

"Changing, changing, ever changing, like the sands upon the shore..."

It was with these words that the forgotten song-writer tried to describe the fickle condition of the human heart. I don't want to make an assessment of the heart of mankind, but we would have to agree that it is a very fitting description if we apply these words to the shape of church history in America. Changing tides of new philosophies, the influence and the type of mission societies which were able to send pastors into the New Country, the orthodoxy of the leaders who took the helm in leading the sometimes floundering groups in a sea of adversity--all of these aspects and more--have produced a seemingly constant flow in the malleable shape of Lutheran Church bodies in America. Some groups which ad started with a firm confessional principles have seen these principles eroded in a sea of unionism. Others whose beginning were much less firm, solidified into rocky ledges of orthodoxy. It is only natural of course, that as this sifting of sand takes place, there will be those who don't flow along with the rest--who soon see the erosion or the change for what it is--and who see the necessity of separation. Such a description would give a fiarly accurate picture of the dissatisfaction concerning the Missouri Synod during the middle of this century. Many simply could not flow with the tide as the staunch doctrinal position of men like Walther and Pieper began to crumble under the pressure of the waters of unionism. Among those who fought against being swept away by a lack of concern for the principles of Scrip- ture, was a group of pastors and congregations who eventually formed a body called the Concordia Lutheran Conference. It is the purpose of this paper to give a brief history of this group which felt bound by conscience to set out on their own and to remain separate from any other Lutheran church bodies in America. In some places, this history may be more brief than one might

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wish for no other reason than the fact that some of the interesting episodes and the personal glimpses regarding their history may be recorded only in the recesses of the memories of those who have been integral partners in this process of change. The data presented, however, gives a pretty clear picture of how and why there is now a CLC (Concordia Lutheran Conference).

#### I. EARLY BEGINNINGS

The tendencies towards fellowshipping with the ALC, and in particular the formation of the Common Confession in 1950 had given rise to some apprehensions among the clergy of the Missouri Synod. The dissatisfaction had begun to lead in the direction of separation already in 1951 when the St. Louis Lutheran Study Club decided to organize a group of concerned pastors for the purpose of discussing the "facts" regarding apparent unscriptural unionism. On July 11, 1951, the first invitations to this convention were sent out.<sup>1</sup> The place of the convention was to be Okabena Minnesota, the date; Sept. 25-26 of that same year.

The purpose of that convention wasn't that of forming a new church body-- it was simply to openmindedly discuss the recent turn of events in the Missouri Synod. But, by the end of the second day of the convention, the group had ended their fellowship with the Missouri Synod, had formed their own group, and had drawn up articles of agreement. The name of the group was to be The Orthodox Lutheran Conference. For their president, they chose Rev. W. H. McLaughlin, of Pittsburgh, PA. Their vice-president was the well known P.E. Kretzmann of Cuba, Missouri. Since this paper is primarily concerned with a later division of this group, the details here will be kept to a minimum. Let it suffice to say that it was with great efficiency and speed and good organization that this group got started. Already by November of 1951 the Orthodox Lutheran Conference was publishing their own monthly journal

The Orthodox Lutheran. It is from this journal and its descendant, The Concordia Lutheran, that much of the material for this paper has been gleaned.

Immediately after the formation of the conference, the right hand of fellowship was extended to WELS and the ELS. One of the reasons that nothing fruitful resulted from this was due to a breakdown in communication, as well as the fact that those two bodies weren't quick to break fellowship with Missouri.

An interesting incident in this regard involves the fact that the overtures toward fellowship sent out to WELS were never answered. A letter was later written to the president of the Western Wisc. District asking why the official overture had gone unheeded for two years. The reply was that no one could ever remember getting such an overture. At that point, the Secretary of the OLC was able to produce two letters from President Brenner showing that he acknowledged receiving the OLC resolutions and would present them to the Committee on Church Union. As of Dec. 1953, <sup>there was</sup> no reply from Wisconsin in regard to this confusion, and since it wasn't long before the OLC had problems of its own, no further attempts at union were made.<sup>1.5</sup>

The OLC was not to enjoy a peaceful existence for long before internal controversy would rock their very foundations. The controversy itself arose over the question of applying the principles of fellowship.

