

A Candle in the Shadow of a
Volcano:
Effects of a United ELCA on
the Lutheran Mission Picture

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Church History Essay

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Dedicated to my Dad who gave me direction for this paper, as well as for the rest of my life. For this I am eternally thankful.

Special thanks is also deserved by my wife, who is my secretary, my editor, my inspiration, and the greatest earthly blessing the Lord has given me.

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A Candle in the Shadow of a Volcano

One might very well wonder why such an unusual title was chosen for an essay on church history. It was not chosen simply to be flashy, although it does flash a very striking picture in one's mind. Rather it was chosen because it gives a very fitting illustration of two vastly different Lutheran church bodies striving to fulfill their God-given purpose in their own unique way. That purpose, of course, is to let the light of God's word shine forth in a sin-darkened world. A massive, turbulent volcano paints an appropriate picture of a Lutheran church who at this time is really not even a church yet. That church is the multi-million member proposed Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or as we will call it for the sake of brevity, ELCA. The ELCA is the marriage of three major Lutheran churches; the 2.9 million member Lutheran Church in America, or LCA, the 2.3 million member American Lutheran Church, or ALC, and the 110 thousand member American Evangelical Lutheran Church, or AELC.¹ As we will point out, to some extent the preparation for union, practices, and purpose for mission of this new church very much resemble an enormous volcano about to erupt. The question is, when and if it does erupt, will it affect the little candle, will it self-destruct, or will the volcano just go permanently out?

The little candle in the illustration is the relatively small 415 thousand member Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, or the WELS.² (See Appendix A) The WELS is pictured by a candle because it is for the most part a calm, unified church body

who unlike many, let most of their light shine calmly rather than through billows of smoke and ash.

At this point I suppose it is quite obvious that the author is an adamant WELS Lutheran. It's thus assumed that an objective viewpoint is going to be extremely difficult if not impossible to maintain. This presents a substantial obstacle in my opinion because history should be recorded in as neutral a stance as possible although from what this author has read, this is rare indeed. However, since this is a historical essay, great pains will be taken to objectively present the facts. Furthermore, since the author previously had little or no experience or knowledge in these matters, we will lean heavily on the insight and opinion of those who have their fingers to the pulse of these events. As in any history, much ink will be spent on attempting to give the reader a feeling of the controversies and decisions and to place you in the shoes of those who are responsible. Surveys and personal correspondence helped, but bear with me in this area. Finally, every event in history has a cause and an effect. Since this for the most part is contemporary, the historical effect will be in short a somewhat thoughtful judgement call. Again those in the know will be relied on extensively, whether they agree or not.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"Expectation and tension both ran high on the afternoon of September 8, 1982, as the time approached for the announcement of votes by delegates in separate but simultaneous conventions of the ALC, LCA, and the AELC. Delegates knew that the proposed resolution, if approved, would trigger steps toward union

of the three church bodies...

At 5 p.m. (Eastern Daylight Time), the voice of church historian Martin E. Marty came over an audio system connecting the LCA convention in Louisville, Kentucky, the AELC convention in Cleveland, Ohio, and the ALC convention in San Diego, California. Bishop James Crumley announced the LCA vote: 669 yes, 11 no. Bishop William Kohn reported the AELC vote: 136 yes, none against. Presiding Bishop David Preus gave the ALC vote: 897 yes, 87 no.

Jubilation! Delegates stood and applauded. The rejoicing at each convention drowned out the telephone hookup for awhile; then 'The Church's One Foundation' turned the emotion into praise."^{2a}

Many have called this the greatest event in the history of the Lutheran church. To be sure, the verdict is still out on that. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt as to its enormous significance at least for some. Many events, of course, led to this historic event. To cover these in depth is grist for an entirely different essay. Yet its necessary to touch on a few pertinent facts. Professor Westerhaus, a faculty member of the WELS Seminary points out that,

"Historically, the ALC and its antecedents have occupied a central position among Lutherans in America between the more conservative synods formerly in the synodical conference on the right and the more liberal Eastern Lutheran on the left. Leaders of the old ALC fancied themselves as bridge builders, as uniquely situated and qualified to be a unifying center for a hoped-for unified Lutheran Church on American soil. The last 25 years have witnessed major shifts in that old left-middle-right alignment. But not according to the ALC game plan. The ALC has moved to the left so far today that there is no appreciable difference

between the ALC and LCA at least at the Seminary level."³

If all goes well by 1988, there will be no difference at any level. What drove the ALC to the left? No doubt there were many reasons. But some ecumenists argue that the single event that made Lutheran union possible was the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod's decision in 1981 to break altar and pulpit fellowship with the ALC.⁴ LCMS, along with the ALC and LCA, is the third of the Lutheran giants, weighing in at a healthy 2.6 million members. These three combined make up 95% of the Lutherans in the United States. (See Appendix A) The late 50's and 60's witnessed a brewing volcano of sorts in the historically conservative LCMS as historical-critical theology tarnished their Seminary faculty and many of their pastors. This drew the LCMS into the waiting arms of the ALC and their fellowship in 1969 under President Jack Preuss. In 1974 the Seminex walk-out purged the LCMS of enough of its liberal influences so that in 1981 they, as mentioned, terminated their romance with the ALC. It was then that the ALC members had to acknowledge that there was no point in sitting around "Waiting for Missouri," before putting together a scheme for Lutheran unity.

Another key event that made union possible was the schism within the LCMS that led to the foundation of the AELC. The AELC's need to become part of a larger, more stable entity hastened the pace of union talks. This union ended any illusion that altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS might be restored in the foreseeable future. Thus the once powerful LCMS becomes just another little guy in comparison to the new

Lutheran church.

