabled" fund, which was to provide help for the widows and orphan children of teachers and pastors and aid for disabled teachers and pastors; federal income taxes, wills, and other legal matters; envelope systems; baccalaureate services and strikes; Alcoholics Anonymous; and

property, group, personal, and health insurance. When rates for church property insurance became an issue, the possibility of forming a synod fire insurance company was suggested.

When the subject of insurance arose, the Aid Association for Lutherans, headquartered in Appleton, took its licks. Thirty years ago, someone asked this question: “Should we not re-examine our affiliation with the AAL in view of its blatant unionism policies?” And only thirteen years ago, someone in the Rhinelander Conference suggested this topic: “AAL—Scourge of Our Synod.” Cooler heads prevailed and “scourge” was deleted. Today the AAL is regarded by many people as a fresh cash cow, providing all branches of the church bushels of money.

The AAL is also involved in spiritual matters. Witness the recent publication of the three-volume home devotion series, *For Such a Time as This*. Lyle Albrecht, in the Editor’s Preface in Volume 1, p. v, says, “May the reader find God’s comfort in these devotions.” On the outside of the back cover, the AAL says this: “This book is a special gift to you as a member of the Aid Association for Lutherans. AAL understands the importance your faith has in your everyday life and wants to provide resources that help support and strengthen that faith.”

Some conference concerns took strange and unexpected turns. The Lake Superior Delegate Conference thanked one of its lay delegates for providing the conference members with fine cigars.<sup>xxiv</sup> Some 65 years later another conference discussed the sinfulness of smoking.

Perhaps the strangest of all topics discussed in any conference in the NWD was brought about by a serious discussion of public drunkenness. This led to one pastor telling about “a case of rum running.” The minutes reassure us that “Both [matters were] thoroughly discussed and answered satisfactorily.”

During the 1970s, topics which in a previous time would have been considered ill-advised or even risqué became mundane. They included “Dancing in the Church,” “Abortion,” and “Methods of Birth Control.” And perhaps unheard of before this time of unprecedented openness, Frederick W. Heidemann, pastor of the WELS church in New London, presented a paper on sex education, emphasizing motives and morals and not, as Heidemann put it, “plumbing.” During the next decade, essayists dealt with rock music, homosexuality, chemical abuse, child abuse, alcoholism, and artificial means of procreation. Petri dishes replaced the common cup as a topic for discussion. The question of “young men with extremely long hair coming to communion” surfaced in the Winnebago Conference.

The presenters also changed during the last several decades. Formerly, the teachers and the pastors themselves addressed burning issues and presented timely papers. Now, speakers from outside the parish ministry, such as college and seminary professors and synod officials and administrators, were called upon to spread the benefits of their special expertise. Wayne Mueller, John Jeske, and Kurt Eggert were in wide demand. Professors Delmar Brick and Thomas Kuster from Dr. Martin Luther College; Edward C. Fredrich, Siegbert Becker, Richard Balge, and Wilbert Gawrisch from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary; Gary Greenfield from Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee; and James Fricke, James Plitzuweit, and William Birsching from Northwestern College were asked to speak on current-interest topics. This list could be expanded many-fold.

Through the years, WELS tried to be faithful to that part of its mission mandated by the second word in its name: *evangelical*. It seems, however, that fruitful discussion of evangelism, a very important consideration when *Reisepredigt* was the topic *de jour*, fell into general neglect for almost 80 years, the victim of a synod beleaguered by a horrific economy, only to resurface in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1964, *evangelism* was on the agenda of the Fox River Valley Pastoral Conference for the first time in many years, an interest renewed most likely by Carl Lawrenz’s

paper on proselytizing. Three years later, Pastor Lyle Koenig would report for the *evangelism* committee. In 1972, Pastor Arnold Tiefel “reported on the recent evangelism workshop.” And two years after that, Pastor Jonathan Mahnke presented “Promoting Evangelism with Our Children.”

The most serious conference concern was aptly the matter of doctrine, especially as it pertained to affairs between WELS and LC-MS. Although this history does not even begin to pretend to try to follow every twist and turn of the path that led from unity to disunity, some information on the topic is given in the chapter entitled “Intra- and Intersynodical Relations,” where more is written about doctrinal matters.

### **The District is Born**

The first of a series of four meetings which would change the 1892 federation of the synods of Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin into an organic union was held in Green Bay from August 20-26, 1913. The federation proposed, discussed, and adopted the following resolutions pertinent to the history of the Northern Wisconsin District:

“1. That the now existing synods unite to form one synod by transferring all rights to the Joint Synod, which shall then divide itself into districts;

“2. That this Joint Synod be divided into geographic districts and that the now existing synodical boundaries need not be considered in the new division.”

The second in this series of four meetings was held two years later in Saginaw, Michigan. On Tuesday, August 24, 1915, the not-quite-completely-new body unanimously adopted its new constitution. Except for some legal niceties which would be satisfied later, the action changed the *Allgemeine Ev. Luth. Synode von Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, und anderen Staaten* to the Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States. Its soon-adopted popular name was the Wisconsin Synod; years later it became WELS. The Rev. Gustav E. Bergemann, pastor of St. Peter Ev. Lutheran Church, Fond du Lac, was elected president of the new body. He would hold the position until he was defeated for re-election by John Brenner in 1933, a defeat which some found logical and others exceptional.

The third meeting in the series, the 67<sup>th</sup> annual convention of the Wisconsin Synod, was held from July 11-18, 1917, the convention year coinciding with the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. St. Matthew’s Ev. Lutheran Church in Milwaukee was host to this unique and historic gathering. The 114 lay delegates, 54 teachers, and 213 pastors and professors carried out the resolutions which provided for the demise and division of the old body and for the birth and organization of the new. Because changes required by laws of the State of Wisconsin had been worked on between 1915 and 1917 and then proposed to the convention, the constitution underwent its final revision of that era and was, as all who attended expected, passed unanimously. Six districts were created. The three districts formed from the old, original Wisconsin Synod are, in *The Northwestern Lutheran* article which describes the meeting, called the Southeast Wisconsin District, the West Wisconsin District, and the North Wisconsin District. All of the names lack the adjectival-forming suffix “ern.” That would be added later.

Nostalgia, regrets, and hope literally drip from the closing words of the article in *The Northwestern Lutheran*, which is a translation of the *Gemeinde-Blatt* original: “In this spirit we parted on that 17<sup>th</sup> day of July when the last meeting of the old Wisconsin Synod came to an end. Luther’s battle hymn was the glad hail with which we left the old and greeted the new, ‘A Mighty Fortress is Our God.’”

The closure and signature are final: “By order of the synod, Heinrich Gieschen, Secretary. Milwaukee, Wis., July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1917.”

The first meeting of the organization which was to become the Northern Wisconsin District was held on Wednesday, July 18, 1917. The new body elected and seated the following officers: President, Rev. Ad. Spiering; 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Rev. K. Machmiller; 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Christian Doehler; Secretary, Rev. G. Boettcher; Clerk, Rev. Paul G. Bergmann; and Treasurer, Mr. Albert Voecks. A “Committee for Revision of Accounts,” its precise duties undefined, was also elected. It consisted of Messrs. Jacob Koehn, Gustav Kahlfass, Wm. Kowalke, and Wm. Gerhard.

The unsigned Foreword to the *Anniversary Booklet of the Northern Wisconsin District 1917-1967*, dated June 19, 1966, contains this cryptic sentence: “the new Northern Wisconsin District became active on October 1, 1917.” No explanation or elaboration of the words “became active” is available, and a query directed to the office of the incumbent district president remains unanswered.

A necessary provisional meeting of the old body was held from August 15 to 21, 1917 to settle legal requirements. The final settlement took place in 1919, during the fourth in the series of meetings referred to.

The first published reference to the finances of the Northern Wisconsin District appears in *The Northwestern Lutheran*, April 21, 1918, pages 63-64. In the “Treasurer’s Report on Home Mission Funds,” W. H. Graebner, treasurer of the general synod, reported that the district contributed \$3,370.64. This was slightly more than 26% of the total contribution of the six districts.

The announcement in *The Northwestern Lutheran* of the first meeting of the NWD clearly demonstrates that, although some deliberations and actions remain constant, the age was quite different from the present: “The North-Wisconsin District of the Joint Synod will hold its sessions, D. v., Aug. 14-20 a.c. at New London, Wis., in the congregation of the Praeses Rev. Ad. Spiering. The sessions will be opened with divine services at 10 A.M., Aug. 14<sup>th</sup>. Requests for quarters are to be sent to the local pastor before July 15<sup>th</sup>. The delegates of the congregations are kindly asked to hand their credentials to the secretary immediately after the opening service. These credentials must bear the signature of the presiding officer and the secretary of their congregation. Whoso intends to come with an automobile, will please mention it.

“Special petitions should be sent to the President, the Rev. Ad. Spiering, prior to July 15<sup>th</sup>.

“Hortonville, Wis., June 18, 1918. G.E. Boettcher, Sec’y.”<sup>xxv</sup>

Although the article describing the meeting is romantic—New London is a “beautiful little city,” the members of Emanuel are “most hospitable,” and the president is “beloved”—the meeting itself, judging from the article describing it, was quite pedestrian. Bergemann, who was not only president of the Joint Synod but also a member of the NWD, delivered the opening sermon, underscoring the purpose of all synod meetings: to build the kingdom of God. Pastors August F. Zich and H. Koch delivered doctrinal papers: the first on “False Messianic Hopes,” the second, which was unfinished due to lack of time, on the “Allruling truth of Scripture.” Business consisted of appeals of various kinds: to fill our colleges, to bring the gospel to the men in service, and to support the military with gifts of money to the Army and Navy Board and with letters to individuals. Four divine services and one patriotic rally were held. All the officers were re-elected. The delegates left for home shortly after noon on August 19, convinced that the new



way was the better way, that synodical work was made more apparent and more real within the confines of a smaller body.

Twenty-five years after the Northern Wisconsin District held its first biennial convention, the Wisconsin Synod introduced a new kind of “giving” program. Based on this program, the NWD did less well than other districts. Using the communicant count of 48,686 as a basis for comparison, the NWD was the third largest district in the Wisconsin Synod, minimally superseded by the Southeastern Wisconsin District (51,530) and the Western Wisconsin District (48,878). The NWD, however, contributed the least. Having subscribed to an average per communicant contribution of \$11.05, it gave \$10.60. This was 74 cents less than that of the Western Wisconsin District and \$1.52 less than the average of the entire synod.

In the year 2000, the “Forward in Christ” anniversary year, the Northern Wisconsin District will hold its convention at Fox Hills Resort in the Mishicot area. *Northwestern Lutheran* incorrectly gave the location as “the Manitowoc area.” During the convention, someone—quite possibly—will take the floor, refer to the *Statistical Report*, and urge the NWD to do better, pointing out that the synodical average for all-purpose giving of \$707.22 is \$170.68 larger than that of the NWD.

### **Intra- and Intersynodical Relations**

The Northern Wisconsin District has experienced a significant number of intra- and intersynodical differences since 1917. Some of these differences are discussed in this chapter. Others that deeply affected a district president are discussed in the chapter titled “Presidents of the Northern Wisconsin District.”

Some of the differences began in the hearts, minds, and convictions of individuals. Others began within an individual congregation or arose between several congregations. Some, like an innocuous scratch, began with an innocent remark. Others began with more heat than light. Some, regarded in their time as crucially important, have in the judgment of history been reduced to insignificance. Others dealt with fundamentals and remain troublesome even today. Some of these discussions—What *is* the proper word: debates, arguments, differences?—have never been resolved, each side clinging tenaciously to its original position.

What has become known as “The Protéstant Controversy” troubled the Manitowoc Conference, Immanuel Lutheran Church in Manitowoc, its pastor, Theophil F. Uetzmann, the teachers of Immanuel Lutheran School, and the members of the congregation for three decades. Immanuel, a daughter of First German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Manitowoc, had its roots deep in the Wisconsin Synod. When Uetzmann protested certain actions of the synod in the controversy, the congregation followed his lead and suspended fellowship with the synod. While most of the members supported Uetzmann, about 50 families left Immanuel. Some of these 50 families formed Grace Lutheran Church and, in effect, remained affiliated with the Wisconsin Synod; others formed Redeemer Lutheran Church and affiliated with the LC-MS. From 1938 to 1967, Immanuel was an independent congregation; its pastor and teachers affiliated with the Protéstant Conference. In 1970 the congregation was received into membership with the WELS.

For at least six years the Protéstant controversy took up much time at regular and special meetings of both pastoral and delegate conferences. It is voluminous material; inclusion of only a small portion would imbalance whatever symmetry this history has.<sup>xxvi</sup> It shows segments of the ministry at low tide, and relaunching the entire matter in this history will raise no boats and unload no new freight.

The Northern Wisconsin District was not spared the cruel heartbreak and disastrous hardships that accompanied the dissolution of the Synodical Conference, that family of Lutheran synods that had dedicated itself to serving conservative Lutherans in America since 1872. Although attaching specific dates to specific acts marking *precisely* the tempo and the extent of the deterioration of relations between the constituent synods, especially the largest, Missouri and Wisconsin, is difficult and, additionally, is not within the purview of this book, certain checks on history's calendar are noted in this brief, skeletal review.

Before the differences within the Synodical Conferences began to surface and make public ripples, there was worrying in the Lake Superior Conference about differences on a much broader scale. An assignment given as far back as 1935 asked the essayist to define "The Differences between U.L.C. [United Lutheran Church], A.L.C. [American Lutheran Church], and the Synodical Conference in respect to Doctrine and Practice."

In 1939 the district president, the Rev. Walter Pankow, referring to the increasingly fervent overtures the American Lutheran Church was making to LC-MS, asked "that each conference busy itself with the present movement of church union." Conference minutes seem to indicate that the directive was generally honored more in passing than in action.

However, in keeping with Pankow's request, the Lake Superior Conference meeting in April 1939 studied and adopted in its entirety a lengthy committee report which ended with this declaration: "We, the Lake Superior Conference of (?) N. Wis. Dist. of the Wis. Synod do consider the actions of our sister synod of Mo. in continuing its negotiations, looking to a union with A.L.C. independently of the other synod members of the Synodical Conf., as unwarranted." [The (?) indicates an illegible word in the text.]