It seems that sometime during 1955, Pastor Kretzmann, who was at that time a professor at the seminary in Minneapolis, told one of his seminary classes that he considered it possible for him to preach for Pastor Gervasius Fischer of Mankato. Pastor Fischer was a WELS pastor who had at first supported the cause of the OLC but who had withdrawn support, even though his doctrinal position was the same as that of the OLC. Pastor E. Hallstein of Clark, South Dakota, regarded that statement as being unionistic and began to discuss it

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privately with Dr. Kretzmann. After a lengthy correspondence, other members of the conference were drawn in. Since Kretzmann was a professor at the CLC Seminary in Minneapolis, the "Committee on Theological Education" which was constitutionally authorized to supervise the faculty and student body, attempted to discuss the matter in controversy.<sup>2</sup> Pastor C.G. Schumann hindered such discussions saying that since Kretzmann was a member of his congregation, the Committee on Theological Education had no right to take any kind of action on the case. The controversy smoldered in this state until Dec. 5 1955 when Dr. Kretzman sent out the following announcement to the members of the conference. "Unless the men (and others) who share Pastor E. C. Hallstein's position will withdraw their sinful charges against me by Dec. 31, 1955, I shall no longer consider them either individually or collectively, as brethren in the faith."<sup>3</sup> With further observation, Kretzmann noted that Hallstein was becoming a "pathological case."<sup>4</sup>

Since there was no withdrawal of charges, the majority which sided with Kretzmann decided to hold a special Conference convention on Feb. 4, 1956. Those who sided with Hallstein felt that they could not spiritually meet with the convention and refused to acknowledge the convention as a bona fide constitutional meeting especially since the duly elected president and vice-president of the Conference at that time were among those opposing Kretzmann. The President was E. Mehlberg; the vice-president--H.D. Mensing. At the special Pastoral Conference held in Tinley Park on January 19, the Hallstein backers drew up a statement called "Our Declaration" in which the unscriptural impeachment proceedings of the faction were denounced.<sup>5</sup> It was also spelled out in this statement that they wouldn't be able to discuss these matters as facts until they had retracted and repented of the unscriptural break in fellowship. In the meantime, any offices vacated by Kretzmann's followers

were filled by President Wehlberg until the time of the next convention when permanent officials would be elected. The following congregations and pastors subscribed to "Our Declaration": Christ Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, WI; Pastor E. Wehlberg. Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Tinley Park, ILL; Pastor H. David Mensing. Holy Trinity Orthodox Lutheran Church, Oskaloosa, IA; Pastor J. E. Shufelt. Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Clark, South Dakota; Pastor E. Hallstein. St. Stephen's Ev. Lutheran Church, Wilmot, S.D.; Pastor C.W. Schaefer. St. John Orthodox Lutheran Church, Lebanon, OR; Pastor M.L. Mattereder. St. Paul Orthodox Lutheran Church, Empire, OR; Pastor P.R. Bloedel.

Since this group had what they considered to be the original CLC officers, they felt it would be proper to retain the name, Orthodox Lutheran Conference, even though the other group did also. As a result, from Feb. 1956-December, there were two copies of the Orthodox Lutheran ~~being~~ <sup>Being</sup> sent out, one by each group. To avoid confusion then, the seven pastors who had opposed Kretzman, decided to reorganize under a new constitution with a new name. The name that they chose was the Concordia Lutheran Conference. They traced the name back to Andreae's German edition of the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church which was published under the name, Book of Concord or Concordia.

We, therefore, greatly cherish this designation for our conference because it directs us to the tried and proven confessions of our Church, which, by God's grace, we continue to stand in our endeavors to preserve for us and for our children the teachings and treasures of the true Lutheran Church.

By this name our conference also wished to emphasize the harmony, the concord, the complete unity, agreement, and the one-mindedness among the brethren of our fellowship in full accordance with I Corinthians 1:10 where we read, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."<sup>6</sup>

The reference to the confessions was not just a pious sounding verse which passed over their lips, as has seemed to be the case in the history of many

Lutheran Church bodies. The constitution and practice of the CLC clearly shows a sincere attempt to adhere strictly to all that is taught in the confessions. According to the constitution, the CLC accepts as its confessional standard the canonical Scriptures; the Symbolical Book of Concord of 1580; and the Brief Statement of Missouri.<sup>7</sup> One statement of the constitution (adopted in August 1957 and approved May 1958) which would prove to be significant in the CLC's relationship with WELS was a statement regarding the doctrine of the Church especially in reference to the authority of the conference or a synod. Retaining that position which Missouri had technically held, the local congregation was considered the one divinely ordained form of the church. "A conference or synod is neither of higher nor of equal authority to any of its congregations, Mat. 18:17-18, Mark 10:42-45."<sup>8</sup> According to the constitution, the conference was only an advisory body. At any rate, with the adoption of the constitution and the new name, the CLC was now an official Lutheran body in America.