In anticipation of this new church it was also very interesting that it wasn't the church executives alone who were rushing headlong into union. In the ALC, for instance, a church-wide opinion poll conducted at district and synod conventions in 1981 produced an overwhelming positive response. Again in 1982 commitment for moving quickly toward a new church was almost unanimous. ALC presiding Bishop David Preus, who originally preferred a gradual convergence of the churches, has thus worked diligently to fulfill the will of the people.⁵

THE BEST LAID PLANS

To carry out the will of these three church bodies, a special commission for a New Lutheran Church(CNLC) was formed. 70 members were elected from all of the various synods not necessarily according to the size of the church bodies. Since 1982 the CNLC has met 8 times. The last meeting on September 23-27, saw the construction of the church's constitution, confession of faith, and statement of purpose. If all goes well, (More on this later) the very last meeting of the CNLC will be the summer of 1986. If the timetable rolls on as scheduled, the three churches will give approval or criticism to the CNLC's work in August of 1986, hold a constituting convention to elect officials in 1987, and open for business on January 1, 1988.⁶

For our purposes, we will briefly brush over the proposed structure of the ELCA. At this time they are going to go with a three tiered system of offices. At the top will be the national executive branch.

Then the entire United States is divided into 64 synods. Finally there is the congregational level. Also there will be eight regional centers for mission across the country. The eight regional centers will provide resources for the synods for certain matters such as developing new mission congregations or concern for stewardship, education, and congregational life. The regional centers were instituted to hinder the church from becoming too hierarchical and to keep boards and offices from multiplying as in the once proposed four-tier system. They are viewed as partnership units linking groups of synods to the national church.⁷ Its assumed that this is the body who will have ^{which} the final say on the growth of the synod and its home mission policies and practices.

One thing about this union, for perhaps the first time in history its being done openly and honestly. Jean Caffey Lyles, an editor for The Christian Century and an expert on church unions makes these observations:

"You have to say one thing for the Lutherans: They are having their fights (over the intricacies of their union) in full public view. Church unions once were negotiated behind closed doors, by the 'old boys' of the participating churches, and the details of the compromises and trade-offs made to reach agreement often weren't revealed until some church historian wrote about them years later. None of that for the Lutherans. This may be the best-documented merger in Christian history.

This union is also of interest for its detailed prenuptial agreement. The Lutherans are making before union many of the kinds of decisions that other uniting churches have left to be worked out after the pact

has been sealed. Lutherans appear willing to risk making any number of controversial decisions on structure and site up front, trusting that the fallout will not touch off explosions in congregations, districts, or synods, and prompt influentials to argue for pulling out before the final contract is signed."⁸

THORNS AMONG THE ROSES

Obviously these unique policies have caused some rather unusual situations. As the final deadlines of the new church draw nearer and nearer, the workable[?] disagreements have transformed into a knock-down, drag-out battle. At this time, in fact, its very questionable whether there will even be a new church. This month, May, 1986, thirty-one LCA Bishops got together for a two and a half day closed door meeting to wrangle over the proposed policies of the CNLC. When the dust cleared, the braintrust of the largest and most influential of the three merging bodies came up with these five revisions for the new constitution. They were:

1. That the congregations should not be so independent from the national church which after all, is the true body of Christ.
2. That the AELC's policies on ordaining parochial teachers diminishes the truly ordained ministerial office.
3. That the quota system for all church offices demanding 60% lay, 40% clergy, 50/50 men/women, and 10% minorities and non-english people is not fairly indicative of the present percentages of the church body.
4. That the wish-washy, wait until after the merger

stand on ecumenical commitment be made stronger.

5. That the pension plan be revised and based on 12% of the contributor's compensation, and that dependents can opt out of the medical and dental plans if they wish.⁹

All of these recommendations fly in the face of decisions already taken by the CNLC. Some also go against strongly expressed ALC and AELC preferences. Yet all of these were staunchly supported by the 31 bishops. Presiding Bishop James Crumley of the LCA remarks, "I have wondered if the new Lutheran church was the kind of thing the LCA could adopt or should be encouraged to adopt. It would be disastrous if Lutherans are not more together than they are now."¹⁰

It seems that the AELC members of the CNLC have been much more ready to engage in rough and tumble debate on various issues. In fact at times they have been adamant in advocating their points of view. In spite of the relatively small size of the church body, they have made substantial contributions to the ELCA constitution. This major influence obviously has not always been appreciated.¹¹ If the union is going to succeed at all, the three uniting bodies will have to give up their stereotypes of each other. Perhaps there is some truth to their exaggerated images of each other, to be sure, each has ^{its} ~~their~~ own quirks and crotchets as well as gifts and graces. One Lutheran, after attending a meeting of the CNLC remarked, "In the new church, the AELC people should be in charge of worship and liturgy; the LCA people should be in charge of social action; and the ALC people should be in charge of pastries for

the coffee hour."¹² (Can you guess the speaker's affiliation?)

