

PASTOR WALTER LEEGE
A
MONTANA MISSIONARY

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In September 1914 Pastor Walter Leege arrived in Roundup, Montana. A graduate fresh out of Concordia Seminary in Springfield, Illinois, he had come to serve Lutherans in Roundup and the surrounding area. Before long his ministry would include an area from Roundup north to Grass Range, then east to Sand Springs, then south to Ingomar, then west back to Roundup and everything along and within that route, a route of approximately 225 miles in length. In addition, he served points west to Ryegate and Custer Gulch. For a time he even traveled as far as Miles City. (see map - appendix 1) From 1914 until deteriorating health forced him to retire in 1957, Pastor Leege brought the comfort and truth of the Gospel to the people in this area of Montana. Although he was not a very big man - 5'7" and 165 lbs - the Lord accomplished much through him.

Walter Leege was born on November 25, 1890 in St. Marie, Green Lake County, Wisconsin. His father Robert Ewald Leege had come to America from Germany. His mother's family had a homestead three miles north of Princeton, WI where his parents were living at the time of his birth. It was in Princeton at St. John's Lutheran Church that Ewald Adolf (Walter) Leege was baptized on December 25, 1890 by Pastor A.G. Hoyer.

His father worked on a farm, but the summer following Walter's birth, Robert Leege suffered a sun stroke while haying. So Robert was encouraged by his employer (who was interested in starting a cheese factory) to take up cheese making. This he did. When Walter was about three, Robert moved his family to Black Creek where he interested some farmers in dairying and together they started a cheese factory. It was here that Walter began his education. His mother was a good friend of the school teacher and so was able to get young Walter admitted to grade school when he was not quite four years old.¹

¹ Leege, letter to Pastor Suelflow

Walter's grandfather lived three miles from his father's cheese^{factory}. In the wintertime Walter would hitch his dog up to his sled and travel down the frozen Fox River to visit his grandpa.

Growing up in Black Creek, Walter liked to fish - a hobby he continued to enjoy throughout his life, although his ministry seldom allowed time for this pursuit. The fish Walter caught as a boy, he would sell for five cents a piece so that he might have a little spending money. Walter also enjoyed tennis and chess, and was quite good at both.

As a boy, Walter would also walk in his sleep. In the morning his parents would find his boots all wet, but Walter didn't remember anything that had happened during the night. So the Leege family had to start locking their doors to keep Walter inside and safe.²

In 1900, Robert Leege started a cheese factory in Neshkoro and the Leege family moved to this small town of about 100 people. Here Walter completed his grade school and high school education. It was also here in Neshkoro that Walter received his catechism instruction under Pastor H.C. Rowald. He was confirmed in Neshkoro at Zion Lutheran Church on April 10, 1904.

Walter graduated from high school at age 13, earlier than usual even in those days. Robert Leege thought that it would be best if his son received a good education, so he sent Walter off to Ripon College. In Ripon he lived with his maternal aunt and her husband, who was a mail carrier.

The following summer, 1905, Walter returned home. During the summer his father became sick with typhoid and died. This left Walter, his younger sister and his mother alone with the family cheese factory. Walter tried to help his mother with the cheese factory, but he was too slight of build to handle the heavy jugs of milk. So

² Johnke, personal interview

Walter went to spend the winter with relatives.

Since the teenage Walter was small and often sickly, the doctor thought it would be good for him to spend as much time outdoors as possible, so the summer following his father's death Walter hired out to work on a small farm. He received twenty-one dollars a month in wages.

In the fall he returned to Neshkoro to live with his mother. In Neshkoro he got a job as a delivery boy for a general store. A stone quarry had been started a few miles north of Neshkoro with about fifteen families living near it. Walter's job was to contact these people for their orders and the following day he delivered their goods. Through his delivery route, he became acquainted with a Golhke family. Their son Theodore was studying for the ministry at Springfield, IL. The Golhke family, as well as one of Walter's aunts, encouraged him to enroll at Springfield.