Such were the sometimes turbulent details which describe the way that seven men were faced with the task of establishing an independent Lutheran church body. When the dust had finally cleared and they were able to take stock of their situation, what was left of the group which in 1951 had left the Missouri Synod for the purpose of "preserving and carrying forward the true Lutheran position formerly held by the Missouri Synod,"<sup>8.5</sup> were seven congregations in 5 states, comprising a total of 363 baptized members, 232 communicant members and 68 voting members.<sup>9</sup>

## II LATER DEVELOPMENTS

With the establishment of the constitution and the reorganization after a disheartening breakup with those that had been considered their brothers, the Concordia Lutheran Conference was dug in the trenches and ready to carry on.

Like a toddler who has just gotten its feet on the ground they were now ready to take their first steps forward. Those first steps came as a result of the 1958 convention held at Peace Ev. Lutheran Church of Tinley Park ILL. on August 9-11. Although Pastor Schaefer was already an officer of the conference, and had in fact been one of those to sign, Our Declaration, and The Agreement, (a statement similar to Our Declaration which explained the re-organization) his congregation, St. Stephen's of Wilmot, SD wasn't officially accepted into membership until this 1958 convention.<sup>10</sup> Outside growth came also that year as a vacant congregation in Seattle, Washington--served by Pastor Natterer as vacancy pastor--was also received into membership. In order to insure that growth could continue, it was determined that a goal should be set for the establishment of a seminary with a full-time professorship.

The entire history of the CLC up to this point had been marked by quick changes and at the outset it seemed as if the goal for the seminary might also be quickly attained. Peace congregation of Tinley Park made a preliminary offer to the conference, namely; the use of 3 5/8 acres of its own property. The conference went on record as being favorably disposed to this preliminary report and authorized the Committee on Theological Education to carry on further negotiations with Peace Lutheran. Since one application for ministerial study had already been received, the Committee on Theol. Ed. also promised that arrangements would be made for the instruction of this student at once.<sup>11</sup> Realizing that some time would be needed to establish a seminary in Tinley Park, the members of Christ Congregation in Milwaukee formulated a plan which would establish a temporary seminary in the city of Milwaukee, in a building which would be provided by the local congregation. Both offers were officially submitted to the 1959 convention at Empire Oregon in June.<sup>12</sup> Since sufficient funds weren't immediately available for beginning to underwrite the cost of a building at Tinley Park, it was decided that the Milwaukee plan was the best

sulted to the situation. Pastor Mehlberg was requested by the Committee of Theol. Ed. to serve on a temporary basis as the first instructor, and by November 1, of 1959, Pastor Mehlberg was installed as the professor of the new Concordia Lutheran Conference Seminary. The building which would serve as a chapel-parsonage and seminary was located on 64th and Ruby.

Only a month later another installation would take place. Pastor P. Bloedel who had been pastor at Empire, Oregon, accepted the call to serve as pastor at St. Lukes in Seattle WA. The growth prospects of the infant conference looked very favorable.

It would not be only through the establishment of a seminary that the Conference would attempt to strengthen its fortifications. In the convention of July 1960, the voting members authorized the Committee on Lutheran Union to proceed with negotiations with the OLC--albeit very cautiously.<sup>13</sup> Since no favorable response was elicited from the OLC, no further attempts were made at this time. The next really official word heard concerning the OLC was a ~~statement~~<sup>ment</sup> in the May 6 issue of The Northwestern Lutheran stating that the OLC had dissolved and many of the remaining pastors had joined the Wisconsin Synod. Another chapter was completed concerning the struggle of conscience-bound Christians.

Being dedicated to carrying out the letter of the Scriptures was the cause that had led to a split with the Missouri Synod in the first place and had later led to the disheartening break among the men in the original OLC. Being dedicated to carrying out the letter of the Scriptures and opposed to sinful unionism ~~there will always~~<sup>leaves</sup> be the possibility of sad encounters and breakups. The Conference convention of June 24-26, 1961 was to be the location of yet another controversy. The exact origin of this problem is somewhat vague. Apparently, Trinity of Clark, SD had presented a memorial to the convention. This memorial apparently had something to do with Christ Church in Milwaukee



and Pastor Mehlberg. Trinity was instructed that according to the constitution, Article VI 1-3, they hadn't followed the proper procedure in taking care of their disagreement. I assume that it was in violation to the following clause, "In the case of disputes between 2 pastors, a pastor and a congregation, or between two congregations, a decision by the conference or its representatives shall be submitted only upon the request of both parties concerned."<sup>14</sup> Official objections had to be filed with the president to be taken to the Board of Directors and then if necessary to the Convention. "No public circularization of the conference regarding disputes and objections would be made except after the above regular procedures have been exhausted, with due patience and to no satisfactory solution."<sup>15</sup>

The recommendation was made by Mehlberg (the president of the Conference) that since Trinity had refused to cooperate with the President and Board in seeking settlement of the problems, the matter should be discussed after which time Trinity and Pastor Hallstein should be suspended from fellowship. It was about at this time that the conference was adjourned till the next day. Having reconsidered his motion throughout the evening, Pastor Mehlberg gave Pastor Hallstein a chance to back out gracefully.