On top of all this, many of the laymen in the three church bodies are wondering what is going on in their churches. Jeanette Johnson of East Grand Forks, Minnesota believes that, "Our Lord is not pleased with what is going on, and will not bless it." Clifford Panheim of Denver, Colorado, believes big-ness may be a curse rather than a blessing. "What part will the average member of a congregation have in that whole new church?" he wonders. Lloyd Halvorson of McLean, Virginia declares, "Getting politics into churches can destroy them." Franklin Brehmer of Fredericksburg, Texas thinks the new church must declare clearly that both the preached word and the sacramental word are means of grace. Walter Blume of Lancaster, Ohio cautions, "If we continue to pick and choose those things that are relevant to modern-day mores in Scripture, we might just as well forget about the whole work of the church, lock the doors, and go on our merry way of doing whatever pleases us most." Essie Grann of Savannah Georgia, says she is displeased by "trends in the national church toward increasing sociopolitical concerns... and away from scriptural and evangelical concerns." W.R. Sauey of Baraboo, Wisconsin thinks "We need to become more mindful of ...being Christ's disciples." Hula Dorsch of Bird City, Kansas asks, "Who appointed the 70-member commission that has members advocating abortion, gay movements, sex therapy and the list goes on? I see this (church union) as a brainwashing, a dangerous step towards socialism."¹³

Except for the lady with the communist plot, all of these

people have legitimate gripes. It's encouraging indeed to see that there are many with deep theological concerns and especially for our purposes, missiological concerns. Sadly the church hierarchies do not have these same concerns as is obvious from the LCA bishop's list. Almost all of the major discussion between the uniting Lutheran church bodies is about superficial details of the organization. One might very well wonder which things are going to get priority in the ELCA. If all the discussion is any guage, it won't be missions. Let's briefly take a look at some of these disagreements.

The first proposed revision of the LCA bishops pertains to congregational/national church relationships and is probably the most legitimate concern. The LCA has a strong national organization and a powerful bishop in Crumley. The other two Lutheran bodies, especially the AELC with its strong LCMS influence considers the national church only a servant of the local congregation, instituted by God. The proposed revision arose from concerns in the ALC and AELC on what some saw as the need to protect congregations' authority. Declared Crumley: "It is utterly improper to say all authority exists in the congregation. The church is not a federation of congregations."¹⁵

The general consensus seems to be that the more hierarchial the church, the less mission-minded it will be. The statistics however, seem to show that while the LCA is far more social and ecumenical minded, it still does mission work equal^{to} or better than other Lutheran bodies. (See Appendix B) Nevertheless, CNLC

Chairperson William Kinnison responded heatedly to the LCA bishops report saying, "The bishops of this church have given no vision (for mission) for 4 years, and now their action is a pathetic display of false leadership. They are forcing people to focus on meaningless niceities for the sake of hierarchy."¹⁴

The next focus for feuding is the quota system proposed for church officers. The ELCA proposed constitution states:

Each division and synod shall establish a formula for numbers of lay members of the assembly that will allow at least 60% of the voting members to be lay persons, and that shall give each congregation a minimum of 2 lay members, one of whom shall be male and one of whom shall be female. Additional members shall be equally divided between male and female...each also shall determine a process that will enable it to reach a minimum goal that 10% of its assembly members be persons of color and persons whose primary language is other than English... each shall establish a plan to attain this goal within ten years."¹⁶

There is no doubt that this is a very noble exercise in *de* segregation. It's certainly God's will that we reach all people with his word. This purpose is stated specifically as a goal of the ELCA and is also born out by the number of Hispanic missions underway in the WELS. (See Appendix D) (The author himself serves in a predominantly black inner-city WELS congregation.) Yet it is unreasonable to expect to come up with these percentages in church bodies who have nowhere near that kind of minority. Shouldn't offices rather be filled by those

most capable, whether they are black, white, or green? One LCA Pastor makes this rather unevangelical point, "The CNLC seems to be saying, Pastor, in the new church we want the leadership to be non-white, non-male, non-middle-aged and non-clergy to a far greater extent. In other words, Pastor, we want in leadership positions just about anybody but people like you. Oh, by the way, can you help us raise \$6 million to get this thing started?"¹⁷

By the way, doesn't the 50% inclusion of women balk in the face of such scripture passages as I Corinthians 14:34,35 and I Timothy 2:11-14? Later we will consider more of the new church's opinion on scripture.

The disagreement over the parochial teachers is a dying issue, since the only church that even has any parochial schools or teachers is the puny AELC. There doesn't seem to be any room or money in the new ELCA for such mundane things as Christian Education for gradeschool children. (Perhaps that is the main reason why enrollment in their colleges and Seminaries is taking a nose dive.) (See Appendix B) The last two other proposals of the bishops (See page 8) are also not highly contested.

There are, however, many other trivial controversies among the Lutherans that they obviously don't consider so trivial. The most heated arguments have been over the site of the national church offices. The ALC is based in Minneapolis/ St. Paul. The LCA is based in New York, and the AELC is in St. Louis. The two front runners seemed to be Chicago or the twin cities. All of a sudden out of nowhere the CNLC as a compromise and with a little help from a mammoth million dollar grant by the Siebert

Foundation announced Milwaukee was its choice. The uproar hasn't stopped since. Bishop Stanley Olsen representing the Pacific Southwest Synod of the LCA protested, "We have worked hard to place Lutheran witness in centers of American and world leadership. Milwaukee speaks symbolically of a retreat into our ethnic insularity of former days. Lutheranism has lived to regret the hundreds of times when dollar-saving decisions placed our congregations in cheap, off-the-beaten-path locations." "The LCA staff in Milwaukee 'feel a bit put down' about the negative feelings toward the city." said Glen Holmquist, an assistant to another bishop. "It doesn't make a doodly-doo where we are located. Is the main thing maintaining a headquarters or evangelizing the world?"¹⁸ Somehow it just doesn't seem likely that the ELCA will stay in Milwaukee. Interestingly enough, the WELS is also based in Milwaukee. Generally that close of quarters would not be an ideal situation for either, but most doubt that there would be any affect on either except to emphasize the vast differences between the two church bodies.