Throughout this long and sometimes tortured trip, which narrowed to concern Missouri and Wisconsin, the conferences of the Northern Wisconsin District sang their songs to themselves, to others, to synod. It is not possible within the limits of this introductory history to list all the songs and sing all the stanzas. Nor would such a songfest be musically enjoyable and spiritually profitable. Suffice it to say, not everyone joined the refrain. And those who did were not always in harmony, as the history of the district—as it is recorded in conference and district minutes—reminds us.

There are, though, some pertinent and worthwhile examples that give interested readers a bittersweet aftertaste of a distasteful time—a time no one eagerly anticipated, a time no one joyfully experienced, and a time no one warmly recalls with the glow of satisfaction that accompanies genuine contentment.

Between 1945 and 1961, a series of events occurred, and positions hardened, which eventually fractured the fraternal relations both synods, Missouri and Wisconsin, and their satellites had enjoyed. The first of these, the *Doctrinal Affirmation* of 1945, was a landmark failure. It affirmed neither doctrinal agreement nor fellowship between the LC-MS and the American Lutheran Church, but it appeared to be the point of no return for some within the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod.

Scouting had been raised to issue status as early as 1929 when Pastor Ernest G. Behm, then in the ministry for a dozen plus years, posed this question: "Is the Boy Scout movement a religious movement or not?" Beginning about 1947 and continuing thereafter, as an issue it aggravated the intersynodical situation because it was more immediate in nature and thus more understandable and pressing to the people in the pews. By February 1949 it had almost taken over center stage. About this same time, the Boys' Brigade, an organization patterned after the scouts, became a particular problem in the Winnebago Conference area. The difficulty centered

in and around the cities of Neenah and Menasha; the chief reporter was a Pastor Paul G. Bergmann.

Other than scouting, one of the first instances of what came to be regarded as “unbrotherly conduct” in the NWD came in Manitowoc. In that city, Redeemer Lutheran Church, the offshoot of Immanuel Ev. Lutheran Church, was accepted as a member of the Missouri Synod, even over the objections of Dr. John Behnken, president of the LC-MS. The congregation had come into being as a result of the Prot stant controversy and Uetzmann’s position concerning certain actions of the Wisconsin Synod.

Another instance of conduct allegedly unbecoming presumably brotherly organizations arose over the organization of a congregation in Fond du Lac by the LC-MS. Inaptly named Hope, this church became the antithesis of fraternal cooperation. Its very existence caused several WELS pastors to question during a meeting in Town Winchester in the fall of 1948 the usefulness and validity of “mixed conferences,” the designation for meetings attended by members of the four constituent synods of the Synodical Conference.

In subsequent meetings of the five conferences of the Northern Wisconsin District, the issue of attending or avoiding mixed conferences became disconcertingly divisive. Some measure of futility was reached in a meeting held at St. John in East Bloomfield in September 1951. A lengthy committee report regarding the matter is recorded in its entirety in the minutes. Such inclusion is highly unusual; summaries or digests are the norm, as conference minutes bear out. Not knowing the precise course to follow and unable to reach consensus, the report urged “each member of the Conference to follow the dictates of his knowledge and conscience.”

Sensing growing confusion in the ranks, the Wisconsin Synod became more aggressive in its defense of what it held to be the true and historic position of the Synodical Conference. Beginning in 1951, its official magazine, *The Northwestern Lutheran*, carried a series of polemical articles titled “As We See It.” Written by Professor Edmund C. Reim, president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, the articles pointed out in measured and clear language what Reim believed to be the fundamental differences between Wisconsin and Missouri. Reim also wrote *Where Do We Stand?*, a 64-page booklet outlining the doctrinal position of the Wisconsin Synod, as Reim, in his position of secretary of the WELS Standing Committee on Church Union, understood it to be at that time.

Taking their cue from Reim’s articles and willing to follow his lead, one year later the members of the Wisconsin Synod delegation to the Synodical Conference, which had met in St. Paul, Minnesota, reported that they were *in statu confessionis*. This rarely-used, unfamiliar, and esoteric theological expression implies, as some believe, somewhat pugnaciously, that its bearers are in doctrinal disagreement with another group and that they, the bearers, while defending their position openly and unhesitatingly, hope that the other body “may still come to see the error of its ways.”

The Fox River Valley Conference experienced its first publicly-recorded brush with intersynodical problems on the local level in February 1952 in New London. Three visiting pastors raised an issue in connection with the “Lutheran high school at Appleton.” They said the high school’s constitution defines Synodical Conference Lutherans as “those adhering to [the] Brief Statement (1939) of Missouri Synod.” The visitors contended that “this needs further clarification so that all know where they stand exactly before any building begins.” They urged that “a united stand be taken on laying down principles involved and expressing clearly the confessional foundation on which we stand before, and not after, the building is erected.” When the conference took no specific action on this matter, the discussion widened to involve the new

high school with the Lutheran Men of America. This prompted an additional and unrelated question: Is there “any difference between fellowship in the Lutheran Men of America and fellowship in Lutheran singing organizations?” No action was taken on these matters, either.

At practically the same time, on February 19, 1952, the Winnebago Conference meeting at Trinity Lutheran Church in Neenah resolved to let the individual determine what course to follow. One resolution reveals the confusion and the indecision existing then: “Under the confusing circumstances of the present moment, such matters will have to be decided by individual conscience.”

On May 10, 1955, at Eagle River, Wisconsin, the Rhinelander Conference adopted and sent a lengthy and strongly-worded memorial to the district president. While it accused the LC-MS of “loveless, unbrotherly conduct,” it is possible it may have been culpable also. It petitioned “the Honorable Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States” to “recognize the dissolution of the Synodical Conference brought about by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.”

Immediate severance of relations was put on hold when the WELS convention of 1955 voted two to one to postpone to a recessed convention to be held the next year further action on its resolution to terminate fellowship with the LC-MS. Two years after this vote, in 1957, Reim withdrew from membership in the Wisconsin Synod, believing it was temporizing. He was succeeded by his one-time protege, Carl Lawrenz, the Fond du Lac product who had been tutored in his theological growth by Bergemann.

Matters continued to worsen. In April 1956, at Hyde, Michigan, the Lake Superior Conference decided by resolution “not to have fellowship of any kind with the two men of the Missouri Synod...who interfered with our congregation at Marquette, until the case has been brought to a God pleasing conclusion by our officials.”

Another indication that trouble with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was escalating further on the local level came later. A letter from the Rev. John Brenner to the Rev. Frederick Brandt, chairman of the Fox River Valley Conference, brought to the attention of the conference an organization called the Lutheran Men of Wisconsin, presumably a subsidiary organization of Lutheran Men of America. The issue, not unlike others of its kind, was unresolved when a now-nameless someone raised a point of order and a subsequent motion carried “to discuss ‘this item’ at a different time and at a different place.”

The “Tiefel resignation” demonstrates that lack of “general agreement” that plagued WELS. Pastor Frederick Tiefel had served in the WELS mission in Japan since 1952. He resigned from the synod in 1957, giving as his reason the synod’s failure to break with Missouri. The small group he continued to minister to took the name “The Confessional Lutheran Church of Japan.” Tiefel returned to the United States any number of times throughout the years. But he did not return to WELS.

The Tiefel matter reverberated in the Winnebago Conference. In April 1957, the Rev. Arnold L. Mennicke, pastor of St. Matthew Ev. Lutheran Church, Winona, Minnesota, and a prominent and long-time member of the World Mission Board, was asked to present the mission board’s case and answer questions. Mennicke was a polite, soft-spoken man, a quality gentleman; if anyone were able to pour oil on troubled waters, he would be the one.

Although it seemed obvious that everyone should have known the official Scriptural interpretation of Romans 16:17-18, it became increasingly clear that not everyone was on the same page. A memorial from the Winnebago Pastoral Conference, dated September 17, 1957, addressed to the praesidium of the Wisconsin Synod and its Church Union Committee made this stunning public confession: “Whereas our Synod also seems to be sadly divided on the

interpretation of Rom. 16,17-18, we..." For its part, the Winnebago Conference in this 1957 meeting resolved that the word "avoid" means "a definite separation."

On September 15, 1958, the Winnebago Conference met at Peace Lutheran Church in Green Lake. The minutes show that conflicting positions were nibbling away at peace, amity, and concord. Minority groups met and signed declarations protesting continued fellowship with the LC-MS. Either a concerted and determined effort to reach a meeting of minds or a general level of mistrust prompted the following action of the Winnebago Conference. When it met at Redeemer in Fond du Lac, the minutes note that the minutes were "read more carefully by President Siegler" before they were adopted. In spite of this, there was "no indication of general agreement."

But some had reached general agreement. They had made up their minds and chafed at what they perceived to be synod's lack of decisive action. Hoffmann, a veteran of the Lake Superior Conference, together with comparative newcomers George Tiefel, Sr. and Edwin Schmelzer, petitioned the NWD pastoral conference to disavow the action of the New Ulm, Minnesota convention of August 1957 and to return to the actions of the conventions in Saginaw, Michigan in 1955, Watertown in 1956, and a portion of the New Ulm convention in 1957.

Actions in the Fox River Valley Conference also indicate a general level of uncertainty and indecision existing during those pre-break days. In a November 1958 meeting a motion was made to study papers written by both Lawrenz and Reim. Others preferred another tack, and a substitute motion to study only the Lawrenz paper carried the day. Reim's time in WELS had evidently passed, and he would find refuge in another synod.

Reim's withdrawal from membership in the Wisconsin Synod, the subsequent action of the Seminary board, which everyone assumed meant Reim was no longer eligible for a call into the pastoral ministry of WELS, and Reim's following course of action caused some confusion, especially in the Rhinelander Conference. The Rev. Wilbert R. Gawrisch, pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Rhinelander, fell ill. Zion, to the surprise of many, called Reim to serve during Gawrisch's return to health. Reim, to the chagrin of those who had been surprised, accepted the call. When the Rhinelander Conference considered the affair in its January 1958 meeting in Eagle River, the lengthy discussion dealing with the abnormal situation settled nothing.

During those difficult days, the deteriorating detente between Wisconsin and Missouri was a prominent topic, especially in the Winnebago Conference. Several respectable reasons could be set forth to explain this, but the principal one must center on and around Oscar Siegler. Siegler was a short man, but he stood tall as a member of the Winnebago Conference, the president of the Northern Wisconsin District, and the secretary of the Church Union Committee. During those long months and years, while everyone prayerfully sought what he thought was the God-pleasing solution to the situation, it became increasingly clear that, just as there was confusion and division in the conference Siegler had served for many years as secretary and then president, there were also some differences of opinion in the Church Union Committee. Two sides rallied around what could, for lack of a better word, loosely be called slogans. One of the sides warned that "a little leaven might infect"; the other pleaded to "find again the common ground." During the time the Church Union Committee met with ever-increasing frequency, Siegler was a major player in his conference and district: reading, reporting, advising. He must have been on stage for many long hours as the drama unfolded.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Conference minutes tell tales, which in retrospect are invariably sad and haunting, of personal doubts, misgivings, resignations. In the spring 1959 meeting of the Winnebago Pastoral

Conference held in Fond du Lac, Pastors Gerhard Pieper and Waldemar Schuetze explained why they had not taken part in the morning communion service. They were, they said, “deeply troubled by the division in the Conference” over relations with the Missouri Synod. They were to leave their church, take some of its members with them, and found another congregation in the same city.

Pastor Robert Reim’s personal trek to decision must have been excruciating, for he found himself pulled in opposite directions by two strong forces: his father and his father-in-law. Robert Reim was the son of Edmund Reim and the son-in-law of Ernest Behm, who had served as district president roughly a dozen years before this. As late as July 1959, some two years after his father had withdrawn from synod membership, the younger Reim led the conference in its devotion. He also served the conference as its secretary. Three months later, the next set of minutes records the decision he had made: “The office of the Secretary of the Conference, having become vacant, was filled by the election of Pastor Glenn Unke.” Reim had resigned from synod. Additionally, as the “the scheduled preacher [for the next meeting of the conference], he had declined to preach.”

These men were by no means the only ones to leave the district. In his report to the 22nd biennial convention of the NWD, then-president Siegler named six others who had severed relations with the NWD. And they were not, of course, the only ones to leave the synod. Notices such as the following periodically filtered down from synod headquarters: “Four more men have left the Wisconsin Synod.”

Like Reim, some of the men who felt conscience-bound to withdraw from synodical fellowship had held responsible positions in the synod. A case in point is “Pastor M. J. Witt, the president of the Pacific Northwest District [who] resigned from synod” about the same time Reim did. In November 1960 it was announced that Pastor Harold Eckert, the executive secretary of the Board of Trustees, had asked to resign from the Board of Trustees.

Frederick Tiefel’s father, George Tiefel, Sr., who was pastor of two congregations in northern Wisconsin during this time, was actively involved in the affairs of the Lake Superior Conference. His name ceased to appear in conference minutes after he announced on August 25, 1959 “his severance from the W.E.L.S.” According to the conference minutes, Tiefel “felt the W.E.L.S. continued in sin with Mo. and he could not go along with this.” Tiefel also said, “By rejecting the floor com. report our Synod had rejected the Word of God.” According to the minutes “the chairman asserted that there are some who do not entirely share G. Tiefel’s convictions.”

When the chasm between Wisconsin and Missouri widened, Winfred Schaller, principal of WLA and synod secretary, took an active role in Winnebago to terminate relations with the LC-MS, advocating severing “brotherly relations with the Missouri Synod under present circumstances.” When he thought this was not done quickly enough, he made contact with others. At the northern end of the district, Radtke read a letter from Schaller in which Schaller announced his termination of fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. This surprised those conference members who had known Schaller as a quiet, dignified, warm human being; a fine choral director; and an exciting and stimulating history teacher at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Michigan. In passing, let it be noted that Schaller’s sister Selma was married to Edmund Reim.