And so Walter Leege entered Concordia in Springfield. He took the examination to see if he might test out of the first year. He passed in all subjects except German, but was not allowed to skip the first year. While in school in Springfield, he worked in a store on Saturdays and was the helper of an electrician. Eventually he worked as the electrician for the school. Because he was often sick, he considered dropping out of school, but was encouraged by Professor Pieper who promised that he would be sent to a place where it was dry.

In 1912 he was sent to Wolseley, Saskatchewan, Canada, to vicar. His supervising pastor was Pastor Wetzstein, who was the chairman for the Saskatchewan District Missions. He received twenty-five dollars a month salary. When he first arrived in Canada he stayed with a family by the name of Banneman until he was able to find a large one-room house to rent for ten dollars a month.

In Wolseley several of the Lutheran families informed Vicar Leege that they wished to have him teach their children German. Another man, Mr. Grunwald, was

summoned to appear before a peace officer because he was not sending his children to the public school. He asked Vicar Leege to accompany him. There at court, Vicar Leege met the chairman of the school board. This man was interested in finding some way to have the German children in school; and so a school was organized with Vicar Leege as the teacher. The necessary English books were supplied by the school district., and Vicar Leege taught the children to read and write in both English and German.

Vicar Leege and a couple of members built benches for the new school for the children to sit on, although sometimes he simply conducted school at his house because the school was so cold. Parents paid one dollar a month for the first child, 75 cents for the second child, 50 cents for the third, and nothing if there were anymore. Out of this tuition fee, Vicar Leege ordered German books. The rest was his pay for teaching. Vicar Leege had about twenty students in his class. At times one or two of the boys would even board with him.

Some families who were sending their children to the public school were also interested in having their children learn German. They asked Vicar Leege to conduct an evening German class for their children. This class ended up including a couple of adults. One of those who attended the class for a time was Miss Theo Wilcox whom Walter Leege would later marry. He had about a half dozen students in this evening German class.

Vicar Leege was then approached by a man who knew of several people who were interested in learning English. And so Vicar Leege began conducting an evening English class. For each student in his evening language classes, Vicar Leege received one dollar a week.

In addition to his teaching duties in Wolseley, he was also sent to start services at several outlying posts including Winthorst, Indian Head, and Broadview. So Vicar

Leege was kept very busy. Teaching five days a week from morning until late evening, and conducting worship services on Sunday.

For Christmas that year, Vicar Leege's school-age students, including those in the evening German class, put on a Christmas service. Vicar Leege taught them to sing Christmas songs and accompanied them on his violin. He would continue to make use of this talent throughout his ministry in Montana, leading the congregations in singing by playing his violin when no piano or organ was available.³

In 1913 Walter Leege returned to Springfield to finish his Seminary training. He graduated in 1914 and was assigned to a parish in Roundup, Montana. He was ordained August 9, 1914 at Zion Lutheran Church in Neshkoro, Wisconsin by Pastor Walter Albrecht.

Before going to Montana though, Pastor Leege, at the urging of his mother and sister, went back to Wolseley, Saskatchewan to propose to Miss Theo Wilcox. Pastor Leege writes:

"Felt that I should not get married for a year or two, but my mother and sister felt differently about it. They persuaded me that I should at least become engaged and since Theo Wilcox was the only oldest girl that I had known and seen quite a bit of, I was encouraged to visit her and to propose to her, if she was still to be had. I went and saw and was accepted. Then asked the parents if it was alright with them. The mother was most happy. The father said if she wanted to marry a preacher, it was alright. The mother suggested that we wait until next June to be married. To this we agreed." ⁴

After any necessary wedding plans were made, Pastor Leege climbed into the

³ Leege, letter to Pastor Suelflow

⁴ Leege, letter to Pastor Suelflow

saddle and rode off for Montana. On his way down from Canada, he stopped in Winnett before arriving in Roundup. There were several cowboys there at Winnett because there was a roundup going on. So Pastor Leege stopped and preached a sermon for them before continuing on to Roundup.⁵