If Pastor Hallstein will give indication here that he holds himself to be in fellowship with me and as a brother will endeavor to cooperate in the carrying out of the resolution of the Conference, I would be happy and glad to withdraw my request for his and his congregation's suspension.<sup>16</sup>

Hallstein answered with a counter proposal. He asked that a study should be made of a thesis entitled "An Exegetical Treatment and Defense of our Use of the Luke passage 14:28-30." He said he would let that determine the question of fellowship raised in the president's statement.

From the floor of the convention it was noted that the answer didn't answer either the question or the previous resolution so the recommendation was once again made to suspend the congregation along with Hallstein their

pastor. After some discussion as to whether this was regarded as a suspension or an expulsion (the congregation was considered to be only in fellowship and not an actual member) it was decided to notify Trinity that they would be given 90 days to inform the Conference as to whether or not they would follow Hallstein. Before this was to be taken to a vote however, it was decided to give Pastor Hallstein the opportunity to defend himself. They would hear him the next day. As the early morning session opened, however, Pastor Floedel took the floor and suggested that to allow this man who had become a "tool of the devil"<sup>17</sup> to further defend himself might place them all in danger of tempting the Lord further and that they should now take a vote. A standing vote revealed 14 in favor of the suspension with 3 opposed. Those who were opposed were the delegates of Sigourney-Muscatine Iowa. Following recess, a proposal by the president stated that since the pastor and two delegates of Trinity, Sigourney-Muscatine had voted negative, they were recognized as out of fellowship. It was incumbent on Trinity congregation to inform the president as to whether or not it would concur with its delegates. If Trinity was in disagreement but still wished to retain fellowship, they were instructed to follow Article V of the constitution in settling the disagreement. The president's motion carried. Both congregations went along with their pastors and in effect, reaffirmed the break in fellowship.

Although such an episode was certainly a sad experience for those involved, and although this meant that 1/4 of the congregations had been removed, it wasn't by any means the death-blow to the struggling conference. The next year brought 2 sources of hope to the constituents of the conference. The first good news came in the form of an announcement that Pastor Alvin J. Cordes who had formerly served five years in the ministry of the Missouri Synod had terminated his relations with that body because of its false doctrinal position

and had passed a colloquy given on June 23. Thus, they had one more pastor eligible for a call.<sup>18</sup> On August 26, 1962, Cordes was installed at Empire Oregon after a three year vacancy there.

1962 also brought the news of the first graduation from the Seminary. On September 9, graduation ceremonies were held for Mr. Julius Schmitt. Another pastor was eligible for a call, and this time there was no opening readily available. He was however, encouraged to continue under the auspices of Christ Lutheran Church where he did work among the Negroes.

It was at this time that mission work was being very actively done in other areas as well. In particular, the congregations at Seattle and Empire reported on canvasses in the area. The pastor at St. Paul's noted, "we feel we have at least 100 good prospects from our canvassing, at least 75 of these unchurched."<sup>19</sup> To those unchurched, the ambitious pastor Cordes sent a monthly "St. Paul's Evangel." During the Lenten Season of 1963, attempts would also be made to reach out to the people in the Coos Bay area with about \$50.00 worth of advertizing in the daily paper. As the mission work was done, the stress on evangelism was laid on the shoulders of the members--not just the pastors. In a series of articles in volume VIII of the Concordia Lutheran, the Conference sought to strengthen the lay members to be better prepared to witness to their faith. An Evangelism Manual was also put up for sale which was to enhance the effectiveness of the outreach program by training them to be better witnessing Christians. This type of work was the assignment of Pastor Cordes who was the chairman of the Committee on Missions. Not long after he had become a part of the conference, the ambitious young preacher had prepared a program of taped sermons which were to be made available to groups that had left heterodox church bodies and who were looking for those who taught the Word of God. Mimeographed sermons were also offered as well as any other help

which would be requested. Realizing that outside growth is not possible if there is not also inside growth, authorization was also given to begin writing Sunday School material. To round out the program, the young people were also taken care of. Although I found no records dealing with the number of high school age youths belonging to the conference, the youth groups, particularly those in Washington and Oregon did get together at least once for camping activities etc.<sup>20</sup>