That those were difficult days is recognized by any one who experienced them. Pastor emeritus Theodore Sauer, one of the men who lived through the trauma rampant in the Winnebago Conference, in reply to a query, has this to say about the times: “I wish I could help

you. You will recall that we went to Africa in 1961, right after the break. The matter was up for discussion a good many times, of course, before the actual break. There were differences of opinion, but I don't recall any real difficult conference sessions. By the time the actual break occurred, a number of Winnebago Conference members had already left the synod and so their voices were no longer being heard. A number of those were rather close to us, and so those were sad days".<sup>xxviii</sup> Sauer later felt an explanation for "sad days" was necessary and appropriate.<sup>xxix</sup>

Pastor emeritus Glenn H. Unke, secretary of the Winnebago Conference for many years following Reims resignation, wrote this: "I do not remember any conference resolution made that I was to forward to Synod at that time.

"I do remember that there was a 'sigh' of relief when the break finally was made. We had prayed that it would have had a different outcome, but the break was the Wisconsin Synod's final answer to some twenty years of admonishing and pleading for a favorable outcome to all the counseling and discussions with the LC-MS. It was not to be".<sup>xxx</sup>

The split in the congregation at Tomahawk proved to be a blessing in disguise for many individuals, for it taught them how to demonstrate and provide brotherly love in concrete fashion. When in 1959 a larger faction of the congregation left the Wisconsin Synod, the smaller segment needed help. Although the congregation had originally belonged to the Western Wisconsin District, the tiny group because of proximity was adopted by the Rhinelander Conference of the Northern Wisconsin District. At the suggestion of Radtke, at that time circuit pastor, the conference raised funds, drew plans, and built a modest chapel for the orphan group. Radtke recalled some of the details for this history: "We began construction in Oct. The Lord gave us warm and beautiful weather whenever work was scheduled. 42 men from all over the conference came for the actual construction. We were able to complete the building before spring."

During the 1961 convention held in Milwaukee, the synod voted 124 to 49 to "suspend fellowship." The die was cast. The deed was done. The Rubicon was crossed.

The crossing was less than shipshape. Not everyone wanted to reach the other shore at the same time! When St. Peter, Sturgeon Bay, invited the district pastoral conference to be its guest at its fall meeting, somebody raised the question whether the district could meet there in view of the congregation's disagreement with the synod over suspension of fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

The story was not finished. In January 1964, at Christ Lutheran Church in Menominee, Michigan, we are told, "The motion carried to thank Pastor Kujath [Mentor Kujath of the Lutheran Children's Friend Society, Milwaukee] and to ask him to convey the concern of the Conference regarding the fellowship relations of the staff at the Children's Home." Whether he did or did not is not known.

During these years, new words, phrases, expressions, and sentences were coined or, at least, used in the presence of laymen for the first time. *In statu confessionis* has been mentioned. Others include "suspension of fellowship," "conclave of theologians," "unbrotherly conduct," and "interim conference." The Protest Committee of WELS had a standard answer to all the protests that were made decrying the synod's failure to sever relationships with Missouri: "It [the Protest Committee] would pursue the course until deadlock is reached." "Deadlock" was also an addition to the synod's theological vocabulary.

The saddest of all tales is the story of families torn apart, something which happened to a surprisingly large number of people in all stations of life. The Rev. Bertram J. Naumann was one of eight signers of a letter directed to the Northern Wisconsin District, which met in Appleton,

Wisconsin from June 23 through June 26, 1958. It was a letter in which the signers “were constrained to declare [themselves] in protesting fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. A carbon copy was sent to the Rev. Oscar J. Naumann, then president of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod. Oscar remained with his ship; Bertram jumped to another: the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC), the same one Reim had boarded. Bertram and Oscar were kith and kin; the first was nephew to the second. The nephew also took his congregation at Green Garden to the other ship.

Doctrinal disagreements with smaller bodies that had had disagreements with the LC-MS also gradually unfolded. Conference minutes of a meeting held in 1964, at Stambaugh, Michigan tell us that “the floor was given to Pastor J. Wendland to present his essay on the ‘Critical Review of the C.L.C.’s Position on Church Fellowship.’” Three years later, at Grace Lutheran Church in Oshkosh, Pastor Martin Janke, quoting from the *Book of Reports and Memorials to the 39<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention of WELS*, said, “The Synod of Ev. Lutheran Churches (SELC) no longer shares the position we once held in common” and “No agreement [has been] reached with the Church of the Lutheran Confession. [We are] still talking past each other.”

### Education

Lutheran education on both the elementary and the secondary level has played a major role in the lives of many members of the Northern Wisconsin District. Trying to turn back the hands of time to determine which school was the district’s first is a no-win task, quite beyond the scope and limitations of this history. The reason is simple: congregational histories, the primary source for this kind of information, are inadequate—not because they are unreliable, but because our rich language is also an imprecise language. The people who wrote these histories used the word “school” in disparate ways when referring to early parish educational agencies. Each use, which may be correct in and of itself, does not help the person trying to identify its specific use. One chronicler may write that “the school was begun in 1862.” His definition of “school” could be a term of four to six or eight weeks taught by the pastor, perhaps in a room of the parsonage or in a corner of that room. The place may or may not have been arranged for teaching and learning purposes. Another writer may state that the “church opened its school in 1902,” insisting that a real school had to have a real teacher in a real school building. To a great extent, this writer’s “school” had to conform to the laws of the state; it had to be distinctive.

This type of dissimilarity is demonstrated in the Proceedings of the 1863 synodical convention: “The statistical report shows the following: 41 pastors, serving 73 congregations plus 42 preaching stations, of which 22 were under the *Reiseprediger* Moldehnke; 37 day schools; 48 congregations had a Sunday school.” There is no accompanying explanation of what “day schools” means.

Defining “teacher” within the context of Lutheran elementary schools, commonly and imprecisely called at the time “Christian day schools,” also poses a difficult problem. The parish pastor was more often than not also the teacher. Sometimes the position was filled by an older child. *The History of Morrison Zion Lutheran Church & School* says, “A student by the name of Jonas was the first teacher, assisting Pastor Kluge, who served our congregation from Reedsville.” We have no other information about Jonas, the assistant teacher: no last name, no age, no class or grade level. He must have been big enough and strong enough to maintain order.

St. John, rural Manitowoc, is typical of congregations which followed a precise schedule and an exact path in reaching the goal of offering its children a formal Christian education. In 1847, John Roepke, a man who was far ahead of his compatriots and his time, bought a piece of



land in Town Newton to give to his congregation to be used for the site of a school and a parsonage. In 1857, the congregation passed a resolution stating that no child of the congregation could be confirmed unless he or she had at least two years of instruction in the chief parts of Christian doctrine. In 1878, the pastor pleaded with the congregation to establish a *regular* school with a *teacher*. In 1903, the school was finally opened; its teacher was a graduate of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

Other schools in the NWD are older than St. John. Which one was the first school, as defined by our terms, is moot. More important is the fact that many congregations found Lutheran elementary schools reliable, trustworthy pillars which did and do support firmly the policies and the programs of local congregations.

First German Ev. Lutheran School in Manitowoc is typical of older schools in the district. Opened most likely in 1855, it was the recipient of a lot donated in 1860 for a *new* school, and the parsonage-schoolhouse was enlarged. That this was one building appears to be correct, simply because the writer of the *Historical Review* (of First German), who is very precise and linguistically correct, uses the singular verb *is*. By 1864, 193 children attended the school, and the congregation called its first teacher. The pastor had doubled as the teacher for the first nine or so years.

Some congregational histories are very careful in describing their schools. “Our Parish School” in the *Historical Sketch* published in 1938 by St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, Two Rivers, says this: “A complete school was organized at the time of Pastor Bartelt [1863], who gathered the children into his home where a special room was prepared. The school was more fully developed in the time of Pastor Braun [1866]. The subjects in which the children were instructed were: Catechism, Scripture texts, Bible history, composition, German grammar, history, geography, arithmetic, and nature study. The school was of eleven months duration, and extra time was used for instruction for confirmation.”

Conference minutes—written at a time when members, teachers, and pastors felt their schools were under siege—reveal a profound respect for their schools and a deep-seated fear they would be destroyed by hostile forces. Eighty years ago, Pastor Ph. Sprengling said this: “The congregational school is a great blessing, builds congregations and the synod. Dangers threaten them since the war [World War I]. Laws are being passed to destroy them. But also there are threats from within. [There is] often little concern about them in congregations. But the Word of God speaks to us. So every congregation needs a school. Most of our pastors and teachers come from these schools.”

The concern for parish schools and their improvement went beyond theory, that is, mere superficial attention to papers that discussed the merits of Christian education. Some extraordinarily far-sighted and absolutely astounding practical suggestions came from these conference meetings. The same meeting that heard Sprengling’s impassioned plea discussed at length a) the possibility of setting up a summer course for teachers and pastors “who want further education,” b) remitting the final two years’ costs of students attending the theological seminary and the teacher seminary, and c) set up a “Teacher Office” to find and recruit “women teachers, who would like to teach.”

Today the 153 congregations in the NWD support 58 elementary schools. The 5,508 pupils who attend these schools are taught by 371 teachers (252 women and 119 men). Respectively, these numbers represent 12.35%, 15.80%, 18.40%, and 18.40% of the totals in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

According to the Commission on Parish Schools, the Northern Wisconsin District also has 618 children enrolled in what the commission calls “Early Childhood Ministries.”

Additional figures rounding out this statistical picture show that the NWD has 12.80% of the synod’s pastors, 19.00% of its baptized members, and 19.30% of its communicant members. In 1998, the district contributed 11.50% of the synod’s funds for budgetary purposes, ranking last among the twelve districts in the “All Purposes Average Per Communicant” category.

Nearly four decades ago, this district and the Western Wisconsin District helped pioneer the development of a new off-campus student teaching program devised by the faculty of Dr. Martin Luther College. Under the direction of Professor Howard Wessel, the length of the practice teaching term was extended from about four weeks to eight or nine weeks. In addition to the five classrooms in St. Paul Lutheran School in New Ulm, schools in the Appleton and Watertown areas were invited to participate. Forty-four would-be teachers, under the supervision of 31 experienced teachers in 19 schools, took part in the expanded program during its first year, 1964-65.

### **The Lutheran High School Movement**

The report of the Educational Survey Committee, published in 1927 and commonly referred to as the “Moussa Report,” included this prescient statement: “The Synod should authorize and subsidize the establishment of preparatory schools, or academies, in many different parts of its territory, preferably according to conferences.” Although an academy, which by being named Northwestern Lutheran Academy aptly acknowledged its location and honored the intrinsic importance of the word “Northwestern” in the history of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, was opened a year later in Mobridge, South Dakota, the dream of area high schools serving all of the synod’s worker-training needs at the high school level and in all sections of the synod in educating its vulnerable teenagers never materialized. Even before the members of the synod could think about, adjust to, accept, and fund this new and novel plan, the Great Depression effectively smothered any expansion of all forms of formal Christian education.

The peace and prosperity which followed World War II became midwife to Moussa’s child. Moussa, Bergemann’s associate at St. Peter in Fond du Lac and a part-time teacher at Winnebago Lutheran Academy when the school was opened, would not have begun to recognize the educational institutions that emerged. They were quite different from what he had envisioned decades before. It is true that these schools, which in the vernacular are commonly referred to as “area Lutheran high Schools,” do provide worker-training tracks and specific courses to serve as feeders for the synod’s advanced worker-training programs. However, their primary thrust is directed toward providing a broad, distinctly Christian high school education for the “areas” they serve.

The Northern Wisconsin District supports three of these area Lutheran high schools. Some general information regarding their beginnings and the impact they had on the conferences that were and remain one of their main sources of support is pertinent.

### **Winnebago Lutheran Academy**

Winnebago Lutheran Academy (WLA) is the oldest of the three. Other than Wisconsin Lutheran High School in Milwaukee, which as a joint venture with congregations belonging to the LC-MS had existed since 1903, the opening of this academy in 1926 preceded the birth of its first exclusively Wisconsin Synod sibling by more than a quarter century. According to one of

the pastors of St. Peter Ev. Lutheran Church in Fond du Lac, Winnebago was the heartchild of the prayers of an eighth grade girl who attended the parish school. In keeping with her fervent expectations, St. Peter began a ninth grade; the academy sprang from the loins of that ninth grade.

The Winnebago pastoral and delegate conferences played critical roles in helping found and fund Winnebago Lutheran Academy. During a meeting at Menasha in 1926 Moussa and Bergemann asked the conference “to take over the Luth. high school, which now had a ninth grade, and further build it up until it was a complete high school, to relieve the Watertown college.”

Although the stated reason for taking over the high school—“to relieve the Watertown college”—is odd, on the following day, January 26, 1926, this resolution carried: “Moved that a committee be named, to draw up plans for a Lutheran High School Association.”

Bergemann was bold. The minutes of the “Lake Superior Delegate Konferenz” for June 3-4, 1930, state this: “On Pres. Bergemann’s behalf Mr. Grabowski made a plea for a free will contribution for Winnebago Academy.” The minutes add this strange item: “*Pres. Bergemann wants the names of all communicants of synod, that publicity may be sent them.*” What is even stranger is the following: “*Motion made; seconded, and carried that Bergemann’s request be approved.*” These actions were taken at a time when the northern conferences were awash in debt.

Although no incontrovertible, specific information exists, it appears from minutes of various conferences that Bergemann could be overbearing. One year after he asked for “the names of all communicants of synod,” he, at Rapid River on June 25-26, 1934, “pushed the matter if providing him with communicant lists.” What is not in doubt is the following: According to Melvin Croll, the secretary, “The pastors agreed to do so.”

After Winnebago Lutheran Academy was begun, the conference gave it proper attention. From its inception, academy teachers, variously called “instructors” or “professors,” and its principals or directors were encouraged to attend Winnebago Conference meetings. They did—often, it seems, to seek financial support of one kind or another. During a September 1947 meeting at Montello, Prof Martin Drews, a member of the academy faculty for 16 years, revealed WLA’s plan to erect a building on a newly-acquired site. He “appealed to the conference members for support of this undertaking”.