He arrived in Roundup on September 4, 1914 and checked into the Palace Hotel. He conducted his first actual services in Montana the following day on Saturday, September 5 in Belmont and in Lavina. And on that Sunday he conducted his first services in Roundup. He stayed at the Palace Hotel for a few days until September 9, when he moved in to board with a Mrs. Decker.⁶

He stayed at Mrs. Decker's until he was married. His wedding, however, took place earlier than originally planned. As already stated, Pastor Leege and his future bride had planned to be married the following June. But circumstances at the Wilcox home pushed that date up. Theo's sister was coming home along with her husband and small son. The house they were living in was short of room and Theo would be without a room. So she wrote to Walter and asked if it would be all right if they were married that fall. That was agreeable to Walter but with his new pastoral duties he was unable to go to Wolseley. And so Theo came down to Montana and the couple was married at the home of Pastor Paul Meyer in Lewistown on Wednesday, November 4, 1914.⁷

Missouri Synod work was first begun in this area of central Montana by Pastor Paul E. Meyer from Lewistown. He first conducted services at Lake Basin in January of 1912. Later that year in September he held services for the first time in Roundup and in December in Lavina. A year later, in December of 1913, he began services in Belmont. Then just a couple weeks before Pastor Leege arrived, on August 24, 1914,

⁵ Zinne, personal interview

⁶ Leege, personal pocket calendars

⁷ Leege, letter to Pastor Suelflow

he preached for the first time in Melstone. This initial work set the stage for Pastor Leege, who had come to serve the scattered Lutherans living in this area.⁸

The town of Roundup to which Pastor Leege arrived in 1915, was a rough, frontier town. Coal began to be mined at Roundup beginning in 1907. The miners were a rough group of individuals. **“The bars in Roundup were always full and there were lots of shootings and killings and brawls.”**⁹

Roundup began in 1882 as a stage stop between Lewistown and Billings. The original stage stop was on the south side of the Musselshell River. In the 1880's this part of Montana saw the land overrun by hundreds of thousands of cattle. The glory days of the cattle barons lasted less than ten years, when the harsh winter of 1886-87 combined with dry summers and overgrazing, wiped out most of the cattle. Many took up the cattle business again after that, but the herds never reached the size they had been before that winter. 1906 saw the last of the great cattle roundups take place and marked the end of the open range.

The 1890's brought the railroads through Montana. In 1909 the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad complete a line which ran through Melstone and Roundup. At that time Roundup moved to its present location on the north side of the river. Pastor Leege made great use of the railroad for his travel, traveling 5,000 to 8,000 miles a year on the train.

The railroads also helped to bring in the homesteaders. The Homestead act of 1862 gave land to anyone who wanted it. A person had to file a claim to receive 160 acres, then he had to stay on the land and farm it for five years. At the end of the five years the land was yours to do with as you pleased. In 1909 the government enlarged the land size to 320 acres. And in 1912 it decreased the number of years you had to

⁸ Meyer, letter to Pastor Leege

⁹ Howard, personal interview

remain on the land to three.

And so the homesteaders came to Montana in great numbers. On one day in May of 1913, the Great Northern Railroad sold 503 tickets to homesteaders moving into Montana. People came from all over and by nearly any means. So many people moved into this area that in 1915 **“there were lights all over place. You could look in every direction and you could see lights there were so many people.”**¹⁰ Today that is hard to imagine, because you can look for miles and not see a light. With so many people moving into the area, many of them from the Midwest, Pastor Leege would not have had any difficulty finding Lutherans to contact.

The first year of his ministry Pastor Leege conducted services weekly in Roundup and about once a month in numerous other places namely Belmont, Lavina, Melstone, Kelly, Lake Basin and at a Mr. Weinhold's farm which was near Roundup. He also made a couple of trips to Sumatra and one to Jordan. All of these services were conducted in English, but in addition to these he also had a German service once a month in Roundup. He would generally have at least three services every Sunday, and sometimes had services on Monday. At Christmas time, Christmas services for some of the congregations were held on the day after Christmas, because there were simply too many to get them all in on one day.¹¹

Services were primarily held in people's homes or in school houses. Especially in the outlying areas of his circuit, as he traveled from place to place, Pastor Leege would simply conduct services in ranch homes for whoever was present. In Roundup the congregation was able to rent a church for two dollars a time. In Melstone services were held in the Congregation Church, which is now the parsonage of the Congregational Church. Beginning about 1929, Lavina rented the local Methodist

¹⁰ Neumann, personal interview

¹¹ Leege, personal pocket calendars

Church.