It was especially easy to see in such a small group that without making a concerted effort to meet the needs of all people (an endeavor which can be frustrating and expensive when working with such a small group) it would be impossible to keep on growing or even to continue to exist for very long. In spite of the fact that all the bases seemed to be covered (as much as <sup>was</sup> humanly possible when considering the small number of pastors and the scattered locations of the congregations) it was discouraging for the voting members of the CLC to learn that at the 1962 convention, 4 of the 6 congregations had sent no lay delegates. It may have been in response to this that the 1963 convention in Lebanon, Oregon, considered several other tools which would be useful in helping to spread the message of the Gospel. A Conference Tract Program was adopted with Pastor Cordes as the Chairman. The need was recognized for a permanent Publishing House which was controlled by the conference. Up until now, the material had been printed by Pastor Bloedel on his own equipment. Guidelines were also to be set up for pastors and congregations which were approached by those who were too far away from any of the congregations and plans were made to begin to investigate a Program of Parochial Teacher Training.<sup>21</sup> To what extent all of these projects succeeded is not totally certain (to me) due to a lack of material covering the history from the period of time between 1967 and 1972.

The 3 years prior to 1967 perhaps seemed uneventful, but that can be an

indication of steady and quiet growth. The fact that on April 5, 1964, a building was dedicated in Tinley Park—which was to serve the congregation and eventually the Conference as a seminary—showed that the work was continuing to move forward as these men kept their eyes focused on the goal of providing more pastors to preach the Gospel. Although historical documents covering the next 6 years are scarce, several noteworthy events did take place during that time.

### III 1967-1972

The three incidents which would have been significant in the history of any church body but especially to one of this size, were the final establishment of the permanent seminary at Tinley Park and the separation of two of the pastors who had been a part of the Concordia Lutheran Conference.

As of October 1, 1968, the voices seemed united and progress had been made to the point that the president of the Conference declared that the Milwaukee Plan for the Seminary would be discontinued. Instructions were given to the Committee on Theological Education to proceed with the New Seminary Plan. The Committee then presented two possible plans to all the congregations of the Conference. Both new plans revolved around Peace Congregation and the original generous proposal which they had made that the Conference could make use of their property for the seminary. The difference between the two plans revolved around whether there would be a Conference owned professorage or if the professor-president should provide for his own house. Voluntary pledges were also taken at this time. The circumstances involving one of the pledges was interesting.

Christ Lutheran Church of Milwaukee, voted to make \$75.00 available. Later they reconsidered their pledge and reported to the Committee that they had unanimously resolved to dissolve their own congregation for the benefit of their brethren.

In view of the conditions in our conference, namely, the shortage of pastors and the need of a seminary professor, as well as the rejection in Milwaukee of true orthodoxy, we the voters of Christ Lutheran Church have resolved, under the Lord, to dissolve our congregation.<sup>22</sup>

Christ Church figured that at least \$4,000 would be made available to be given to the seminary fund. To eliminate a delay in starting the program, the decision was made to put out a call for nominations for professors to be printed in the Concordia Lutheran.<sup>23</sup> Rev. Nehlberg and C. Schaefer were nominated for professor-president at the seminary and Rev. Wensing was nominated for associate professor.

Pastor Schaefer was elected, and when he moved to Tinley Park, a vacancy was created which was quickly filled by Julius Schmitt, the seminary graduate who had been working among the Negroes of Milwaukee. Voices were united in praise for the progress which had been made in establishing the seminary.

The fact that the pastors weren't speaking always with one united voice was shown by the fact that in that same year, Pastor Cordes had to terminate his relationship to the Concordia Lutheran Conference. (This was also the reason why there was a shortage of pastors) This can of worms was opened wide when a layman from California--who agreed with the Conference as far as doctrine is concerned--had been corresponding with Pastor Cordes and found him to hold a position in doctrine and practice contrary to the Scriptures.<sup>24</sup>

One of the several items in question was Pastor Cordes' position in favor of polygamy.<sup>25</sup> The California layman then contacted Pastor Nehlberg and asked him to contact Cordes. The President at that time, Pastor Schaefer, as well as two other representative pastors attempted over a period of months to meet with Pastor Cordes, but he simply refused to meet with them. The final attempt was made on April 8, 1969. In the following convention, it was noted that attempts had been made to deal with him "concerning whom there was evidence of

violations of Holy Scripture in the administration of his pastoral office."<sup>26</sup> Dissappointment was expressed for the separatistic attitude which Cordes had taken the past few years. It was also reported to the dismay of the rest of the Conference, that before discussions could be carried out, Pastor Cordes had resigned from the Conference. He said, "I believe that I can, as God gives me the grace, use my God-given time, talent, and treasures to the glory of God more faithfully outside the membership of the CLC."<sup>27</sup> It was moved to accept the resignation on protest on the grounds that he had disguised the real situation. He had resigned when attempts were being made to resolve the issues, and it was viewed as a sinful act of separation. The resignation from his congregation went hand in hand with the resignation from the Conference.