On top of all this, there is one rather humorous problem that plagues the ELCA. It seems that the new name that the 5 million member church body has chosen is reserved by a 50 member rural denomination in Jackson and French Lake, Minnesota. These two congregations are all that remains of the old Eielson synod. Formerly that synod was in Wisconsin, and in that state, no one else can use that name. Truman Larson the farmer/president of the small group said there was no way they would give up the

name out of respect for their forefathers. Robert F. Blank, the LCA treasurer and lawyer notes, "From a legal standpoint, size has nothing to do with it. We don't have a legal leg to stand on. We can't use the name in Wisconsin."¹⁹ Go get 'em, Truman!

All in all, this author has noticed a general scattering of thorns among this rosey union. There seems to be a mistrust of the other churches and the people running them. Maybe its just a vocal minority, which is likely, but one sure reads a lot of attitudes like this particular Pastor's, printed, by the way, in the LCA's church wide magazine, The Lutheran:

"First it is not 'we' who are forming this new church, but it is 'they.' I was a delegate at the 1982 LCA convention in Louisville, Kentucky, at which we elected our representatives to the CNLC. We were not allowed to vote for whom we wanted, but we were presented with selected individuals in carefully 'boxed' categories. There were very few 'at large' slots. So we are represented by persons who may be qualified, but most of whom are relatively unknown. They are not our church's natural leaders. These CNLC members then proceeded to isolate themselves from us (Perhaps for their self-preservation) as the flap about quotas showed us. They may be playing a very good brand of baseball, but they are playing in a different ball park than most of the 'grass roots' folks. At a recent gathering of 200 professional leaders of the Ohio synod (LCA), a CNLC representative was asked, 'If 200 of us sent a unanimous resolution concerning something that directly affected Ohio, would it make a difference?' His answer was a lot of confusion as to who was responsible

and then he said, 'Most of it finishes in someone's waste basket.' He said he felt that we would have very little effect on the CNLC."²⁰

In a letter to Illinois Synod pastors, Bishop Paul E. Erickson wrote last month that the CNLC "has lost its way!" He noted that this spring's synod convention will give careful attention to the commission's report. Erickson writes,

"All of us had high hopes for the new Lutheran church. I believe that we could build upon the best in each of the merging bodies. I had dreams that we would have a vital, vibrant church which would allow Lutherans in the United States to take their rightful place as a national Christian community. Unfortunately a series of compromises has left us without a doctrine of ministry, a headquarters in a regional rather than a national and international city, and a confused plan of organization that has no clear lines of responsibility and authority."

In answer to the question of what went wrong he writes,

"It was a noble experiment to put 70 people together and charge them with the responsibility to give us a new church. I believe that the inability of the CNLC to develop a clear ecclesiology—a theological understanding of the church, and an understanding of what it means to be in a structure which will enable mission—has been a problem."²¹

Frankly, this has even led some members of the CNLC to despair. Dr. Elizabeth Bettenhausen, professor at Boston University and CNLC member writes,

"I am convinced that it would be a grave mistake to proceed with the merger given what emerges in the most recent report. The premise that the LCA, ALC, AELC were united in essentials and thus could

simply construct a new church to incorporate that unity was false from the start."

Dr. Franklin O. Fry, another member of the CNLC mourns, "I sobbed with joy at my table in gratitude at the 1982 convention. Now I would not be able to vote to accept this document as a basis for a new church."²² By now we might very well be wondering if there will be a new ELCA or not. The failure of this merger is a very real possibility, at least at the present time. Two things tip the scale to the theory that this merger will eventually happen. It may not be on their rushed timetable, and it may take many more compromises and discussions, but much evidence points to a merger.

The first of these two observations is that these three church bodies have been for a long time now bitten with a union at all costs ideology. As we have seen from the previous historical background (page 2) the ALC and LCA consider union with anyone and everyone part of their theology. Their battle cry is becoming more and more "One in Christ!" (More on this later) This is ingrained in their pastors at the Seminary level, and passed on almost unanimously to the people. Perhaps you remember that the vote for union went 98% LCA, 91% ALC and 100% AELC. The AELC, who seems to be making the biggest stink, are in the most uncompromising situation. Their puny size and lack of adequate facilities to train pastors and carry on their missions practically necessitates a merger. The appeal of what these three churches could accomplish together and the awesome weight they could throw around the American religious scene is, in the

opinion of some, irresistible. Don't look for this merger to fold without vehement protest.

The second observation is that heated debate among these three bodies is not only the norm, it is expected. As one reads the official periodicals of these church bodies, its almost unbelievable the wide variety of opinion, policy, and even doctrine that can be found there. We've already tasted some of the bitterness expressed in these articles. (See pages 8-13) Darold Beekman, a CNLC member writes in the ALC magazine, The Lutheran Standard, "There will be issues that we continue to debate. That is a sign of health, not of weakness."²³ To this point another layman wrote an interesting letter to the Christian News, entitled "A voice of the ALC shocked about WELS." In this letter he reveals, "I was shocked to hear the Wisconsin Synod periodicals reject publishing anything that 'did not represent the unanimous position of the synod's membership'...Can you imagine a reader of the WELS periodicals grabbing a paper, confident that on every single subject he already knew the position of his synod and the editorial slant of the publication? How dull!"²⁴ By now we can see more clearly why the picture of a volcano was set forth as a type for this church. Perhaps even they would agree with this analogy.