The most dogged and faithful reporter was Winfred J. Schaller, principal from 1948 until he left WELS in 1958. A sampling of his reports includes enrollment statistics, pleas for more students, purchase of a house to be converted into a dormitory for girls, and increased congregational participation. In 1950, Schaller was pleased to announce that members of nineteen congregations had joined the academy association and that the enrollment had risen to 147 students, ten more than the previous year.

Finances were a chronic problem for WLA, as they were for all area Lutheran high schools. In three back-to-back meetings in the early 1950s, Schaller initially asked for help and advice in arriving at a solution to the school’s money problems; secondly, reported that the financial difficulties of maintaining the academy were becoming increasingly grave; and thirdly, proposed a solution unheard of before that time. Whoever thought of “the Schaller solution,” one which would require the synod to part with some of its hard-gained dollars, has never been revealed. It became the question of the decade, one whose management bedeviled synodical academies and area Lutheran high schools.

Schaller, who had come to Winnebago Lutheran Academy from Michigan Lutheran Seminary, had that frame of mind which those outside its pale, for lack of a better phrase, call “the synodical mind set.” The synod, like the federal government to many people in the present day and age, is to be the fountain of final funding. When budgetary shortfalls occur, turn to Milwaukee for help. Schaller reported that the academy had been granted \$3,000.00 per year to help until “this question” had been decided. Most of the members of the synod did not even know that “this question” existed. Where, how, when, why, and to what degree this money was granted has never been divulged. People who were connected with area Lutheran high schools in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s—other than WLA—still think about the affair.

The fundamental question was this: shall the synod even consider the possibility of giving annual help to *all* parochial high schools that offer students to the church? The people who supported the idea thought that aid should be based on the number of students the high school enrolled in synodical colleges. Those who opposed the idea regarded it too radical to be discussed. The conference of presidents (CoP) had given its answer, weighing in on the side of those who opposed the idea. The CoP said: 1) “We recognize the value of Christian education on the secondary level. 2) This general statement of policy, however, does not mean that the Synod commits itself to subsidize such undertakings.” After some haggling and considerable bargaining, a complex formula was devised. It was based on a) the number of students involved, b) the number of years those students were enrolled in an area Lutheran high school, c) the appropriate classes those students had successfully finished, and d) the number of years those students were enrolled in a teacher or a pastor course. The arithmetic resolution of the formula would determine the amount of synodical assistance an area Lutheran high school received.

Brighter days for Winnebago Lutheran Academy lay ahead, and they led to the school’s diamond jubilee celebrated very appropriately in this the anniversary year of the synod.

### **Fox Valley Lutheran High School**

Although there was talk in the early to mid 1940s about starting a new Lutheran high school in the Fox River Valley, the first widely-publicized mention of what was to become Fox Valley Lutheran High School came at an unusual time and in an unexpected place. During a meeting of the Winnebago Conference in Montello in 1947, Pastor Gerh. Schaefer, who must have believed in striking while the iron was hot—he had just heard a strong pitch for Winnebago Lutheran Academy—announced that a rally was being planned at Appleton in support of a “new Appleton Lutheran High School.” Six years were to pass before that announcement became reality.

In the meantime, on June 14, 1948, “The Board of Regents of the Fox Valley High School Association” respectfully submitted this information to the Northern Wisconsin District: “That the Fox Valley Lutheran High School Association has been formed and is now a full-fledged organization.”

On the same occasion, the same group recommended this to the district: “That the District urge the Joint Synod to give consideration to the reimbursement of locally-supported Lutheran High Schools for acceptable students entering the college departments for training as workers in the church.”

The pastoral conference did its bit to enhance the credit side of Fox Valley Lutheran’s ledger. Conference collections, which had been designated for some kind of mission or charitable work, were now designated to go to the “new high school.” The early spring meeting of 1956 was no different. The members voted to “have an Offering during the conference service

and the whole Offering be given to Fox Valley Luth. H. S.” It is not important that the offering amounted to \$37.55; it is important that people were thinking about the school.

Six months later, on September 18, 1956, the Rev. Harold Warnke, who wore the hats of conference chairman and principal of the new school, asked to be relieved of his duties as chairman. He felt his obligations at the school would prevent him from attending conference regularly. Warnke was by all accounts a shrewd man. He knew which hat to wear and when to wear it. During the election to choose his successor as conference chairman, as principal he took the floor to report on the school’s enrollment and needs: desks, typewriters, tables, library books. When he felt he was becoming old hat, or even perhaps tiresome and bothersome, he sent in others attired like him. Hoge Bergholz announced that band instruments would be gladly accepted. A Pastor Waldschmidt reported that the Lutheran Youth Encampment wanted to give Fox Valley Lutheran High School (FVLHS or FVL) \$500, a generous sum 44 years ago. An unnamed person suggested that the conference buy books, review them, and then give them to the pastoral library of FVL.<sup>xxxii</sup>

When the question of fund raising at the school was brought up in 1963, the matter was referred to the Board of Regents “for their own good Christian judgement.” Although fund raising was never referred to again in conference minutes, there is a simply fabulous tale in FVL’s recently published cookbook about cooking up a storm for the school and its many needs. Called “The Peanut Brittle Story,” it tells how Anna Heuer Warnke and Julia Falk turned the memory of a childhood activity into a sweet dish for the school.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The product was frangible; the results were enduring.

Through the years, other matters that more than anything else reveal changing attitudes, values, opinions, and positions were brought up, discussed, and laid aside—to be solved hopefully by the passing of time. Thirty-two years ago, the “Introduction of Dancing in Our Lutheran High School” was judged worthy of discussion. Twenty-seven years ago a Pastor Kosanke led a discussion on square dancing, a topic which seems quite out of sync with what we today consider proper or improper. Slightly more than a dozen years ago, a faculty member of another area Lutheran high school presented “Shall We Dance?: An Assessment of Church-Sponsored Dances and Their Relationship to Our Goals.” No real answer was given, but a caution was raised: “Be careful about your goals.” No one gives dancing much thought today.

Like Winnebago Lutheran Academy, FVL had problems with titles. Kurt Oswald and Gerald Mallmann were teachers and/or instructors at Fox Valley Lutheran High School, equal in every respect as members of the faculty and in the minds of the students. In conference minutes Oswald is called “Professor” and Mallmann is called “Instructor.” This is surely not a big deal, but one of them must have wondered why the two were called what they were called. Gertrude Stein once said, “A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.”

Thirty years ago, someone raised this question: “Does not the fact that Fox Valley Lutheran High School has joined the Roman Catholic Athletic conference raise many problems regarding confessionalism or unionism?” Today one of FVL’s worthiest opponents on field, court, and diamond is the Catholic high school in Appleton.

The Northern Wisconsin District will celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of WELS with a day-long celebration on July 15, 2000. Bookending the event will be two great and glorious days in the history of FVL: On May 21, in the year 2000, at 4:00 in the afternoon, the date stone of its new school shall be laid. On September 10, in the year 2000, at 4:00 in the afternoon, the new school shall be dedicated to the glory of the Triune God and the welfare of his children.

### **Manitowoc Lutheran High School**

A very early mention of a Lutheran high school in and for the Manitowoc area came in February 1927 when, according to the minutes of the Manitowoc Conference, “Teacher Harmening brought up again the matter of a high school.” “Again” causes trouble for this history, for there is, as far as conference minutes reveal, no previous reference to a high school. The topic was revisited sixteen months later. During the pastoral conference in June 1928, Pastor Edward Zell, the conference visitor, read a report from the district president, E. Benj. Schlueter. One of Schlueter’s points concerned Lutheran high schools. A committee of three—Pastor Edward Zell, Teacher (?) Harmening, and Mr. Karl Struck—was appointed to study the control and the cost of upkeep of a high school. The committee was to report to the next meeting.

Two decades passed before the Manitowoc Delegate Conference returned to the subject in any meaningful way. The Great Depression, which caused havoc nationwide, did its dirty work also in eastern Wisconsin, putting on hold all thoughts of an area high school. In June 1950, the conference resolved to form another, different committee to study the feasibility of an area high school in or near Manitowoc. Pessimistic conferees questioned whether there would be “enough cooperation.” Five months later the conference assured the “committee reporting on the Lutheran HS that they would support it.” Although the minutes of both pastor and delegate conferences are relatively quiet when compared with the minutes of other conferences in other areas of the district—and thus the absence of a lot of words here—the tempo of meetings increased exponentially. On January 20, 1957, the Rev. Kenneth Seim was installed as the first principal of Manitowoc Lutheran High School (MLHS).

These were great years for the area Lutheran high school movement. Less than eight months after Seim’s installation, MLHS called its second full-time instructor: Frederick Manthey. Affectionately called Fritz by his fellow faculty members, he—after a goodly and Godly number of years in the teaching ministry—is living out his golden years in retirement in Little Chute. And one year later, almost to the day, another principal was installed at another high school, the first in the Wisconsin Synod West of the Mississippi: Saint Croix Lutheran High School, West Saint Paul, Minnesota.

As was the case with other schools, within four years the issue of finances raised its head at MLHS. Individuals, even though they were acting together, simply were not able to carry the load. Twelve years after Seim’s installation, the association of people became a federation of congregations.

Now, 44 years later, the original student body of fourteen has increased 28 times. The school, to everyone’s immense relief, satisfaction, and thanksgiving, has arrived.

The enrollment of the three area Lutheran high schools is at the time of writing 1,426.

### **Northland Lutheran High School**

The date was January 8, 1968; the place was Rhinelander. The occasion: the meeting of the Rhinelander Pastor-Teacher Conference. The speaker: Theodor O. Nommensen. His topic was “Christian Education as a Mission Arm.” The result was an unexpected but pleasant surprise: the motion carried to place “a discussion on Secondary Education in our midst on the agenda for the afternoon session.” Additionally, the specific topic of a Lutheran high school was to be placed on the January 1969 agenda of the conference.

Six years later, the conference heard this report: “D. Koch informed the Conference that the Rhinelander Jr. High School building was for sale for \$50,000.00.” Someone asked, “Is it time to consider a Lutheran High School?” By resolution, Zion Lutheran Church, Rhinelander,

was encouraged to “pursue this idea.” Although a Lutheran High School Feasibility Committee was formed, consideration moved slowly. Action moved even more slowly. The committee had not reported nine months later.

During the January 1976 conference meeting, the announcement was made that a meeting for people interested in an area Lutheran high school would be held the next month in Rhinelander. Radtke, who had been in the conference for some 20 years and was regarded as a senior advisor, slowed matters down. He expressed caution and raised questions regarding the high school’s organization, its responsibilities, and guidelines it would follow. He was especially concerned about the authority to whom the high school would answer. Five months later, someone muddied the waters by injecting the subject of woman suffrage. At the same meeting, the motion was made and carried that the circuit pastor represent the pastoral conference in meetings of the Northland Lutheran High School Association “prior to the incorporation of the Association.”

Before Northland Lutheran High School (NLHS) ever opened, someone questioned its recruiting methods. On April 10, 1978, at Grace Ev. Lutheran Church, Monico, the subject was raised. There followed a “discussion of the Northland Lutheran High School Association’s methods of recruiting. [The] question [was] raised whether the approaches are being made in a loving, orderly way.” There was no resolution.

John Schultz became Northland’s first principal in November 1978. The school, opened in September of the following year, has now found a permanent home in rural Mosinee. It had been located in Merrill and Wausau before this.

Even though the WELS churches in Merrill, Wausau, and Mosinee are members of the Western Wisconsin District (WWD), and NLHS is a member of that district, the school deserves a small niche in this history. The idea undergirding it was originally broached in the NWD and at least one of the congregations which help support it today is a member of the NWD.

### **Garden Outlots**

The Northern Wisconsin District planted the seeds of the Gospel in a number of different kinds of gardens: two of them were in mission fields across the face of Earth, one was in institutions which provided various types of care, and two were in camps for children and teenagers. Some of these seeds continue to bear bountiful fruit today; others have wilted.

### **WELS Lutheran Ladies League and Shoreline Circuit of LWMS**

The women of the Northern Wisconsin District have been actively involved in mission work for almost four decades. Two organizations, the WELS Lutheran Ladies League (LLL) and the Shoreline Circuit of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society (LWMS), actively assist the church in carrying out the Great Commission. They do so by learning about the needs of various mission fields through regularly-scheduled meetings and rallies, periodic activities, and speakers; by using their multi-faceted talents to supply specific needs; and by contributing generously to projects left wanting by budgetary shortfalls. The NWD should thank God for the work these two groups are carrying out.

Lutheran Ladies League is an independent group. Its members belong to churches holding membership in the Manitowoc and the Fox River Valley conferences of WELS; it is not affiliated with any parent organization. LLL held its organizational meeting on October 30, 1963. Attending were 81 people: delegates, pastors, and pastors’ wives, some of whom may have been delegates. Eleven months later, September 30, 1964, the group held its first meeting. It was a

rousing success. No less than 558 women from 36 churches attended. They contributed \$837.31 to the Christian Literature Fund for Africa. In today's dollars that \$837.31 would be a most handsome sum: \$4,458.00.

LLL has always looked forward. During its first decade, some 6,541 women attending the rallies collected \$11,466.40 to spread the gospel. Since then, it has contributed thousands and thousands of dollars more.

Twenty days after the tenth annual rally of the LLL, the Shoreline Circuit of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society was organized. That historic date was October 16, 1973. The records of the Shoreline Circuit are proof positive of that old adage, "Mighty oaks from little acorns grow." Shoreline's first financial entry shows a bottom-line balance of \$39.99. The last figure available to this history is November 4, 1988; it states, "The mission box monies totaled \$1,458.87."

Through the years, the Shoreline Circuit has been uncommonly generous. It has showered its bounty in many different places, and its acts of charity have touched many different people: home missions, foreign missions, the medical mission in Africa, the civilian chaplaincy in Europe, mentally impaired, visually handicapped, troubled teens, jails, houses of correction, prisons, college campuses.

Recent actions in the LLL and the Shoreline Circuit of the LWMS seem to indicate that although both groups are showing greater willingness to fashion their mission endeavors to suit their common goal, they prefer to continue as separate organizations.