The first church building belonging to any of Pastor's Leege's congregations was built in Roundup in 1925. It was dedicated on May 10, 1925 before an attendance of more than 200 people, who had come from far and near. A debt of \$2,500 was negotiated in order to make the building possible. Much of the work, however, was done by the members, which helped to keep the amount of money needed to a minimum. But when the Great Depression came only a few years later, there must have been times when even this debt appeared to be more than they could ever hope to repay. But in 1937 the debt was paid and on May 2 special thanksgiving services were held.

To accompany the singing, if there was no organist or piano, Pastor Leege was able to play a little. But often there was no piano or organ available. When that happened, Pastor Leege would take out his violin, which he carried with him, and accompany the singing with it.

Pastor Leege traveled among these congregations without the benefit of our modern transportation. It appears that the horse that brought Pastor Leege down from Canada, did not belong to him, because when he arrived in Roundup he had no mode of transportation. So Pastor Leege bought a bicycle. For about a year, until he bought a Model T in 1915, Pastor Leege rode his bicycle around to the different parishes. When it was muddy, he would ride as far as he could and then he would carry his bike. If he had to walk he usually walked along the railroad tracks since it was an easier surface. Nevertheless he often came home black and blue from his waist all the way down to his ankles from where the bicycle had banged up against him as he carried it.¹²

In 1915 Pastor Leege bought a Model T touring car. Of course in those days

¹² Howard, personal interview

cars had no heater, no electric starter and no windshield wipers. Although this was an improvement over his bicycle, travel was by no means easy.

What roads which did exist were not paved. The first road in the area that was paved was highway 87, which was not paved until the very late 1930's. Although some of the roads maybe had a little gravel, they were rough. Often Pastor Leege had only ^a cow trail _^ to drive over and follow.

With these conditions, snow or rain could make travel impossible. The soil of eastern Montana, known as gumbo, may be hard as concrete when it's dry, but when it rains the gumbo becomes slick, like driving on grease. The gumbo balls up on your tires until they won't turn round. When Pastor Leege got into gumbo, he would have to stop and dig the gumbo out from under the fender over the wheel. Then he would roll a little farther and repeat the process again of digging out the gumbo.¹³

In bad weather, there were Sundays when Pastor Leege was not able to make it to worship service, or if he did sometimes he had no one to preach to.¹⁴ Like many other missionaries at that time in this part of the country this certainly would have been a frustration for him. Pastor Leege possibly may have said or written words similar to these of a Wisconsin Synod pastor in the Dakota-Montana mission field in 1922. At the least he would have had similar feelings and experiences.

"I, too, have been endeavoring to console myself when the weather and road conditions had been such that either I was unable to meet my appointment, or if I did, the audience was little or nothing, that it was the Lord who was responsible for the weather. He assures us that He earnestly seeks the salvation of every soul, that salvation comes only by the means of His Word, to be preached unto every creature; He also knows how sorely those entrusted to our

¹³ Howard, personal interview

¹⁴ Leege, personal pocket calendars

care are in need of the Gospel. Then, why He sometimes seems to make it impossible for us to preach, or keeps many absent, is surely something which neither I nor many others are able to understand. But that is not our business either. Our duty is to do the best we can, to be found faithful in our calling.”¹⁵

At other times when he was able to make it he wouldn't be able to get home after services and would stay overnight wherever the last service was. Sometimes this meant sleeping in the barn on the hay.