Lest you still are not convinced that the union is nowhere near being on the rocks yet, permit me to let them speak for themselves. Edgar R. Trexler, the editor of the LCA's official periodical, The Lutheran, writes,

"In a sense the three Lutheran churches dare not

fail in this merger effort. Failure would leave a deep wound on the Lutheran psyche and make it easy for the world to pass them by as loners. Lutherans would certainly not be considered credible partners in ecumenical relations if they cannot get their own house in order. The LCA family will remain firmly committed to the Lutheran union and will do everything in its power to bring the ELCA into being on its present time line for 1988."²⁵

Barbara Hanst, another CNLC member writes, "If none of the changes was made by the CNLC, we must go on with the merger. Our division as Lutherans weakens our evangelism. I cannot defend why the LCA and the ALC cannot get together." Bishop Herbert Chilstrom insists it would be "total disaster, if the merger fails. If we don't pull this thing off now, Lord have mercy on us, we won't have another chance for two or three generations." Finally even presiding Bishop Will Herfel~~d~~ of the fiery AELC feels "confident the church will proceed to the constituting convention in 1987. I think its God's will and the will of the people."²⁶

SCRAP OVER SCRIPTURE

The element of utmost importance in any mission program is the message. What are we telling the people. So crucial is that message that if it is flawed and worthless, so also will be your evangelism and mission. In the WELS a mission congregation can call a pastor and be certain of what he is going to preach; not so in the ELCA. The interpretations of scriptures and doctrine seem to vary widely- you could hardly believe it's the same

church. Sadly, because of this diversity, scripture and doctrine do not always assume ^{their} its prominent roles in the ELCA. Basically the uniting bodies have agreed to disagree. The statement on scripture was phrased generally enough to fit everyone under their umbrella. Dr. Samuel Nafzger of the LCMS observes, "The proposed wording reveals a clear retreat from a recognition of scripture as infallible and/or inerrant. It is not the absence of these words so much as the studied avoidance of confessing the full truthfulness of the bible that is troublesome."²⁷ The new church's confession of faith specifically states:

Chapter 2:30 "This church accepts the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life."²⁸ Conspicuous by their absence are the terms infallible and inerrant. This was not always the case. In both present ALC and LCA church constitutions, both of these words were used. Although admittedly it has been quite some time since these terms in their classical orthodox sense have been taught in either church body. As far back as 1927 Dr. E.H. Delk, an ALC² Seminary professor at Gettysburg Pennsylvania admits,

"When I came to the seminary years ago, I fully believed in verbal inspiration of every book of the bible. The bible was to me an infallible authority in its statements concerning astronomy, geology, anthropology, history, ethics, and religion...I fancy I had plenty of company in my jejune conception and belief that the Bible in all its statements was inerrant... What a change has been wrought in the sphere of New Testament scholarship during the last 50 years...Higher criticism has set theology free

from that tyrannous literalism and false idea of inspiration which made all attempts at the adjustment of theology with modern thought in history, science, and philosophy either impious or revolutionary... No theory of verbal inspiration is any longer tenable. It is, of course, no secret that verbal inspiration is not thought in some of the Seminaries of the United Lutheran Church."²⁹

The ULC is, of course, the forerunner of the present LCA. Again Professor Westerhaus notes that it was not until 1947 in the ALC when some professors "began to approach the scriptures historically, rather than with the a priori of inerrancy and verbal inspiration. What was a small voice in 1947 became a large sound within a decade. By 1956, when the proposed constitution of the new ALC was voted on by the ELC, several, if not most, of its professors of theology were teaching a view of scripture at variance with the statement on the bible in the new constitution."³⁰

Today is nearly a mirror reflection of the past. The difference is historical-critical theology has been taught in their seminaries inseminating their pastors for two and a half decades. Professor K.E. Christopherson, Professor at Pacific Lutheran University, writing in an article in Dialogue (Vol 19, summer 1980) in effect complains year after year that students and parents still become upset when he seeks to convince them that the Bible does contain error.³¹ Professor Philip Quanbeck, a teacher of religion at Augsburg College and author of adult bible courses admits:

"Many thoughtful Christians today place much emphasis on the 'inerrancy' of the Bible. They do this for a variety of reasons, including seeking to make clear that the Bible is not like any other book. But when we try to apply the claim of 'inerrancy to the Bible, we

discover difficulties. The Bible for example, is not an authority in matters of science and world geography. It ought not to be regarded as the norm for information on the age of the earth or the location of continents. So the authority of the Bible in our life and in the church does not depend on its being without error in terms of science or geography."³²

Professor Richard Hanson, a professor of religion at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, voices his opinion in the ALC's The Lutheran Standard,

"I think we should keep in mind several things about scripture, including some things about scripture that we as Lutherans have never said before. We need to acknowledge, for example, that the biblical books are historical records of the life of faith from the past. These scriptures cease at a point in time. Yet God continues to send inspired messages through speakers, including persons such as St. Augustine, Moses Maimonides, St. Francis of Assisi, Brigatta of Sweden, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, and Martin Luther King, Jr. to name but a few."³³

It certainly is interesting to say the least, that Dr. Luther (not King) the man who suffered so much to restore true orthodox teaching would be mentioned by a Lutheran as belonging to such a crew. Historical Criticism has been the crack in the dam of orthodoxy that has so weakened these bodies that the flood waters of liberal anything-goes-ism is no longer just seeping, but gushing through the foundation of their beliefs. Reason reigns supreme as the basis of theology, not the word of God. One old ALC hand admits that 'the old historic Lutheranism has

built up a system of orthodoxy, can hardly without a loss of intellectual integrity and vitality, be maintained in the light of the historical method of understanding the scriptures."³⁴

Thus it becomes open season and any interpreter can take the scripture in the way he thinks it best fits his life. At this point, two significant bible passages, I Corinthians chapters 1 and 2 about the wisdom of this world and 2 Timothy 4:3-5 concerning hearing what itching ears want to hear, come to mind. The wide variety of itching ears doesn't seem to bother teachers like Professor Quanbeck. "Confessing the authority of scripture does not guarantee that we automatically agree on what the Bible means."³⁵ One frustrated CNLC member quips, "quibbling over theories of inspiration is no less a disaster than to quarrel over the color of vestments."