### **Institutional Ministry**

In 1942 WELS authorized calling a full-time institutional missionary to work in the Fox River Valley area. According to the enabling resolution, the missionary called by the Northern Wisconsin Institutional Ministry would carry out his work from Green Bay on the north to Fond du Lac on the south. He would carry the gospel to WELS members in prisons, jails, juvenile detention facilities, drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities, mental health facilities, hospitals, and nursing homes. His work was to include all who were interested in his message.

The missionaries who worked in this field in the early years were shy in publicizing their work, and some of their names are lost to posterity. The *Proceedings* of the Fifteenth Convention of the North-Wisconsin District, held in Fond du Lac in 1946 state simply, "Two Institutional Missionaries in the Fox River Valley are under the supervision of the District Board." Nor are they mentioned by name in the *Proceedings* for 1948 and the years that follow.

The Rev. Arnold Schroeder, assisted by several Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary students, carried on limited work at what he initiated call "The Walls," the old state prison at Waupun, and at other institutions. However, calling someone who was willing to accept the institutional missionary position on a full-time basis proved to be difficult. Pastors who had not been trained at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for this unique and trying kind of work were understandably loathe and/or afraid to enter the unfamiliar arena. Thirteen years ago, someone who was not afraid accepted the challenge.

The Rev. Elwood C. Habermann of Watertown, South Dakota, who did accept the call and was installed as institutional missionary on August 23, 1987, believes he was the seventh man to be called. Habermann carried God's Word to at least seven different institutions from Green Bay to Kettle Moraine, traveling some 28,000 miles annually to do the work. He held worship and communion services, conducted adult membership and Bible classes, and annually baptized from ten to twelve adults. To finance the program at the time Habermann began his



work, \$1.00 was asked of each communicant in the district. Habermann carried out the work alone until the mid 1990s. Now listed among the retired pastors in the *2000 Yearbook*, he has been helping on a part-time basis since 1996.

The Rev. David A. Tetzlaff came on board on January 1, 1996. Tetzlaff was equipped for the daunting task. One of the seminary students who had helped Schroeder, he had done college campus and inner city work. Tetzlaff visited nine prisons, one mental hospital, and seven county jails. He annually traveled some 36,000 to 38,000 miles in carrying out his call. Tetzlaff's change in ministry (retirement) is given in the July issue of *Forward in Christ Northwestern Lutheran*.

During the 41<sup>st</sup> biennial convention of the Northern Wisconsin District, held at Manitowoc Lutheran High School, June 15-17, 1998, the district voted to merge its institutional work, officially known as the Northern Wisconsin District Institutional Ministries, Inc., with that of like associations in the Southeastern and Western Wisconsin districts. As of September 1, 1998, the new entity is the Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries Association.

### **Camp Bird and Hiawatha Lutheran Youth Bible Camp**

The minutes of both the Lake Superior Conference and the Rhinelander Conference frequently, banteringly, and pleasantly refer to two summer camps. One is for children from the fifth through the eighth grades, the other for teenagers. If not the camps *per se*, the joshing about them must have brought a great deal of fun to the conferees.

The official name for the children's camp is Lutheran Youth Encampment, Inc. at Camp Bird (LYE). Its popular name is Camp Bird. Begun in 1953 by Delmar C. Brick, then pastor of Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Kimberly, and Theodore Hartwig, then pastor of Riverview Lutheran Church, Appleton, it continues to minister to the needs of children who find special delight in God's great outdoors. Begun in a Marinette County park 17 miles west of Crivitz and located between that town and Mountain on County Hwy W, it was taken over by others when Brick and Hartwig left the Fox Cities area. At the present time, Pastor Edward F. Stelter, who lives in semi-retirement in Two Rivers, is in charge of the camp. He is assisted by his wife, Mr's. Lavon B. Stelter. The camp, which continues to be carried on in its original location, can accommodate 450 fifth through eighth grade children, 150 during each of its three one-week sessions during July. According to LYE's newest colored publicity brochure, "There are three main objectives for the camp: first, studying God's word; second, studying and enjoying God's creations in nature; third, building Christian fellowship..." Stelter reported that the camp does not reach capacity during the first week, but each year, he said, it is gradually getting closer to a full house.

Hiawatha Lutheran Youth Bible Camp, which served teenagers of the Lake Superior Conference, was begun about 1960 by the sainted James Hanson, pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Hyde, Michigan. The original site of the camp was Clear Lake in Michigan's upper peninsula, about 50 miles northeast of Hyde. The Rev. Armin Panning, the camp's first director, was succeeded by the Rev. Phil Kuckhahn when Panning left the district. Kuckhahn was director from 1963 to 1968. The Clear Lake site, which could accommodate about 115 campers, had a workable ratio of 11 campers to one counselor. Because of scheduling conflicts, the camp was forced to move to Camp Molinaire, near Channing, about an equal distance west of Hyde. When this happened, the campers who had come from the Sault Ste. Marie area set up camp at Cedarville, Michigan. After a number of years, Kuckhahn "just let it [the camp] die a natural

death.” His letter of March 11, 2000 closed with a warm testimonial: “I have a lot of good *memories* of a lot of fellow believers willing to serve the Lord with time and talents.”

### **District Presidents**

WELS members seem at times to be indifferent to the private lives and public careers of servants who work for them in church and school. Official and quasi-official records are scarce, scanty, and generally not readily available. Conference minutes, sometimes poorly written regarding both penmanship and content, often resemble sewing instructions and cooking recipes, two kinds of writing that all too frequently state the obvious and omit the apocryphal. The following example, taken from the minutes of one of the conferences of the Northern Wisconsin District, is absolutely not atypical: “The president was called on to report on the vacancies in the district.” The reader is left to guess about the details.

Conditions are not improving. Within especially the last decade, I believe, the unwritten but apparently official synodical attitude governing recording the lives of those who have gone before us can be summarized in a word: “Laconic.” Obituaries occupy less and less space in synod’s organs, and at times they are insultingly curt. As a result, this chapter is regrettably uneven and incomplete.

Much of the following material was obtained from helpful third parties, surviving family members, and the subjects themselves. Although some of the first-person materials are modest and self-deprecating, this history is indebted to all who contributed copy, and it herewith acknowledges their help and thanks them sincerely. At the same time, it publicly acknowledges that some who served the district faithfully and well are without question given less than their due.

Since its formation in 1917, the Northern Wisconsin District has been served by thirteen pastors who have filled fourteen administrations. The average age of these men when they were elected was slightly more than 49 years. The oldest was August Zich; he was 60. The youngest was Oscar Siegler; he was 38. The average length of time each man held office was six years, four months, 18 days. The briefest administrations were those of Walter Stroschein and Theodore Sauer; each of them served one term of two years. The longest was that of Carl Voss: 22 years.

### **Ad. Spiering**

(Gustav) Adolph Spiering was elected the first president of the Northern Wisconsin District in its first meeting—July 18, 1917—held immediately following the last session of the former Joint Synod of Wisconsin on July 17, 1917 in Milwaukee.

Spiering was born October 22, 1862 at Spremberg, Brandenburg, Prussia. When Spiering’s father lost his textile mill—the reasons for this unexpected loss are unclear—the family emigrated to America and settled in the Town of Grand Chute, Outagamie County, Wisconsin. Spiering *fi*ls was encouraged to attend Northwestern College and then the theological seminary, located at the time in Milwaukee. Spiering taught school in St. Paul, Minnesota and Milwaukee to help finance his schooling, made a mission sweep north of Green Bay at the request of the home mission board, and served as vicar at Naugart, where St. Paul congregation had been organized in 1861. After finishing his education, he accepted a call into the ministry in November 1885, at Manchester, where a congregation, another St. Paul, had been founded twelve years before. He was ordained and installed the next month. Using Manchester as his home base, he did mission work at two places in Kingston, where preaching stations or

congregations were formed, one early in 1867 and the other much later in 1891, at Marquette in 1877, Markesan in 1882, Randolph in 1888, and Cambria in 1891.

The New London area had been served before 1893 by two Lutheran churches: St. John and St. Paul. Although they belonged to different synods, they merged in 1893, chose a neutral name, Emanuel, and sent a divine call to Spiering. Spiering accepted and was installed on November 12, 1893. He would serve the congregation for 36 years, retiring only because of poor health. Spiering opened the parish school the day after he was installed and was its first teacher. Forty-eight children answered the call for a Christ-centered education. Today, Emanuel is the largest Lutheran school in the district.

In spite of Spiering's time-consuming schedule as pastor of a large congregation and teacher of a growing school, he continued the outreach work he had begun and enjoyed while at Manchester. He visited Lutheran families in Sugar Bush and encouraged them to attend Emanuel. This small community some six miles north of New London had been settled about 1850. Harvesting and processing tanbark from hemlock and oak trees and logging of pine, maple, and oak trees provided a subsistence livelihood until the settlers, who were people of the soil-farmers by instinct, background, and training-were able to clear the land to develop their farms. Because a round trip between Sugar Bush and New London by horse and buggy took anywhere from two to three hours, depending upon the weather and travel conditions, Spiering decided it would be easier for him to go to Sugar Bush than it would be for the Sugar Bush folks to travel to New London. He began conducting services in Cedar Dell school house on April 4, 1915. This led to the organization of Grace Lutheran Church at Sugar Bush in 1916.

One of Spiering's greatest joys during his ministry in New London must have come in 1918 when the congregation and he were able to host the first biennial meeting of the new Northern Wisconsin District. (The details of that occasion are given in the chapter titled "The District Is Born.") It was fitting that this historic event coincided with the silver anniversary celebration of the congregation.

Spiering died at the home of his daughter in Des Moines, Iowa on August 23, 1931. Following the funeral service at Emanuel, his body was committed to the good earth in New London, there to await the resurrection.

### **E. Benjamin Schlueter**

Edwin Albert Benjamin Schlueter, known for years in Wisconsin Synod circles simply as E. Benjamin Schlueter, was born August 28, 1880 in Watertown. During his ministry, he was pastor of congregations in and near Kingston (1903); St. John, Markesan (1909); and Grace, Oshkosh (1921-1952).

Schlueter served the church in wider capacities. He is the only person in the history of the Northern Wisconsin District who, like national president (Stephen) Grover Cleveland, served split terms. He held office from 1924 to 1928 and from 1932 to 1936. During the 1940s, Schlueter was first vice president of the Wisconsin Synod. He was also a member of the Commission on Foreign Missions. This was a new, important, and controversial committee created by the synod sitting in plenary session in New Ulm, Minnesota in 1945. This committee and its work became the field of battle for two opposing mindsets. On the one side were those who, the economy notwithstanding, opted for mission expansion overseas *now*; on the other were those who, because of heritage and financial considerations elected to move more cautiously and conservatively.

Schlueter served as president of the Synodical Conference from 1944 to 1950. Toward the end of his last term, the Boy Scout problem caused trouble in at least one locale close to his home base: Madison, Wisconsin. There, in spite of congenial relationships fostered especially among the lay people by the joint or central school supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and the Wisconsin Synod, scout troops were formed in at least two LC-MS congregations. What action Schlueter, in his official position, took is not a matter of record, Schlueter, who is remembered as a very colorful man, died March 9, 1952.

### **August F. Zich**

August F. Zich, like Spiering an immigrant, was born June 12, 1868 near Stargard, Pomerania, Prussia. The Zich family emigrated to America and settled on a farm near Waterloo. Zich attended the local Lutheran elementary school and was graduated from Northwestern College in 1890 and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1893.

Zich's path to the Northern Wisconsin District began in far away rural Austin, Minnesota, continued through Sleepy Eye, another small, country community in Minnesota, and ended in Green Bay. Zich served Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church from 1893 to 1896. A farming community congregation in Dexter Township, Mower County, it was on June 12, 1893 the site of his ordination and first installation. Zich and Caroline Lau were married on September 6, 1893, Light years ahead of his time, Zich introduced once-a-month English services at Trinity. Zich accepted a call to Sleepy Eye, serving St. John Ev. Lutheran Church there from 1896 until 1911. During these years, St. John called its first teacher for its school. Before then, the pastors had taught the children. The congregation also built a rather imposing, red brick church in 1902, totally different from the typical 19th century, white-frame structure Zich had known near Austin. During his sojourn in Minnesota, Zich served briefly as president of the Minnesota Synod from 1909 to 1910.

In 1928, the same year in which he was made a member of the editorial staff of *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Zich was elected president of the Northern Wisconsin District. His first recorded action as district president was to conduct a service at the June 11, 1929 meeting of the Lake Superior Delegate Conference held at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Gladstone, Michigan. Probably more typical of his presidential duties than the brief service was his April 21, 1931 presence at the meeting of the Lake Superior Pastoral Conference. With him were Pastors Gerhard Pieper and Gustav E. Bergemann, then president of the Wisconsin Synod. The meeting minutes state that Bergemann explained the financial condition of the synod; they say nothing of Zich and Pieper. This does not mean, of course, that Zich did not participate in the conference discussions and business. Zich served until his successor was seated, this in either 1931 or 1932.

Zich left Green Bay for a professorship at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Thiensville, a school he was able to serve only briefly—from September 2, 1931, when he was installed, until his death on June 24, 1939.

A minor, unresolved problem regarding Zich's tenure as district president remains. Both *Continuing in His Word* and the incumbent president of the Northern Wisconsin District say Zich was president until 1932. However, he was called to and installed at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in the fall of 1931. Three possibilities exist: Zich filled both positions until his successor was elected; this is probable. The district had an "acting president"; although this is possible, such an acting president's name is not mentioned in the synod's official organs. The district had no president for some months; this is improbable.

**Schlueter** served his second series of terms from 1932 to 1936.

### **Walter Pankow**

When ill health prompted Adolph Spiering to retire from his New London charge at the then-advanced age of 67, the parish he had served faithfully and well for so many years called a younger man. That younger man had celebrated his first birthday five days before Spiering was installed as pastor of Emanuel. That younger man had lived his entire life, up to that point, during Spiering's Emanuel pastorate.