The raging fires of controversy didn't end with the expulsion however. In just a little more than two years, the president of the conference would himself be removed from fellowship with the Conference. Pastor Mehlber's congregation, you will remember, had disbanded in favor of liquidating their property for the benefit of the new seminary in Tinley Park. This had all taken place at about the time that Pastor Cordes had resigned from the Conference so Pastor Mehlberg was called to fill the vacancy at St. Paul's in Coos Bay. (The congregation had not moved, apparently the town had. That congregation had previously been listed as a part of Empire Oregon.)

The charges against Mehlberg were concerned with rank legalism in the area of birth control and his insistence that his position in this matter even took precedence over the doctrine of justification.<sup>28</sup> Those in the inner circle were aware of other examples of legalism, for example; the demand that his parishioners have their Christmas Cards approved by him before they would send them out.<sup>29</sup> The article in the Concordia Lutheran which informed the constituents of Mehlberg's demise told that he had broken his word, and called

his fellow pastors false prophets. It was also stated that he was guilty of the dissemination of materials filled with untruths, half truths and so on. Although he refused to meet with pastors or the Board of Directors, he did send materials to their congregations asking them to depose their pastors for their errors.<sup>30</sup> The convention of 1972 expelled both St. Paul's Lutheran Church and Pastor Mehlberg. The convention documents charged him with making public judgments on a matter which was being studied by the conference as well as the fact that he was guilty of dealing unfairly with fellow pastors.

By his unwarranted suspension of fellowship and his hasty application of 2 Thess. 3:14,15 over against his fellow pastors, accusing them of being false prophets, he has in a high-handed and papistical manner, forced the private matter discussed in our Pastoral Conference to be made public to our congregations because all of the congregations would have to be informed of the reasons given for his action (1Pet. 5:5 Mt. 23:10; ps 50:19-22);<sup>31</sup>

In the few discussions which were held with Pastor Mehlberg, he refused to back down on any of his statements even though he admitted that he had no Scripture backing for them. The Conference also felt that he was guilty of misconduct in the handling of certain affairs in his congregation where he had excommunicated a member, then had let him back in and yet again excommunicated him. However, since his congregation stuck with Mehlberg, they were expelled from the Conference also. The congregational directory at this time included four congregations; Peace of Tinley Park, Pastor Mensing; St. John's of Lebanon Oregon, Pastor Natterer; St. Stephen's of Wilrot, SD, Pastor Julius Schmitt; and St. Luke's of Seattle, Washington, Pastor Floedel. At this point perhaps it seemed that there was only one direction to go and that was forward. ~~And~~ In truth, with these difficult matters out of the way, progress could again be made.

#### VI FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS - 1981

When setbacks occur, it is necessary for survival that we get back on our



feet as soon as possible and forge ahead as best we can. (Perhaps it seems ironic that as I write these words, I am listening to a news report concerning a national setback in the form of an assassination attempt on the President of the United States.) Even in the midst of the controversies described in the previous section, thoughts were directed at the continued growth of the Conference. Already at the Convention of 1970 the decision was made to purchase the printing equipment offered to the Conference by Pastor Bloedel. The Conference print shop would then be set up under the supervision of Pastor Bloedel as chairman of the Board of Control. Perhaps thinking that some of the load of work associated with printing would be removed from the shoulders of Pastor Bloedel, a resolution was made to print the Concordia Lutheran on a monthly rather than a quarterly basis.<sup>32</sup> Originally it had been intended to be a monthly journal, but a lack of time had made it necessary to combine issues.

The situation at the Seminary began to look up somewhat. As of 1973, three students were enrolled; 2 part-time students, Mr. David Mensing and Mr. Randall Styx as well as a vicar, James Luedtke, who was serving his apprenticeship at Tihley Park. With the prospect of more pastors entering the field, a mission fund was being built up so that it would be possible to call graduates into mission fields. However, on April 1 of 1975, Julius Schmitt resigned from the office of the ministry stating that he felt inadequate to handle the solemn office and to cope with the burdens connected with it.<sup>33</sup> Another pastor was added to the force however, when Mr. James Luedtke graduated in connection with the summer convention. Luedtke was installed at Wilrot, on Oct. 12. That didn't mean that there was a full force of pastors, however, since at that same convention, St. John's Lutheran Mission was granted a \$400.00 monthly subsidy provided a pastor would accept the call to be their pastor. From then on, periodic articles would appear in the Concordia Lutheran

encouraging young men to enter the Seminary.