In his paper on doctrinal differences among Lutherans, Pastor Prenzlau, WELS, makes two worthwhile observations on this problem. "Orthodoxy...is established not by the official position...but by what is taught in pulpits and seminaries, and its publications. A church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the errors combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline."³⁶ (Acts 20:30, I Timothy 1:3) Also he notes that "The errors in other Lutheran bodies in respect to the word of God, while they may have 'intruded casually', have not been 'combated and removed' within these groups by means of doctrinal discipline. Rather the spirit of neo-orthodoxy that began with the higher criticism of scripture is on the increase and becomes greater with each ecumenical move of the chessboard."³⁷

With the denial of the inspiration, infallibility, and in-
 ereance of God's word, it would follow that other doctrines of
 scripture, as well as practices of the church, would be affected.
 In the ELCA, major doctrines like conversion, election, justifi-
 cation, the church, the anti-Christ, the matter of lodges, escat-
 ology, and fellowship are either thrown out or disgustingly per-
 verted. They claim to subscribe to the confessions, but "only
 in so far as they rightly interpret scripture,"³⁸ which is quite
 another thing. There are about 20% of them who question whether
 Jesus is the only way to heaven. 30% who don't think a child is
 sinful at birth, 60% think that all religions lead to heaven and
 the same GOD. 55% think the Gospel is God's rules for living.³⁹
 About 20% think that Adam and Eve were mythical characters. 45%
 believe that God is satisfied with your best. (See Appendix E&F)
 It's ^{has} even gotten to the point where such 'sexist language as
 "Father" and "Son" ' narrowly escapes by a vote of 33 to 30 being
 stricken from the CNLC's confessional statement in favor of "Cre-
 ator" and "Redeemer".⁴⁰

The kicker is that much of the laity doesn't even realize
 what is going on. Asked how different the Lutheran church bodies
 are from each other, 40% of Lutheran laity answer, "I don't know."
 (This includes WELS) 23% more feel the differences are at most,
 slight. Only one in six (16%) of the Lutheran lay people regard
 the several Lutheran bodies as extremely different from one an-
 other. Lutheran clergy, on the other hand, feel otherwise. 76%
 of the clergy see drastic differences.⁴¹ (See Appendix G)

Ironically, a significant number of laity take a much more

conservative stand on doctrine than the clergy. They more often respond with what may be regarded as a more traditional view. Dr. Carl Reuss, the father of all these statistics, points out, "The account of Adam and Eve falling into sinfulness is simply a story which did not take place in reality, is strongly opposed by the laity, (69%) while 40% of the clergy agree with this idea.⁴² There are some, indeed, there are thousands, of lay people and clergy in the ALC and LCA, who recognize that serious doctrinal problems are present in their various churches, and they have banded together to try to prevent various errors and heresies from being perpetrated, either by promotion or by permission, in their new church. One such group is called FELLP, or Fellowship of Evangelical Lutheran Laity and Pastors. They are speaking out strongly for inerrancy and against universalism (all saved somehow) and ethical relativism (no clear standards of right and wrong, as in homosexuality, abortion, etc.). This group is made up of 20 to 30 LCA and ALC congregations in the Minneapolis/ St. Paul area. Its interesting that some of the FELLP congregations are among the strongest mission-minded congregations in the LCA. For example Pastor Barnhart's congregation in St. Paul supports 65 missionaries- most of them independantly.⁴³ Lest we shower too many accolades on FELLP, it ought to be noted that the co-chairman of the organization, Rev. Morris Vaagenes, Jr. is also the leader of the Lutheran Charismatic Renewal movement. Even their righteous acts are as filthy rags.

Another group out in California called the World Confessional Lutheran Association is of the same metal as FELLP. Dr.

Reuben H. Redal offers this insight in an invitation to a southern California Seminar April 18-19, 1986, "It is our sincere intent to inform and to offer alternative suggestions to those who are not clearly satisfied with the present course of their synods. There appears to be a growing concern as the time for convention voting draws nearer."⁴⁴

What really went wrong with the ALC and LCA? Surely it was many things, far more than we will cover. These thoughts, however, were gleaned from a paper written by a now retired history professor of mine, Oscar J. Siegler,

"Among the causes that might be listed for the gradual infiltration of this 'modern gospel' into the minds of Lutheran clergy and laity alike, was the fact that Lutheran literature in the English was definitely scarce for a considerable period of this countries history. As a result, many of the Pastors of the English speaking eastern synods were forced to turn to periodicals and books of a reformed origin, which literature became more and more imbued with the ideas of the social gospel and in turn affected the minds and the judgement of the Lutheran readers... Then it should not be forgotten that our Lutheran preaching has sometimes tended toward dogmatical lifelessness, lacking the warmth of the true gospel- preaching, causing some to espouse a Gospel whose basic principles are altogether alien to Lutheran tenents... For over 75 years nearly all of the synods of the East and West had parochial school systems ...and while today the large LCA has not one parochial school left within the boundaries of the U.S. ALC has but 36 schools. (written in 1946- today there are few, if any) The decline and fall of the parochial school in other Lutheran bodies in America have meant confessional laxity and doctrinal indifference... It would be

impossible to compute or weigh the innumerable effects which the public school system has had and is having on the LCA and ALC today. There is hardly a doctrine of the Bible which is not being undermined or contradicted or ridiculed by our public schools... Generally speaking a Sunday school has had good and bad effects upon the LCA today. If the Sunday School is regarded as a competent substitute for the Christian Day School, if as seems to be happening more and more frequently, the Sunday School is regarded as a substitute for the Church as far as church attendance for the young people is concerned, then Sunday School is definitely a threat and a danger to the Lutheran church. It must be admitted.. the Sunday School by itself is a weak, puny, pitiable toy to pit against the towering, massive, scornful giant of the public school system."⁴⁵

These points are crucial lessons to learn for the WELS. They could perhaps mean the difference between eternal life and eternal death for many.