That younger man was Walter Pankow. Born November 7, 1892 at Lake Mills, the son of Pastor Michael and Mrs. Sarah Pankow, he grew up near Waterloo, attended both the high school and college departments at Northwestern College, was graduated from the theological seminary at Wauwatosa, and was ordained into the ministry by his father in Waterloo on September 5, 1915.

Pankow's first charge was Grace Ev. Lutheran Church, Dalton, organized in the year of his installation. Two years later, he helped organize Trinity Lutheran Church at Friesland. After ten years at Dalton, Pankow was called to St. John Lutheran Church at Markesan. He remained there for four years and then accepted the call to Emanuel at New London.

Pankow's ministry at Emanuel, like that of his predecessor, was for a goodly and godly length of time: nearly 35 years. During those years he served his conference, district, and synod in various offices, each with increasing responsibilities. He was elected president of the Northern Wisconsin District for three two-year terms from 1936 to 1942. At the time of his death on July 4, 1964, he was a member of the Home Mission Board of the NWD.

Walter Pankow is buried in Floral Hills Cemetery, New London, with his predecessor, there to await their Lord's summons.

### **E.G. Behm**

The semi-official photograph of Ernest G. Behm, the fifth man to be elected president of the Northern Wisconsin District, is striking. It pictures him standing in the pulpit, a spot familiar to him for more than 48 years. His hands grasp the podium firmly. His face is calm and serene, his gaze steady and unflinching, his shock of white hair a tad unruly.

The picture epitomizes the man himself: strong, thoughtful, tranquil—all most desirable characteristics in a man who was the pastors' pastor and chief executive officer of the district from 1942 to 1946.

Behm was born at Woodville on April 5, 1892, about one year before Zich was graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Behm was himself graduated from the same school in 1916. Humanly speaking, there followed for this young preacher a series of taxing calls: the first, which lasted only two years, from 1916 to 1918, was to minister to six mission churches in and around Meadow, South Dakota. The second was to serve one church in Mound City, South Dakota; the present pastor of that parish serves the Mound City congregation and also Akaska and Tolstoy, both in South Dakota.

Behm's third charge, a dual parish in Wautoma and Red Granite, brought him into the Northern Wisconsin District, which he would leave only in death some 45 years later. After fifteen years in the Wautoma-Red Granite parish, Behm accepted a call to St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Town Forest. He was installed there on July 28, 1935. During that year, the congregation celebrated its 75th anniversary. Major repairs were made to the church, a new altar was purchased, and an anniversary booklet was published. The congregation numbered 260

communicants and 70 voting members; 40 children attended its elementary school. When the congregation celebrated its 100th anniversary, Behm was chosen one of its festival speakers.

We are not exactly sure what the members of St. Paul fed their pastors, but three of them who served the small congregation for 33 years—Edmund Reim, Behm's predecessor; Behm himself; and Oscar Siegler, Behm's successor—held responsible positions in the Northern Wisconsin District and the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod. Reim was president of the theological seminary, Behm president of the district, and Siegler president of the district and "the first administrator" of Martin Luther High School, New Ulm, Minnesota, after the high school and the college departments of Dr. Martin Luther College were separated and reconstituted as individual schools in 1962-1963.

Behm was installed as the first resident pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Kiel in 1946, accepting the call to serve the congregation after four others had returned it. He served the congregation until his death on May 12, 1965. Four pamphlets published between 1957 and 1980, which mark special occasions or anniversaries in the history of the church, are generous in their praise of his ministry. They cite "his spirited and devoted guidance" which led to improved church attendance and flourishing church activities. Nor do they forget the many improvements made to the property owned by the congregation. Among them were a new parsonage and a church rebuilt and enlarged to hold 300 people.

Behm was a teaching pastor. One picture and its accompanying text in one of the anniversary booklets show him illustrating his theses with charts and graphs. He was making sure everyone understood the point he was trying to make.

Behm's contribution to Wisconsin Synod literature, the brief but meaty *The Papacy Evaluated*, was originally published in 1946. It appeared in a revised edition in 1962. Although the book is long out of print and now largely unknown, it was in its day a popular read, one that pastors often recommended to their members,

Behm served the church at large in numerous capacities. He was visitor of the Winnebago Conference, member of the governing body of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and member of one of several committees that worked on the revision of the catechism.

### **Irwin J. Habeck**

Irwin J. Habeck was formed in a mold quite different from the five men who preceded him to the presidency of the Northern Wisconsin District. They were born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Habeck was born in the 20<sup>th</sup> (on May 7, 1904). Two of the five were born in Prussia; three were born in Wisconsin. Habeck was born in Winona, Minnesota. The average age of the five when they were elected was 50 plus. Habeck had just turned 42 when he was elected in 1946.

Habeck was graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1927. Two years later he married Dorothy Seefeldt. He served ably and well the dual parish of Minocqua-Woodruff and congregations in Medford, Weyauwega, and Milwaukee. During his pastoral ministry, Habeck served as visiting elder of both the Wisconsin River Valley Conference and the Winnebago Conference. He was a member of the board of directors of Northwestern Publishing House in Milwaukee and a member of the synod's prestigious Committee on Doctrinal Matters. Habeck was a vice president of WELS from 1947 to 1966, a position the synod constitution required him to relinquish when he opted to exchange the pulpit for a seminary classroom.

During his administration, Habeck was called on to report on the progress of the synod's Second Building Fund collection. Because his reports, which were to be an undistorted representation of the bottom line, were sometimes pessimistic, he found himself nagging the

brethren to do better, a chore which was fundamentally at odds with his friendly, genial nature. His presidency was troubled by the Hope congregation problem in Fond du Lac in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1947, at the mid-winter meeting of the Winnebago Conference held in North Fond du Lac, Habeck read a letter which he had written to Behnken, the LC-MS president, protesting Hope's organization. Other than make the writer-sender feel that he had executed his duty faithfully, these letters, as far as we can determine, accomplished next to nothing.

Like Zich, Habeck left the district for a professorship at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, a position he held from 1966 to 1984. During his professorship, he wrote a definitive essay review of Koehler's *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, and responses he gave to questions about "war and peace" were characterized as "thoughtful." Habeck died in Mequon on June 5, 1984. He had celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday less than a month before.

Although Habeck, who was an eminently approachable man, had a long, varied, and distinguished career in the pulpit and in the classroom, he is mentioned only once in Fredrich's *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, the history of WELS which today is supplanting Koehler's as the source of the history of WELS, an exclusion which this history cannot account for.

### **Walter L. Strohschein**

Walter Strohschein and Irwin Habeck were as much alike in age and birthplace as Habeck was different from his predecessors. Their birthdays were only nine months apart, and they were both native Minnesotans.

Strohschein was born on March 2, 1905 in Albion Township, Wright County. He attended the high school department of Dr. Martin Luther College, Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, from which he was graduated in 1930. He was ordained on July 13, 1930 at St. John, Buffalo, Minnesota and installed a month later, August 17, 1930, at Trinity in Dundee and Peace in Waucousta. Three months later, he and Bernice Oelke were married. In 1936 Strohschein added Immanuel, Campbellsport, to his roster of obligations. In 1949 he was called to St. John Ev. Lutheran Church in Princeton. He remained there, first on active duty, then in partial retirement, until his death on October 19, 1998.

Strohschein was elected district president in 1950. His first official presidential act was unpleasant. On September 25, 1950, at a meeting of the Winnebago Conference, he called attention to the new mission the LC-MS had started in Appleton. He urged the conference "to give heed to the district resolutions that the various conferences study our position over against such congregations as the Appleton mission." Habeck, the former president, who was still a member of the conference, said in a famous mixed metaphor which the secretary faithfully recorded, for posterity, "We do not regard as sister congregations such congregations that have been organized in an unbrotherly manner, as has been the case at Fond du Lac and Appleton."

On October 17, 1951, the Lake Superior Pastoral Conference passed a resolution which, even in the most generous of interpretations, must be regarded as enigmatic: "The Lake Superior Pastoral Conference begs of N. Wisconsin District President W. Strohschein that he supply the pastors of the Lake Superior Pastoral Conference with mimeographed reports as soon as possible." The words "as soon as possible" almost require the reader to reach an unwanted and perhaps even unwarranted conclusion. Having said that, it is true that placing an evangelical construction on this resolution is difficult.

Strohschein and Vice President Pless were welcomed to the meeting held at Florence, Wisconsin in June 1952. This meeting is important because, for the first time in the Northern Wisconsin District, Strohschein gave a brief analysis of the new pension plan, something quite

novel and long overdue in the Wisconsin Synod. The new plan would do away with the Board of Support, synod's anachronistic attempt to alleviate the humiliating poverty that often accompanied post-Great Depression retirement. In reality, the BoS was so hampered by lack of funds that it did little more than prolong the undeserved pauperism of indigent teachers and pastors or their widows and orphans.

Stroschein served only one term. This history was not able to determine why the district took the unprecedented action of denying an incumbent a second term. The action does not harmonize with his obviously auspicious service as visiting elder.

Stroschein's actual, physical departure from the office of district president is as paradoxical as his brief tenure in office. The eighteenth biennial convention of the Northern Wisconsin District heard him preach the opening sermon, ratified 27 committee and other appointments he had made, received with thanks his "Report of the District President," and passed the following heart-warming resolution: "We recognize the faithful service of Pastor W. L. Stroschein during the past biennium and acknowledge this by a rising vote of thanks." Then it replaced him with a new president: Oscar J. Siegler.

Stroschein's career as visiting elder or circuit pastor of the Winnebago Conference was considerably longer than his presidential term: 27 years. His peers, who evidently held him in high esteem, regarded him a good fit for the position of "pastors' pastor."

Stroschein was also a member of synod's Board of Trustees and served as its chairman.

### **Oscar Siegler**

Oscar Jens William Carl Siegler was born in Bangor, September 28, 1914, the son of Pastor Carl and Mrs. Emma Siegler. He attended Bangor High School, Northwestern Preparatory School, and Northwestern College. After being graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he was assigned as tutor at Northwestern Lutheran Academy, Mobridge, South Dakota. He served Grace Lutheran Church in Pickett from 1941 to 1946 and the dual parish of St. Paul and St. John in Mt. Calvary, Town Forest, near Fond du Lac from 1946 to 1963.

Siegler served as secretary of the Winnebago Conference from June 29, 1947 through June 14, 1954. His minutes are complete and legible, a delight to read, this at a time when minutes were still recorded by hand in a hardbound book with ruled pages. Siegler was president of the Northern Wisconsin District from 1952 to 1962, a tumultuous decade which saw intra- and intersynodical strife rise to fever pitch. He was called on frequently to give detailed accounts of the papers, discussions, and resolutions presented at various meetings and conventions. His position as secretary of the synod's doctrinal commission enabled him to speak with authority.

Siegler also was expected to provide the pastors with answers to troubling questions. Typical of what he did during these trying times is the content of a transcript taken from the minutes of the Winnebago Delegate Conference meeting held at Martin Luther Church, Oshkosh, June 20, 1955. "The floor was given to President O. Siegler. He introduced his subject matter by offering a definition of unionism and describing the dangers of unionism to the church. He then presented a long list of unionistic activities by members of the Mo. Synod and reported that these activities were supported and defended by the Mo. Synod delegates at the Synodical Conference" [Chicago, 1954].

Siegler left the parish ministry when he accepted the call to be the first administrator of Dr. Martin Luther High School, New Ulm, Minnesota, in 1963. He was an amiable man, and his closeness with the members of his faculty was unsurpassed. Siegler retired from the active



ministry in 1982, pursuing at the end of his career his favorite hobbies: telling jokes, gardening, bird watching, and fishing. He died on May 19, 1993.

### **John Dahlke**

John C. Dahlke's resume as an official in the Wisconsin Synod is different from those of his contemporaries. He was president of the Southeastern Wisconsin District (1948-1950), vice president of the Western Wisconsin District (1952-1958), and president of the Northern Wisconsin District (1962-1968). The minutes of the conference meetings he attended, either as a member of the conference or as an official of the district, clearly reveal that his priorities were distinct, pressing, and important, not only as the elected head of the district, but also as the called pastor of a congregation or, on the most basic level, as a communicant member and voting person.

Dahlke was concerned with teacher and pastor vacancies in the district and in the synod. He faithfully noted those vacancies at every conference meeting he attended, and examples of his devotion to detail are numerous, openly available to anyone who has the time and strength to read conference minutes.

Dahlke also kept a watchful eye on the level of stewardship demonstrated by the Northern Wisconsin District when it faced unfavorable comparison with itself and with other districts. At Faith Lutheran Church, Oshkosh, in February 1964, he "gave a brief report concerning the percentage of Pledges kept by the other districts." In May 1965, at Zion Lutheran Church, Peshtigo, he reported that district congregations for 1965 subscribed \$536,902.00, an increase of \$18,000.00, or approximately 3.5%, above the previous year. That was good news, and Dahlke was pleased to rejoice in it.

Dahlke was also interested in the condition of education in the Wisconsin Synod, and he reported whenever possible on the activities and progress of the so-called "Blue Ribbon" Committee (COTTF-Committee on Teacher-Training Facilities).

Dahlke was born on June 13, 1907 at New Prague and attended Lutheran elementary schools there and in Belle Plaine. Both villages are in Minnesota. He prepared for the ministry in the high school department of Dr. Martin Luther College, Northwestern College, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Dahlke's ministry was rich and varied. After graduation from the seminary in 1934, he was assigned as tutor to Dr. Martin Luther College. A year later, he was ordained and installed as pastor of Jerusalem Ev. Lutheran Church, Milwaukee. He married Caroline Kansier the next year. In 1950 Dahlke accepted the call to be pastor of St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church in Tomah. Eight years later he was called to be pastor of St. Peter Lutheran Church in Weyauwega.

Dahlke's obituary, published in the Weyauwega Chronicle on Thursday, August 1, 1974, says he "passed away on Tuesday morning at Appleton Memorial Hospital following a three-week illness." Conference minutes to the contrary had mentioned his health for a number of years. In deference to his privacy, they did not reveal his illness. At a meeting held in the latter part of 1966, the conference visitor gave a brief report on his health. At Crandon, in April 1967, a motion carried to "extend our prayers for his [Dahlke's] continued good health." At Eagle River, Wisconsin, in September 1967, the secretary of the Rhinelander Conference was instructed to "send a letter of well-wishes to President Dahlke." The August 5, 1974 minutes of a meeting held at Manitowoc Lutheran High School state simply, "Because of the death of Pastor John C. Dahlke..." Dahlke had died on July 30 and was buried three days before the Manitowoc meeting.