Such rough driving conditions also meant frequent flat tires. For these Pastor Leege was prepared. He carried with him his own vulcanizing kit. After fixing the hole in the tube and the tire, Pastor Leege would have to pump for fifteen or twenty minutes with his hand pump to inflate the tire before he could continue on his way.¹⁶

And flat tires weren't the only car troubles that were to be encountered. One evening when he was returning from a meeting in Winnett, his car quit on him about half way home. He was about 15 miles from the ranch of Otto Johnke, who was a member and a friend. He was able to catch a ride part of the ^{way} but had to walk the last three miles or so to the Johnke ranch for help. About 11 o'clock at night, he knocked on their door and Otto got out of bed and helped Pastor Leege make it back to Roundup.¹⁷

Traveling through Montana in those days could also be dangerous. Once Pastor Leege picked up a man to give him a ride as he was coming down from Grass Range to Roundup. The man pulled out a gun and stuck it into Pastor Leege's ribs. Well Pastor Leege didn't panic. He explained to the man that he was a minister and

¹⁵ Fuerstenau, p 120

¹⁶ Howard, personal interview

¹⁷ Howard, personal interview
also Johnke personal interview

that the Lord would punish him if he pulled the trigger. He told the man that he was expected at home and that people would certainly miss him if he didn't show up. If he was missing, he assured the man that there would be a manhunt. And he was successful in talking the man out of doing him any harm.¹⁸

But despite the dangers and difficulties of travel, Pastor Leege did travel a great amount in serving the Lutherans in the area. In 1938 his records show that he traveled 10,074 miles by car and 5,800 by train.¹⁹ And Pastor Leege was not reimbursed for mileage. His travel expenses often came out of his own pocket, although the congregations tried to help out when they were able.

But all of this travel meant that Pastor Leege spent little time at home. In 1915 his daughter Dora was born and in 1918 his son Robert was born. His daughter Dora said that **"he was there so seldom that I think it was sometimes kind of hard for us to realize that he was our dad, he was usually gone."**²⁰

Yet Pastor Leege was able to influence his children. He saw to ^{their} their spiritual training and had them involved in the church. Dora played organ and taught Sunday School. His son Robert would follow his father into the ministry. In 1931 at age 13 Robert went off to Mobridge to Northwestern Lutheran Academy. This must have been quite a hardship on Robert and the Leege family, being away from home during these Dust bowl and Depression years.

On occasion, Pastor Leege would take his children with him. One time when Dora was only six, he had her drive from Roundup to Melstone. The gas was on the wheel, but she was not able to reach the brake. As they drove along following the road or trail, Pastor Leege sat in the passenger seat and studied.²¹

¹⁸ Howard, personal interview

¹⁹ Leege, personal pocket calendars

²⁰ Howard, personal interview

²¹ Howard, personal interview

Generally though Pastor Leege drove by himself. All of this travel also meant that Pastor Leege had limited time to study. For the first 13 or 14 years of his ministry he had no desk, and no study. What he did have was a wonderful library in his bedroom. His bookcase was ten feet wide and went from the floor up to the 9 foot ceiling.

If Pastor Leege traveled on the train he was able to study on the train. But taking the train often meant leaving or arriving in the middle of the night. The trains often arrived or departed Roundup at one or two in the morning.

Although Pastor Leege was able to produce a sermon in a relatively short amount of time, often he would be up preparing his sermons late into the night. It seems that Pastor Leege didn't need much sleep. He went to bed late and got up early. He would stay up until midnight and sometimes would get up as early as 3 or 4 in the morning.

Pastor Leege was a dedicated and caring man, who did a lot of work to help people. He cared very deeply about both the spiritual and physical well-being of the people of Montana. In 1917 when a flu epidemic hit Roundup, Pastor Leege took seven people into his house to care for them. They stayed until they were well.

If people had sick children and brought them into the hospital at Roundup, they would often come and stay with the Leege's. They would provide a place to stay and food until the children got better or other arrangements could be made.

Pastor Leege would supply the congregation with vegetables. He liked to garden and raised a huge garden. If people came to his house they never left empty handed. They always had groceries for anyone who stopped and they always had a place for them to stay.²²

Although when Pastor Leege arrived in Roundup in 1914 times were good and

²² Howard, personal interview

economically people appeared to be doing well, these good times did not last for long. Although World War I helped to bring good prices for the homesteaders, it also took many young men out of the state and off to war. Montana contributed twenty-five percent more men for its population than any other state. This was because the population estimate was wrong. Montana's estimated population at that time was 952,478 when in actuality it was only 496,131. Many of those men didn't return to Montana after the war because Montana's economy was depressed when the 20's began.