It is doubtful whether there will be a mass exodus by conservatives from the LCA, ALC, and AELC when and if the new church opens for business in 1988. Most United States Lutherans have learned to live with doctrinal diversity within their denominations. The amazing uniformity of faith and confession with which God has graciously blessed us in the WELS is foreign to them and apparently it is not a high priority for them-as long as their local church and minister do not go too far off the deep end in doctrine, social activism, or dabbling in politics.

SEARCH FOR A PURPOSE

ELCA mission purpose

Then Jesus came to them (the disciples) and said,
 "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given
 to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,
 baptizing them in the name of the Father, and
 of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching
 them to obey everything I have commanded you. And
 surely I will be with you always, to the very end
 of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

These are Christ's parting words, spoken as a commission
 for His New Testament church. This is our chief purpose for the
 church. Admittedly, there are other purposes, but many churches,
 (including some WELS) have been guilty of mixing up priorities.
 In a survey, Lutherans were asked what was the main purpose of
 a congregation. 70% replied worship. Holy Communion and Christ-
 ian education each placed in the top three by a 60% to 90% majority.
 (See Appendix E&H) Evangelism didn't even place in the top
 fourteen purposes.⁴⁶

What makes a church forget its chief purpose? In the case
 of the ELCA perhaps it is an abandonment of their first love,
 scriptures, and the doctrines therein. When conversion becomes
 a cooperation with the Lord, and the gospel becomes God's rules,
 and God accepts the best you can do, and Christ becomes one of
 many ways to heaven, then your religion is workrighteousness.
 That in effect is what a liberal is, "One who believes in human
 perfectability or self-salvation." Because of this, one of the
 chief characteristics of a liberal is "this world-liness." The
 religious liberal thinks the conservative is welcome to waste his
 time with "pie in the sky by and by when we die." The liberal

wants to make sure people get theirs "down on the ground while they're still around." Not that they aren't religious- they are quick to show you scripture that says, serve the poor and needy, fight for justice, and etc. Their jealousy rivals even the Old Testament Pharisee. Because of their "this world-liness", they think the important thing to do is to hit the streets and lobby the government, rather than explain the way of salvation to an individual. In a way, that's all for the best, because when liberals do explain the way of salvation, they frequently explain it in a manner that produces either work-righteousness or despair of forgiveness in the average hearer. The liberal tries to cover his failure by insisting that God is so great that he can easily overlook sins against his majesty, and that the important thing to him is not how we treat God, but how we treat each other. He strives for a better world for everyone. In practice, he thinks the church's agenda should be reform society, improve the environment, and save men from social injustice and the hell of human oppression. The current idea is that these will be achieved when all humans are absolutely equal. He tends to suffer a tremendous load of guilt over his part in not seeing to it that everyone has an equal share in this world's goods. This guilt is what activates him.

As a result, the LCA and ALC have become notorious for their "social gospel" and "liberation theology." They consistently dabble in such government issues as rights of minorities, substance abuse, Medi-care, handling crime, zoning laws, and elections.

The ELCA constitutional purpose states:

"This church will:

c. Serve in response to God's love to meet human needs, advocating justice and dignity for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among nations, and standing in solidarity with the poor and powerless.

h. Study social issues...work to discover the root causes of ^{oppression}poression and injustice.

j. relate to civil authorities."⁴⁷

Professor Siegler of the WELS has this to say about the "social gospel":

"All these outgrowths of the social gospel reveal the alarming confusion that exists today on the principle of State-Church separation. In a dozen different ways the church is encroaching upon a field of activity strictly belonging to the government alone. The church nowhere has the command to save human society. The church's work is to save individuals through the preaching of Christ crucified. That such preaching alone brings about true social reform, is a secondary matter, but it reveals another failing on the part of social-gospelists; the mixing of law and gospel. The social gospel is really no gospel at all. It never has been. It is a law, pure and simple, and at that it is being misused and abused. It is law used not to bring men to a knowledge of his sin, but to bring man to a heaven on earth."⁴⁸

Interestingly enough, the laity seem to be about fed up with all this meddling in social affairs. At least 2 out of every 3 lay persons for example, feel that the church should not be involved in issues of elections and candidates, of business and government relations, or of local zoning laws. At least a majority

of laity feel that the church should not be involved in issues of handling crime or of medical care. Clergy feel otherwise. Half see a need for involvement in candidate issues and elections. Strong majorities favor involvement in civil rights, substance abuse, education, and the government. Laity disagree.⁴⁹ (See Appendix I)

Another major part of the ELCA's mission purpose is their ecumenical efforts. The fastest way to get your church body to grow is to recruit everyone in sight to join you because, after all, you're all "One in Christ." For years already, Lutherans have been sharing altars and pulpits with just about everyone. We've already seen what pains have been taken to get these three church bodies together. Their purpose will not change in the future. The ELCA's constitution states,

"This church, in faithfulness to the gospel, is committed to be an inclusive church in the midst of division in society. Through the cross of Christ, God has broken down the barriers that separate people from one another. Through Baptism, God makes us one people in Christ. Therefore in our life together, and in our organizations and outreach, all expressions of this church shall seek to exhibit the inclusive unity that is God's will for the Church."⁵⁰

In fact they have an executive office for Ecumenical Affairs whose purpose is "to encourage inter-Lutheran, inter-faith dialogue in which this church is involved, administering the membership of this church in such organizations as the World Council of Churches, the National Church Council, and the Lutheran World Federation, including personal and financial support."⁵¹