## Theodore Sauer

Theodore A. Sauer succeeded Dahlke in 1968. During his term in office he, Oscar J. Naumann, the president of synod, and James Schaefer, pastor of Atonement Lutheran Church, Milwaukee and director of the synod-wide Called to Serve program, were summoned to rally the members of the NWD behind that program.

As president, Sauer was also touched, although less inimically, by the unpleasant Prot stant problem. The minutes of the Winnebago Conference, which reflected the members' uneasiness over the lingering Uetzmann problem, state with exceptional curttness, "Furthermore, if anyone wants information on the suspension of Immanuel, Manitowoc, regarding the Prot stant matter, he 'should contact Pres. T. Sauer.'"

Sauer also experienced the trauma of the break with the LC-MS. Although he went to Africa in 1961, immediately following the separation, and thus did not attend any conference meetings after the action which severed fellowship with Missouri was taken, he remembers what happened. His e-mail correspondence, dated February 5, 2000, is given in the chapter titled "Intro- and Intersynodical Relations." However, one sentence merits repetition: "*By the time the actual break had occurred, a number of Winnebago Conference members had already left synod and so their voices were no longer being heard A number of those were rather close to us, and so those were sad days*" [italics mine].

Sauer was born May 25, 1915, in Saginaw, Michigan, the son of Michigan Lutheran Seminary Professor Adolf Sauer and his wife, Wilhelmina nee Westendorf. Sauer's schooling was conventional: St. Paul Lutheran School and MLS in Saginaw; Northwestern College; and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

After teaching for a half year at Mount Lebanon Lutheran School, Milwaukee, Sauer was ordained and installed as pastor of St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, Livonia, Michigan on February 16, 1941. After fifteen years there, he accepted the call to Grace Ev. Lutheran Church, Oshkosh.

But a stateside parish ministry was not to be. In August 1961, Sauer was commissioned missionary and superintendent of the WELS mission in Zambia, Africa, then a British protectorate known as Northern Rhodesia. He served a congregation in Lusaka and supervised mission outreach in several rural areas. Family health problems forced him to cancel his return when his furlough ended in 1964. An American interval of five years followed, during which time he served Grace Ev. Lutheran Church, Manitowoc.

During this time, Sauer played a role in the Prot stant matter. The 1966 convention of the Northern Wisconsin District had rescinded the 1938 suspension of Pastor Theophil Uetzmann and Immanuel Congregation in Manitowoc. A year later, according to a note from Sauer, "Sauer as conference visitor assisted the congregation in calling Glenn Unke to be its pastor." "Assisted the congregation" must mean that Sauer was obligated to compile the call list from which the congregation, directed by the Holy Spirit and not the "conference visitor," then made its choice.

Africa repeated its siren serenade in 1970. To succumb to the serenade or to enjoy the melody the office of district president was singing was a difficult choice. Sauer recalls Naumann saying, "A good district president is easy to come by; a world missionary is not".<sup>xxxiii</sup> Because it's the kind of remark one tends to remember and even cherish, perhaps it settled the matter for Sauer. Nevertheless, he returned to Africa. During the following seven years, Sauer served the mission and medical outpost at Mwembezi, some 40 miles from Lusaka. In 1971, he was called to be superintendent of the WELS mission in Zambia and Malawi and became chairman of the newly organized Lutheran Church of Central Africa. Two decades later the church posted

impressive numbers: 150 congregations, fourteen preaching stations, and 26,833 baptized and 13,555 communicant members.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Sauer returned to America in 1977 and accepted a call to St. James Ev. Lutheran Church in Portage, Michigan. During his time in the Midwest, he served the church in other positions. He was called to be the executive secretary of the WELS Board for World Missions, a post he held from 1978 until his retirement in 1984.

When Sauer retired from the full time ministry, he and his wife, the former Althea Duehring, who married him in 1941, moved to Manitowoc and became members of Bethany. Mrs. Sauer, a registered nurse, who had been of great value to her husband and his work, especially at the medical mission in Mwembezi, died March 7, 1990.

### **Karl A. Gurgel**

Karl A. Gurgel, who served as district president from 1970 to 1974, was born in Globe, Arizona, February 5, 1915. He was graduated from Northwestern College in 1937 and from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1940. He and Lydia Naumann were married on June 15, 1941 by her father, Pastor William Naumann, at St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, Watertown.

Before being welcomed into the Winnebago Conference of the Northern Wisconsin District, Gurgel served First Lutheran Church, La Crosse, Wisconsin and St. John Lutheran Church, rural Caledonia, Minnesota, a member of the Red Wing Conference of the Minnesota District.

Gurgel's introduction to the district came about because of intracongregational strife. On February 22, 1960, at Faith Lutheran Church, Fond du Lac, President Oscar Siegler was asked to report to the Winnebago Conference about the split of St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church, Fond du Lac. Siegler reviewed the positions of the ministers and the subsequent actions of the congregation. Because the vote which followed favored the position the synod was following with respect to the synod's relations with the LC-MS, Pastors Gerhard Pieper and Waldemar Schuetze, together with like-minded members, began to conduct separate services. The congregation then called Gurgel to be their pastor, a position he held until 1984.

Not quite eleven years later, Gurgel was elected president of the district. As did the men who preceded him, Gurgel regularly and at some length discussed synodical and district events and reported on calls and vacancies in the district. One such report, on April 19, 1971, at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Fond du Lac, revealed eleven vacancies in the district and 80 throughout the synod, precipitating a strange and radical discussion for a pastoral conference: "Why do some pastors receive many calls and others few or none?" The conference secretary failed to record answers, if any, to the question. During these years, Gurgel was *ex officio* a member of the Northwestern College board.

Gurgel was an extrovert, a genuine, down-to-earth people person. He had an easy air about him, and he could strike up a conversation with almost anybody on almost any topic at almost any time in almost any place. When Karl A. Gurgel died on February 16, 1999, at the Fond du Lac Lutheran Home, the church militant lost a truly "happy warrior."

### **Carl W. Voss**

Gurgel was only 59 years old when he pleaded that he be not considered for a third term. The district obliged him and elected a still younger man to succeed him. Carl Voss, who had become second vice president of the Northern Wisconsin District only ten years after entering

the district, was 45 when his peers chose him as their leader. Voss would hold the office of district president longer than any of his predecessors.

Voss' path to the presidency followed a much-tramped trail. Encouraged, albeit gently, by both his mother, a homemaker, and his father, a pastor, to prepare for the preaching ministry, he attended Lutheran elementary schools in Tawas City and Owosso, both in Michigan; Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, where he had been born on September 22, 1929; Northwestern College; and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. His seminary schooling had been put on hold for one year (1953-1954) while he tutored at his high school *alma mater*.

1955 was a very important year in Voss' life. He was graduated from the seminary on June 2, was married to Margaret Peter on June 26, and was ordained and installed on July 31 as pastor of the dual parish of Christ in Beatrice, Nebraska and Emmaus, located eight miles southwest of Beatrice. Four years after Voss left, Emmaus' voters, in an enlightened move, elected to discontinue services. The reason: declining attendance. Many members had already transferred their membership to Christ.

In January 1960, Voss accepted the call extended to him by the mission board of the Northern Wisconsin District. His assignment was to begin a new mission on the southwest side of Green Bay. Installed in early June, Voss recalls those first days, weeks, and months with a great deal of nostalgia. Voss writes, "[It] was a rich spiritual joy to be on the ground floor of a new mission, get it organized, and be a part of its amazing growth." In the beginning, the congregation had eleven voting members; the average Sunday attendance was 97. The attendance now averages about 814 (1999 *Statistical Yearbook*).

Early on, the mission and its pastor decided to make outreach a primary objective. In choosing to become less than a mega-church, they set goals of 750 souls and 500 communicants as a congregation large enough for one pastor to minister to satisfactorily. If the Lord granted growth beyond those numbers, they agreed, missions would be started in outlying areas. And so the congregation found itself serving as impetus for missions in Town Suamico (1973), far southwest Green Bay (1990), and Bellevue (1995).

Several matters occupied the diligence of segments of the district or the district itself during Voss' presidency. Less than a half year after Voss was elected, the Winnebago Pastoral Conference became concerned with what some of its members perceived to be federal government intrusion into the affairs of the church. On November 18, 1974, the conference chairman read a letter from Voss which opposed Wisconsin Lutheran High School's use of Title II funds. Voss' third point said that we should "positively try to remove this Offense." If there was a follow through of any kind, it was not recorded in the conference minutes.

What was called "triangular fellowship" became an issue in the 1970s and 1980s. "How are we extricating ourselves from fellowship with Missouri?" was often asked. Relations with Bethesda Lutheran Home in Watertown, Wisconsin seemed to be especially irritating. However, these discussions apparently reached no resolution. Late into the 1990s at least one Wisconsin Synod pastor served as the head of Bethesda's governing board.

The stickiest problem, and the one which caused Voss the deepest personal agony, was the resurrection of what is popularly known as "The Prot stant Controversy." More than a half century had passed since the problem had arisen in the fall of 1926 at Schofield, a village near Wausau. Pastor William Beitz presented a paper which criticized spiritual life in the Wisconsin Synod and issued stern calls to repentance and a renewed life of faith. Sides formed, and the conflict over the paper deepened with each additional reading. It finally reached the faculty of the theological seminary-with dire results.

Like the proverbial cat with nine lives, the issue surfaced publicly again in the late 1970s and early 1980s. St. John Lutheran Church, East Bloomfield (rural Fremont), founded in the backwoods in the valley of the Wolf River in 1864, is one of the oldest Wisconsin Synod churches in the Fox River Valley Conference. The man who was pastor of the congregation since 1976, Floyd Brand, fixated his ministry on what has become called the “repentance teaching” of the Protestant movement, accusing members of his parish of being less than fully and God-pleasingly repentant. Following several meetings, including one which was open to the entire congregation and apparently also to visitors, failed to change Brand’s heart, mind, and theology, the congregation declared him outside the pale of fellowship. It withdrew his call in 1980.

Robert Christmas, pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Green Bay and of like mind with Brand, had attended the open-congregation meeting held at East Bloomfield. The minutes of the Winnebago Pastoral Conference dated February 23, 1981 describe Voss’ dealing with Christman and the congregation. Following an exchange of letters and several meetings, Christmas’s call was rescinded by the congregation in an uncomfortably close vote: 82 voters favored rescindment; 75 opposed it. When Christmas began services of his own, some 250 members, including three members of the school faculty, followed him; some 400 stayed with St. Paul. The teachers’ calls were also rescinded.

With some justification, affairs like this tend to take on a life of their own and spread beyond their immediate province. As early as April 29, 1981, at St. Matthew Ev. Lutheran Church in Beaver, the circuit pastor, reporting on a meeting of circuit pastors in Madison “also made mention of the situation with Pastor Robert Christmas who has been removed as pastor of 1<sup>st</sup> Lutheran, Green Bay, WI and has formed his own independant [*sic*] congregation in Green Bay.”

Voss recalled his feelings in an e-mail dated February 12, 2000: “This was a very wrenching time for me personally since my relationship with the congregation and its former pastor [Robert Christmas] had been so very warm and cordial.”

Following the sorry recitation of the sorry events, the Winnebago Conference in that same meeting asked for a paper on “the whole Protestant matter.” Some twenty months later, in November 1982, Professor Edward C. Fredrich of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary raised and, as briefly and simply as possible, tried to answer seven basic questions about the movement. The crux of Fredrich’s paper lay in the questions and the answers numbered “4” and “6&7.” In answering Number 4, which dealt with doctrinal differences, Fredrich said, “No conclusive discussions have taken place to state this [that doctrinal differences do exist] for sure.” Numbers 6&7 dealt with efforts to heal the breach. Fredrich said, “This is difficult because whenever we ask them to discuss issues [*sic*], they say ‘Go read *Faith Life*’”.<sup>xxxv</sup>

It is ironic that this meeting was held at St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, East Bloomfield. Brand was gone, replaced by Norbert A. Gieschen, who ministered to the congregation from 1981 until his retirement from the full time ministry on January 1, 1995.

Voss, a positive influence in the Northern Wisconsin District, left Green Bay to serve, in the hapless terminology of our day, a social security call in Texas. Now in full retirement (allegedly) in Watertown, he is still very active. He is comfortable with e-mail, and he responds to queries with the alacrity many younger men might envy.

### **Douglas J. Engelbrecht**

Douglas Engelbrecht was a mere quarter of a century removed from his introduction to the Northern Wisconsin District when he was elected its president in 1996. A little more than 25

years before, on September 21, 1970, at St. Lucas Lutheran Church, Kewaskum, the chairman welcomed the new members to the Winnebago Conference. Among them was Vicar Douglas Engelbrecht, new to Wisconsin Lutheran Campus House, Oshkosh.

Engelbrecht was born in Watertown on February 15, 1946. Other than kindergarten, his entire school life was spent in schools of the Wisconsin Synod: St. Mark Lutheran School, Northwestern Prep (now Luther Preparatory School), Northwestern College, all in Watertown, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

After his junior year,<sup>xxxvi</sup> Engelbrecht and Gayle Mattek were married. The following year, Engelbrecht was given his vicar assignment: he would be the first full-time vicar at the campus house. His work in Oshkosh was made more arduous when the man who was to be his supervisor<sup>xxxvii</sup> accepted a call to Michigan. The young vicar was asked to add the two shepherdless congregations, Faith and Immanuel, to his appointed rounds. He survived, returned to the seminary, and was graduated in 1972.

Engelbrecht believes his place in seminary history may be infamous. He wrote in an unpublished autobiographical sketch: “I may go down in history as the only seminary graduate who was not there to receive his call. We were told by President Lawrenz to wait for the bell to ring summoning us to the presentation of calls. My classmates were so ‘antsy’ they headed for the chapel long before the bell rang. In fact the bell never did ring, since all the seniors were already in the chapel with the exception of one. By the time I decided I had better join the group, bell or no bell, they were past my name and a classmate in h [sic] back said, ‘You’re going to North Mankato.’”