The late teens brought dry years and 1919 was a drought year. That combined with governmental steps to bring prices back down after the war, was disastrous for many homesteaders in Montana. People who had borrowed in order to buy the latest machinery, were unable to repay ^{their} there loans and ~~beginning~~ in the early 20's banks began to fail. Most banks that failed in Montana had already failed by 1926. The stock market crash of 1929 really didn't have the effect on Montana that it had elsewhere because Montana's economy was already so depressed.

In the early 1920's oil was discovered in this area of Montana. And in 1950 these wells which had been capped, were opened up and drilled deeper. But that boom did not last that long and could not offset the other economic problems.

During the 1920's many people left the state because they couldn't make a living in Montana. Often a man would come home from whatever job he had and tell his wife and family, we can't make it here let's go. They would take what they could carry and leave immediately. People would often go over to investigate what had happened to their neighbors and would find the table all set as if they were ready to sit down and eat, but instead had packed up what they could carry and leave.

The Depression and Dust bowl years of the thirties did not see conditions improve any in Montana. During the 1920's and 1930's Pastor Leege would have

seen many of his members leave. No doubt many of them became active members elsewhere. But there were probably many that Pastor Leege never knew where they went or what happened to them.

During these years, some of the places which Pastor Leege had been serving ceased having services. Some small towns simply no longer existed. In the 1930's Kelly died out. But despite the number of people leaving Montana, the number of people served by Pastor Leege did not plummet. As places like Kelly died out, places like Winnett, which benefited from the oil discovery, were added to Pastor Leege's circuit. The annual report for 1917 lists 334 souls under Pastor Leege's care. Although that number dipped to around 250 by the mid 1920's, it did not continue to fall. In fact some years, despite the number of people leaving, the number of souls in his congregations increased.²³ This is certainly a tribute to his zeal and dedicated mission work.

During these difficult years Pastor Leege's ministry would have been a ministry of comfort to the poor and downtrodden. Times were very difficult and for many people the only things they would have had were the precious promises of their Savior. Pastor Leege was not immune from suffering either. In 1926 Pastor Leege's younger son Walter George was born. But as a boy he developed bone cancer and at the age of 16 Walter George died. His death affected Pastor Leege greatly. Lois Johnke said that the saddest she ever saw Pastor Leege was on the day of his son's funeral. Pastor Leege said, **"I thought he'd be the light of my life to support me in my old age."**²⁴

Pastor Leege worked for very little as far as money was concerned. In 1933 his salary was \$80 a month. He owned his own home and at that time his son Robert was

²³ Leege, personal pocket calendars

²⁴ Johnke, personal interview

in school at Mobridge and his daughter Dora was in college in Billings. His younger son was also sick at this time and they were traveling around to get him treated.

In these difficult economic times there were times when he couldn't be paid. At times he would go out and work in the harvest fields to earn some extra money. Sometimes people would bring a half a pork or beef . Sometimes people would bring milk or cream or butter. All of these gifts helped to supplement his salary. In addition Pastor Leege had a huge garden and raised his own chickens.

Pastor Leege taught his children that they should be humble and that they should not buy things that the people in the congregation could not afford. Pastor Leege was not happy when his wife bought a refrigerator. She had been boarding two kids while they were going to high school. She charged them a dollar a day and had saved enough money to buy a refrigerator. Pastor Leege was dead set against it. They had an ice box which was good enough and nobody else could afford anything better. He told her she was not to spend that money on a refrigerator. But she took the money and went and bought a refrigerator.²⁵

Sometimes in the evening Pastor Leege and his family would sit and watch the fancy new cars drive by. They knew they could never afford one. But then Mrs. Leege won one. Mrs. Leege sold newspapers for the *Roundup Record*. The paper had a contest. The prize for the person who sold the most newspapers was a fancy, new Chrysler. Even after his wife won this car Pastor Leege could be seen driving around in his Model T. The Model T was good enough, although eventually he did drive it.²⁶

Pastor Leege was concerned that the people had opportunity to hear and study the word. He would do whatever he could to make that possible. If people came in late during the sermon, he would go back and start the sermon over. He said, "if the

²⁵ Howard, personal interview

²⁶ Howard, personal interview
also Zinne, personal interview

people took the effort to come to church they should hear the whole sermon.”²⁷ The rest of the congregation had to bear with them and listen again.