The following year, another vacant congregation was added to the list of those waiting for a pastor. Trinity Lutheran Church of Coos Bay Oregon, was unanimously granted membership into the Conference and was then served by Pastor Mattereder as vacancy pastor.

At this time, some of the other congregations were getting better established as well. In July of 1975, St. Luke's Congregation of Seattle was able to dedicate their own house of worship after 16 years of worshipping in a community hall.

Another report which would prove encouraging to the members of the CLC was the news that after 9 years of part-time schooling at the Seminary, Mr. Randall Styx graduated on June 11, 1978. He immediately was called to serve Trinity of Coos Bay, and that congregation was able to establish itself well enough so that in 1980 a piece of land was purchased for the future building of a worship building.

1980 also saw the graduation of David Mensing, with no congregation in need of a pastor as of yet. This is the basic shape of the CLC at the present. In the 29 years of existence, the statistics haven't changed all that much, only a few names are different. The latest statistics show 5 congregations with 6 ordained pastors, 344 baptized members, 246 communicant members with 74 voting members.<sup>34</sup> Since no congregation was in need of a pastor at the time of Mensing's graduation, the Conference officially began looking for a congregation that might hold the same position as that of the CLC and who might need a pastor.<sup>35</sup> The action of the Conference to begin looking for new congregations who are in need of a new pastor was really not a new policy. Perhaps it would be worth our while to view just what steps have been made over the course of the history of the CLC to reach out to those who were possible candidates for fellowship.

#### V ATTEMPTS TO EXPAND THE HORIZONS

Already after only two years of existence as a conference, shortly after the breakup with those who retained the name of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, a full page invitation was printed in many of the monthly Concordia Lutherans for the organization of a free conference. The invitation reads in part;

Within recent years certain pastors and laymen have felt themselves bound by conscience on the basis of Romans 16:17,18 and other pertinent passages of Holy Write (sic) to sever their connections with congregations and synods of the Synodical Conference. To all such we, of the Concordia Lutheran Conference, extend a cordial invitation to meet with us in a free conference at a time and place to be mutually agreed upon.<sup>36</sup>

Although such free conferences didn't seem to elicit many results, or interest, attempts were made by the board of directors in October of 1962 to establish a proposed agenda for meeting the representatives of the remaining Orthodox Lutherans who had not joined with WELS or any other groups. Such requests were denied by Dr. Kretzmann, W. McLaughlin, E. Erickson, and L. Wilenius. They were willing to speak of differences concerning visible and invisible church, but refused to talk concerning matters regarding the original split.

In 1963, the Conference sent representatives to the free conference of Waterloo, Iowa. Although no real possibilities for union came out of this conference, in a report to the 16th annual convention, it was noted that the pastors were studying the confessional statement of the Church of the Lutheran Confession in regard to possible union discussions,<sup>37</sup> and official overtures were also addressed to the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation in the same interests. No response was received.

Attempts at union were perhaps pushed into the background in the years that the internal controversies were faced by the Conference. But in 1976, the Conference set out with renewed efforts to again pick up these talks.

Upon recommendation of the Committee on Lutheran Union, the convention took some decisive steps toward doing everything possible, in harmony with the Word of God, to reach out and to meet with Lutheran pastors and congregations outside of our fellowship with the endeavor to find Scriptural one-mindedness and to encourage a God-pleasing fellowship.

These policies were implemented in 1977 and 78 when they were able to set up a meeting with the LCR on several occasions. However, due to internal problems within the LCR, it was decided to postpone further meetings.

A memorial was also brought before the 1978 convention that contact should again be made with CoLC (The Church of the Lutheran Confession) to look at their position on the Church and Ministry, to see if resumption of talks would be warranted. However, it was recognized that the position hadn't changed so the decision was made to contact them to see if they were willing to reevaluate their position. The CoLC "respectfully declined" the invitation.