“North Mankato” was St. Paul Lutheran Church, North Mankato, Minnesota, where the tardy one served from 1972 to 1976. During this time, he felt privileged to train several vicars and serve as chairman of the board for The Lutheran Home Association in Belle Plaine Minnesota. His relationship with this association continued for some time after he had left the Minnesota District. In February 1977, he told the members of the Winnebago Pastoral Conference he would be pleased to provide “information on the Home since he serves on their Board.”

Engelbrecht became a member of the Winnebago Conference in July 1976. Then he accepted a call to Trinity Lutheran Church, Neenah. He has been Trinity’s pastor since. During these 24 years, his assignments have increased in scope and responsibility. Sixteen years ago, he was asked to “fetch a cup of water”: that is, to research and report on “what the proper procedures are when a pastor is removed for cause” and also present Articles 23-25 of the Augsburg Confession. Since then, he has been asked to carry increasingly heavier buckets of water: chairman of the Board for Worker Training (now the Board for Ministerial Education), member of the now-defunct Coordinating Council, and second and first vice president of the Northern Wisconsin District. He is one of three district presidents on the Synodical Council.

The thirteen men who served the Northern Wisconsin District as president during the past 83 years came from widely diverse backgrounds. With temperaments as different as their origins, talents as contrasting as the good earth on which they grew up, and abilities as dissimilar as the people who milled the molds in which they were formed, they—with the guidance of the Holy Spirit—were of one mind and like mind. Pertinent parts of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 summarize these men and their work, and we thank God that they were blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, that they held fast the faithful word as they had been taught, and that they were able by sound doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayers—even to this year, the year 2000, the 150th anniversary year of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

## Acknowledgments and Sources

During its 83-year history, the Northern Wisconsin District felt no need to write the story of Gads handiwork in this corner of his creation. The 150th anniversary celebration of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod awoke a latent longing and prompted the "Forward in Christ" committee to find appropriate ways to manifest the district's thanks for the Lord's blessings. Under the chairmanship of the district's first vice president, the committee determined that producing an *introductory* history of the district would be a fitting celebratory activity.

Many people were helpful in completing this history of the district, and their assistance should not be overlooked. The original members of the "Forward in Christ" history subcommittee were considerate in lending a helping hand whenever one was needed.

*People* who provided information in various forms-snail mail, e-mail, personal memories, booklets, anniversary pamphlets-include, but most surely are not restricted to, the following: Forrest L. Bivens, Inna Brandl, Larry Cross, John A. Dahlke, Michael Engel, Douglas J. Engelbrecht, the library staff of Fox Valley Lutheran High School, Joel P. Gaertner, Mark A. Gass, Norbert A. Gieschen, Mark Hannemann, Paul Hartwig, Timothy A. Henning, Mary Hoffmann, Philip Kuckhahn, David W. Laabs, Keith D. Lauber, Wilbur Luehring, Greg Otterstatter, Philip K. Paustian, Gordon Peters, Marvin Radtke, Clare L. Reiter, Theodore A. Sauer, Bettie M. Schroeder, David W. Schroeder, James Schumann, Glenn Schwanke, Philip P. Spaude, Ronald C. Szep, Glenn H. Unke, Carl W. Voss.

To any person whose name is inadvertently omitted from this list, herewith accept my sincerest and deepest apologies.

Delinar C. Brick, Ruth Roebke-Behrens, and David W. Schroeder deserve special mention: the first for the yeoman work he did, first of all, in collecting; then, literally plowing through; then, translating extensive sections written in German script; and, finally, synthesizing the minutes of the Manitowoc conferences; the second for actually driving those extra miles to find and pass on needed biographical material on Adolph Spiering; and the third for proofreading the entire original manuscript and offering helpful current stylistic and technical suggestions.

All persons are mentioned by name only, thus forestalling the "Dance of the Titles."

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**Miscellany:**

The minutes of pastor, delegate, and pastor-teacher conference meetings of the five conferences that make up the Northern Wisconsin District were **the** single most useful and most detailed source of materials used for this history. Unless otherwise indicated, all materials enclosed within quotation marks (“ ”) are taken from these minutes. The quotations are verbatim and include the spelling, punctuation, and abbreviations used in the documents themselves. Subsequent histories that do not have access to these minutes regretfully lack a vital fountainhead of materials.

Congregational pamphlets celebrating anniversaries of persons and institutions contain interesting background material. Some of these pamphlets were provided by individuals who are listed above; many others were provided by Professor em. Delmar C. Brick; the rest are in my personal collection.

Synod and district *Proceedings* were helpful, even though complete files apparently do not seem to exist. If they do, they are presently not available in the office of the district secretary and, consequently, are not readily available for use in writing about selected segments of the synod and the district.



## Web Sites:

[www.yellowstonetrailwi.com](http://www.yellowstonetrailwi.com)

[www.yellowstonetrail.org](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org)

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<sup>i</sup> The original names of the three Wisconsin districts did not include the suffix *ern*, which is now attached to each of them. They were, in the secretary's translated minutes recorded in *The Northwestern Lutheran*, called North Wisconsin District, Southeast Wisconsin District, and West Wisconsin District. In subsequent issues of *The Northwestern Lutheran*, they were given various artistic names. Nomenclature uniformity did not come for some time.

<sup>ii</sup> The official and legal names of these congregations historically included the apostrophe 's, as in *St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church*. At some time, and in some place, someone decided this usage was provincial and decided for all of us that we would do without the apostrophe 's. This history follows that present-day form and deletes the apostrophe 's, as in *St. John*.

<sup>iii</sup> Variant spellings of names found in early records are common.

<sup>iv</sup> *Wisconsin Atlas & Gazetteer*, 1992, p. 56. Town Newton is outlined and Newtonburg is located by name.

<sup>v</sup> Bading's exploits are described more fully in *Northwestern Lutheran*, March 1995.

<sup>vi</sup> "Vacancy" was not used at this time. I have not been able to determine when or where it came into general use.

<sup>vii</sup> "Road" is inappropriate. It is used only because I could find no more fitting word.

The following paragraphs try to put into some sort of perspective the difficulties that early, pre-road travelers experienced:

A small part of the Yellowstone Trail, characterized as "a good road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound," which is generally regarded as our country's first transcontinental highway, cut through Wisconsin from only *after* about 1912 until about 1930. This was more than a half century *after* Bading and others missionary trailblazers were required to travel unmarked paths where segments of this famous trail would later go.

Yellowstone—affectionately called a "road" when the sky was blue and the bed was firm and dry—went north from Kenosha-Racine to Milwaukee, northwest from Milwaukee to Fond du Lac, and almost due north from Fond du Lac to Oshkosh, Neenah, Menasha, and Appleton. Then it headed almost due west through the present hamlets of Dale, Medina, Readville, and Fremont and west by northwest through Weyauwega, Waupaca, Amherst, Plover, Stevens Point, Marshfield, Abbotsford, and Owen. From there, it again went almost straight west, following what is today County X from Owen through Thorp, Stanley, Cadott, and Chippewa Falls. At Chippewa Falls, it dropped south to reach Eau Claire, and then it meandered west through Dunn County to reach its Wisconsin terminus in Hudson.

The Northern Wisconsin District, the Southeastern Wisconsin District, and the Western Wisconsin District of WELS had or still have congregations in some of these communities. Thirteen of them belonging to the NWD were founded many years before "Yellowstone" became a "good road." The oldest of the group, according to the 1999 *Statistical Report*, is St. Paul in Dale; it was founded in 1859, 53 years *before* J.W. Parmley of Ipswich, South Dakota conceived of the concept of a transcontinental route. Today, St. Paul lies a stone's throw north of U.S. Highway 10. It numbers 434 baptized members and 356 communicants.

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<sup>viii</sup> Armin Engel. “WELS First Traveling Missionary,” *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 9-20. In another article published in *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, “Early Contact with Waupun State Prison,” Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 38, Engel calls the *Reiseprediger* an “itinerant missionary.”

<sup>ix</sup> Arnold Lehmann. “Wisconsin Synod *Reisepredigt* Program,” *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 21-43.

<sup>x</sup> The Rev. Orson P. Clinton, founder in 1850 of what is today the Congregational United Church of Christ, Neenah, preceded Fachtmann in this part of the Wisconsin wilderness. Accompanied by his wife Caroline, Clinton was sent out by the American Home Mission Society (AHMS), the cooperative missionary arm of the Presbyterian and the Congregational denominations. The Rev. Stephen Peet was one of the officials of the AHMS who was instrumental in Clinton’s commissioning. Although I believe it is an interesting—and probably significant subject to investigate further—we do not at this time know whether Fachtmann met Clinton or, for that matter, Peet. The former circumstance is possible; the latter, quite improbable.

<sup>xi</sup> Identifying an individual with only one initial and his family name was considered *du jour* during this time. It may have been; workers were few, but it frustrates researchers who try to identify more precisely any given individual. The practice is completely inadequate today.

<sup>xii</sup> *Casuistry* is the attempt to apply general ethical principles to particular cases of conscience or conduct.

<sup>xiii</sup> Gordon Peters. E-mail dated February, 29, 2000.

<sup>xiv</sup> Greg Otterstatter. Undated personal letter, copies of eleven newspaper clippings, and “End Note on the Mears Corners Church” taken from the history of Trinity Lutheran Church, Neenah.

<sup>xv</sup> Readers who are interested in helping complete the history of the Northern Wisconsin District can assist by providing information *re:* other congregations which, although they once belonged to WELS, no longer exist or have transferred synodical membership. Please send any information you have to Morton A. Schroeder, 94 Lynn Drive, Appleton, WI 54915-3026. The e-mail address is <Lynncroft@aol.com>. Some work has been done in this field by Sister Terassita Kettel (?) and Marcie Baer in their *Ghost Parishes and Cemeteries of Manitowoc*, 1982. Professor em. Delmar Brick, 1140 South 35<sup>th</sup> Street, Manitowoc, WI 54220-5416, has also indicated an interest in this largely unexplored field.

<sup>xvi</sup> Interested readers can find corroborating details of these meetings in *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, pp. 206-207.

<sup>xvii</sup> In this note, jotted on my *ms.*, Professor em. Ernst H. Wendland wrote, “And also Pastor Fred Thierfelder in Appleton.” This information, although most likely reliable, was not documented.

<sup>xviii</sup> *The Northwestern Lutheran*, August 25, 1918, p. 134.

<sup>xix</sup> *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2, footnote, p. 37.

<sup>xx</sup> Armin Engel. “The Composite Picture of the Early History of Our [Northern Wisconsin] District,” delivered to the Winnebago Conference, February 2, 1959, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Fond du Lac.

During the time Engel was a member of the Manitowoc Pastoral Conference, he also delivered a number of papers to the conference. The first, presented September 16, 1963, dealt with the early history of the Northern Wisconsin District and the Manitowoc Conference. The second, given on November 16, 1964, was titled “The Northern Wisconsin District—Persons, Places, Events, covering up to the year 1960.”

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<sup>xxi</sup> John Philipp Koehler's side of his part in the Protéstant Controversy is told in exacting detail by Leigh D. Jordahl in his "Preface to the Second Edition" and his "Introduction" to Koehler's *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, pp. vi-xxx.

<sup>xxii</sup> Primary sources were unavailable when this history was written; secondary sources are at odds with each other.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Richard Frohmader, May 11, 1987, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Iron Mountain, Michigan: "How to Get the Most Out of a Pastor's Salary, or Personal Pastoral Stewardship, or Brother, Are You Prospering on Your Salary? If Not, Why Not?"

<sup>xxiv</sup> The lay delegate was Mr. Emil A. Grabowski, a member of Salem Ev. Lutheran Church, Escanaba, Michigan. Grabowski, who left East Prussia for a new life in the New World, arrived in Escanaba in 1901. He was a penniless pauper. Within ten years he was a prosperous businessman and respected member of the community. He served his conference, district, and synod conscientiously and commendably for more than twenty years. Although his first love in the church was mission work, his name appears regularly in the minutes of the Lake Superior Conference and the *Proceedings* of the Northern Wisconsin District in many different contexts. Grabowski, generous to a fault, was highly respected. When one writes about him, one is sorely tempted to use *italics* in less than moderation.

<sup>xxv</sup> *The Northwestern Lutheran*, June 30, 1918, p. 104.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Readers who are interested in a lucid explanation of this phenomenon are encouraged to read the detailed study referred to in Note 36.

<sup>xxvii</sup> I know that "confusion" and "division" are troublesome words, but I did not use them to titillate or dismay my readers. *They were used by conference participants, were recorded in conference minutes by conference secretary(ies), and were accepted by conference members in subsequent meetings.*

<sup>xxviii</sup> Theodore A. Sauer. E-mail dated February 5, 2000.

<sup>xxix</sup> Sauer, in a written note on file, later explained the words *sad days* this way: "...they brought a parting of the ways to co-workers long closely associated in their service in the Lord's Kingdom."

<sup>xxx</sup> Glenn H. Unke. Undated letter pencil-marked "Mailed: 3/2/00."

<sup>xxxi</sup> This worthwhile idea never worked out; the hoped-for, specialized library never grew to workable proportions, and take-out or use records indicate it was used infrequently.

<sup>xxxii</sup> *O Taste & See*. Cookbook Publishers, Inc., 1999, p. 325.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Theodore A. Sauer. E-mail dated March 2, 2000.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> *To Every Nation, Tribe, Language, and People*, p. 220.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Edward C. Fredrich. "The Protéstant Controversy," *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 19-32.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> The four seminary years are labeled in this fashion: the first year is called the "junior" year; the second is the "midler"; the fourth or last is "senior." During the third year, the seminary student "vicars," that is, he is assigned to practical work in the field under the supervision of a veteran pastor.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Vicars, with some humor, tongue-in-cheek, and some awe, label their supervising pastors "bishops." The word is generally avoided in face-to-face conversations.