When it came time for confirmation instruction, Pastor Leege would often spend weeks at a someone's house in order to instruct them or their children. At other times children would come and stay at the Leege house while they were being instructed. The Leege house was often like a church. If people wanted to be married or instructed and confirmed they would come to the house.

In 1952 Pastor Leege's ministry in Roundup came to an end. It seems that the people of Roundup no longer wanted him to serve them. Those characteristics which no doubt served him well and made him such a wonderful missionary in rugged, frontier conditions - the fact that he was a strong-willed and forceful personality - could also upset and anger people. Pastor Leege apparently didn't allow anyone other than himself to care for the church and mow the lawn. That made people angry because they wanted to be included in service. There was also an elderly, retired pastor from Laurel, Montana who some feel stirred up and caused problems for Pastor Leege.

And so a hearing was held concerning Pastor Leege and the Roundup congregation. At this hearing there were several pastors who were upset with things Pastor Leege had told them. Pastor Leege was a very outspoken man and at times could be a bit crude and blunt in his statements.²⁸

Perhaps Pastor Leege's contacts with the Wisconsin Synod added to the problems. About this time Pastor Leege had made a request to the Missouri Synod to send someone out to help him serve this area. The Missouri Synod, for whatever reason, had refused his request. Pastor Leege had then turned to the Wisconsin Synod. The Roundup congregation apparently didn't like this possible arrangement.

²⁷ Howard, personal interview

²⁸ Howard, personal interview

Eventually the Wisconsin Synod did send some vicars out to help Pastor Leege. That is why today the congregations in Lavina, Melstone and Winnett are members of the Wisconsin Synod. After Pastor Leege retired a graduate from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, David Zeitlow, was sent out to Winnett.²⁹

How big a part any of these things may have played in the situation or what other factors there may have been is hard to tell. But according to a pastor from Harlowton **"Pastor Leege had committed so many misdeeds that there was nothing that could be done."**³⁰ And so in 1952 Pastor Leege's ministry in Roundup was ended.

Pastor Leege, however, continued to serve the other congregations. These other congregations moved him to Winnett. He would serve these congregations from Winnett for another five years.

Pastor Leege apparently held no ill feelings against the Roundup congregation or the Missouri Synod. When he moved to Winnett, he sold his house in Roundup which he had built, practically giving it to the Roundup congregation for \$2400.³¹

In 1956 Pastor Leege suffered a severe stroke which forced his retirement in 1957. During the length of his ministry, Pastor Leege received several calls to other places, but he never took any of them - much to the dismay of his wife. **"He said that he had enough work here and enough people yet to bring to Christ. He considered his call to be a special one to these people. He loved the country and the people."**³²

After his retirement he moved to Melstone, where his daughter Dora was living.