It was that same question regarding the doctrine of the Church and Ministry which kept the CLC from entering fellowship with The WELS after the break with Missouri. It seems as if the Conference's own position on that doctrine was in the solidifying stage up till 1963. By this I don't mean to say that any of the pastors ever held a position contrary to that of Missouri which put the emphasis on the local congregation only as the divinely instituted form of the church. However, in 1963, an interesting development was noted in the minutes of CLC conventions. From that time on, whenever the convention budget was adopted, the words were always included, "However, this latter item and the needs of the Seminary are subject to the approval of the Conference congregations through a referendum to be presented to our constituency by the president."<sup>39</sup> Before that time, it wasn't usually mentioned that approval was being sought for the budget.

The first official criticism for the Wisconsin position, which denies that the local congregation is the only divinely instituted form of the church came in reference to the discussions of the Columbus free conference.

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod 10 years ago, in the doctrine of the Church and Ministry, under the leadership of Dr. Hoenecke, held to the same Scriptural position as did the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, under the leadership of Dr. Walther and Dr. F. Pieper. In more recent years, however, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Norwegian), the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (Slovak), the four bodies which originally constituted the Synodical Conference, have in many important matters departed from their former orthodox position in the doctrine of the Church and Ministry...

After the Wisconsin Synod in 1961 separated from the Missouri Synod, it became evident through public statements made in its official periodical that in the doctrine of the Church and Ministry, it no longer fully accepted the old historic position of the Synodical Conference as it was confessed and practiced in the days of Walther, Hoenecke, and Pieper. The Wisconsin Synod had changed its position specifically in its teaching on the local congregation and the synod, and on the pastoral office of the Ministry.

Although the above observation is not totally historically accurate, it is true that the Concordia Lutheran Conference does not agree with the position of WELS and CoLC and ELS that the Synod can be considered a gathering of a body of the Church. And so, the members of the Concordia Lutheran Conference have felt constrained by conscience to remain separate from all other Lutheran Church organizations. As one small church body in an ever shifting sea of sand, they are determined to remain faithful to the Scriptures as they interpret them.

Only God knows what will happen as the sands of religious thinking keep shifting. Will the CLC be smothered and die because of the seeping spirit of disregard for the Scriptures which seems to envelope this nation? Will a change in leadership in the Missouri Synod bring about mass discipline of those who teach false doctrine--opening the possibility for renewing fellowship? Will there always be a CLC as it stands today? Whatever the future holds is written alone in God's history book. But whatever does happen... and without entering into a judgment as to the application of fellowship principles such as led to the formation of the CLC and later principles which

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have kept the CLC separate--may God always give men the conviction to stand up for the truths of His inspired Word.

END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>The Orthodox Lutheran, Okabena, Minnesota. Vol. I #1 page 3
- 1.5 Ibid. Vol. II #14 page 237-238
- <sup>2</sup>The Concordia Lutheran, Seattle, Washington, Vol. XXII #1&2 page 6
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid. Vol. I #9 page 133
- <sup>5</sup>The Orthodox Lutheran, Vol. V #2 p. 19-21
- <sup>6</sup>The Concordia Lutheran, Vol. I #1 p.3
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid. Vol III #6 p.87
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid. p. 89
- 8.5 Ibid. p. 86
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid. Vol. II # 4 page 59
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid. Vol. II #8 p. 115
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid. Vol. II #8 page 116
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid. Vol. III #11 166
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid. Vol. IV #7 p. 100
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid. Vol. III #6 p. 89-90
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup>Minutes to the 1961 Convention. p. 23
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid. p. 25
- <sup>18</sup>The Concordia Lutheran, Vol. VII #7 page 100
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid. Vol. VIII #2 p. 25
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid. Vol. IX #1 p. 140
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid. Vol. VIII #6&7 p. 79-80
- <sup>22</sup>Report of the Committee on Theological Education p. 23
- <sup>23</sup>The Concordia Lutheran Vol XIV First Quarter p.21
- <sup>24</sup>Presidents Report of the 1969 Convention
- <sup>25</sup>Interview with Mark Cordes

- 26 Presidents Report of the 1969 Convention
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 The Concordia Lutheran, Vol. XXII # 1&2 p.10
- 29 Interview with Mark Cordes
- 30 The Concordia Lutheran, Vol. XVII #8&9
- 31 Minutes of the 1972 Convention p. 52
- 32 The Concordia Lutheran, Vol XV #3 p.27
- 33 Ibid. Vol XX # 3&4
- 34 1979-1980 Statistical Report
- 35 The Concordia Lutheran, Vol. XXV # 11&12 p.113
- 36 Ibid. Vol. II #1 p. 164
- 37 Ibid. Vol. XI # 6&7 p. 65
- 38 Ibid. Vol. XXI # 7&8 p. 64
- 39 Ibid. Vol. IX #6&7 p. 71
- 40 Ibid. Vol XI # 9 p. 98-99