²⁹ Neumann, personal interview

³⁰ Howard, personal interview

³¹ Howard, personal interview

³² Howard, personal interview

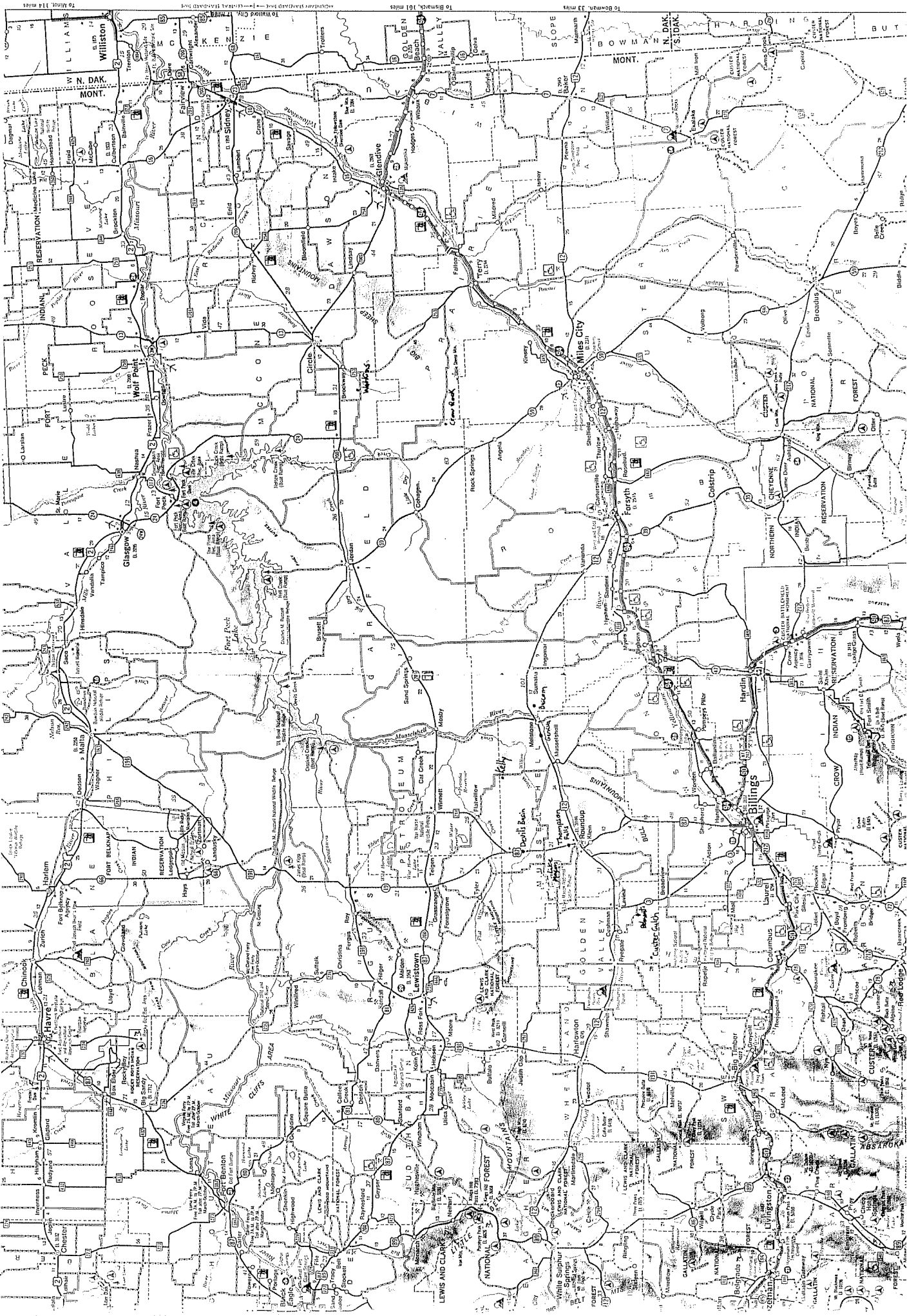
On September 13, 1964 Pastor Leege died of a stroke at the Roundup Hospital. his funeral was held at the Weir Funeral Home in Roundup. He was buried in the Roundup cemetery. Pastors and people came from all over for his funeral.

Pastor Leege **“believed in bringing the gospel to as many people in as many places as he could, and I think that’s probably the reason he was always gone from home, because he was always looking for someone who had not yet heard about his Savior yet.”**³³ The results of Pastor Leege’s ministry are still evident today. The Wisconsin Synod congregations in Lavina, Winnett and Melstone and the Missouri Synod congregation in Roundup are the result of his ministry. Pastor Leege was a faithful missionary, in difficult times and difficult conditions. For him and his ministry we give thanks to God.

³³ Howard, personal interview

Appendix 1

1 inch = approximately 35 miles



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