WELS Pastor Ruel J. Schulz makes this observation:

"When I read this statement, I realized that its probably just a matter of time before this new Lutheran church joins the Consultation on Church Union(COCU), (COCU is the ^(proposal) 23 million-member union of Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and the Church of Christ) and is swallowed up in the multi-million member Church of Christ Union which ecumenical visionaries hope comes into existance some time in the 21st century."⁵²

Furthermore, newspapers and magazines have been regularly publishing major strides ^{made} in the negotiation toward a reunion of Rome and Lutherans. February 4, 1980 Christian News quotes prominent Lutheran minister Richard J. Neuhaus preaching at Cleveland's St. John's Roman Catholic Cathedral:

"There are no longer any reasons to keep Lutherans and Roman Catholics from reuniting into one church...the bitter theological arguements that caused the church to split in the 16th Century have been resolved...with the help of the Holy Spirit, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran church could be reunited in 20 years. It would be an appropriate way to begin a new millenium."

On November 29, 1984 LCA leader, Bishop James R. Crum^{ely}, after a 20 minute private audience with Pope John Paul II was "Thrilled by the Pope's own deep committment to ecumenism and his appreciation for the Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue in the U.S. His Holiness articulated in a fervent and definⁱative way his own personal commitment as well as that of the Roman Catholic church to search for the visible unity of the churches. We agreed that we Lutherans and Catholics are united in more ways than we are divided."⁵³

Pastor Schulz aptly sums up all of this unity in his own way:

"Quite frankly, all of this chumminess and brotherliness is appealing to our sinful flesh. Whether we understand what is involved or not, it sure looks neighborly to see all of those preachers together! But how does it look to our Lord? When Lutherans, loyal to their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His true inspired word, are led to shrug off Scriptural differences and unite in religious fellowship with church bodies with whom they are not in agreement, do they not make of themselves the kind of 'laughing stock'? For instance, can you imagine a Pan-Protestant Reformation Rally?"⁵⁴

At the very least, all of this is ridiculous. At the worst, it flies in the face of Romans 16:17,18 and I Corinthians 1:10, 2John 9-11 and 2 Timothy 2:16-18.

To be fair, however, the new Lutheran church does have a mission program in its plans. It should be pointed out though, that when these Lutherans speak of "mission" they do not necessarily mean spreading the gospel to those who have not. Nor does it necessarily mean planting new churches. In reply to a questionnaire sent to all the Mission Executives of the ALC, LCA, & AELC, (See Appendix K&L) Pastor Kenneth C. Senft, Executive Director for the Division for Service and Mission in North America of the LCA explains:

"We no longer think of missions. We believe that we are a part of one church that is global. The Body of Christ does not know some of the divisions that many of us have perpetrated...are we

not engaged in one mission? We are one with many, many other Christians in the Body of Christ. Not all of them bear the name Lutheran."⁵⁵ Therefore everything we've discussed so far comes under their label of missions. Still the ELCA constitution does call for a Division of Outreach in the U.S.A.

"This division shall reach out in witness to the gospel in areas served by the synods of this church. It shall work to carry out its responsibility for proclamation, service, and the advocacy of justice for all people. It shall assist this church to keep evangelism at the center of its life and witness...It shall be cooperative in planning for mission with other church bodies and ecumenical organizations serving in the U.S.A."⁵⁶

After reading that, it would be appropriate for the prosecution to rest its case. In all my correspondence with their mission executives, there was one "goel" (Hebrew for redeemer) That was the ALC mission executive James A. Berquist. It was a delight to share thoughts with this insightful leader. If he is elected chairman of the new church's mission committee, he just might be able to save a sinking ship. He expresses hopefully that,

"The new Lutheran church will have a strong emphasis on American missions. It is placing increased responsibilities on the 64 synods of the new church for this purpose. Every indication is that American missions will be one of the chief priorities of the new church. In the last 2 years, the ALC has 141 new ministries and congregations in all areas, but plans concentration in growing

parts of the U.S. which often means the sun belt, urban areas, the East and West Coasts, areas highest in numbers of unchurched people, also minorities, black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and Eskimo."⁵⁷

In spite of this bright spot, there are many in this new synod who are gravely concerned about the back seat that evangelism and missions seem to be getting. Pastor Sanford C. Mitchell fears that:

"The CNLC seems to be headed in a direction that does not offer much help for the concerns that some of us care about deeply. I am sure that my role as a pastor/evangelist for the LCA slants the selection of persons who talk with me, but they care deeply about strengthening the outreach of the church to those who do not know Jesus. They are trying to strengthen the local congregation to add vitality to our witness, and the caring love we extend to others around us. These goals seem far down on the list of concerns voiced by the CNLC."⁵⁸

In general the ELCA mission purpose covers a vast array of goals. Many of them no doubt will be carried out. Whether our Lord's great commission will be carried out your guess is as good as mine. Even the famous Dr. Lyle Schaller, noted analyst of contemporary trends in churches wonders,

"Will the new denomination be expected to grow to become a larger church with perhaps 15,000 or 20,000 congregations and 6-8 million confirmed members by 1999? Or is it assumed that since most post-1950 merges have produced shrinking denominations, the ELCA will shrink to perhaps 8,500 congregations and 3 million confirmed members by 1999?"⁵⁹

WELS MISSION PURPOSE

Entering this portion of my paper, admittedly is like getting a fresh cool drink of sparkling water after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. If nothing else, it might just be because we've come home to the WELS. Hopefully you'll see its much more than that. Not only have we arrived home, but there's a sumptuous feast of real meat and potatoes waiting for us. For a WELS member, scripture is inerrant, infallible, and the only means that God ^{uses to} gives direction for his church and for our missions. Therefore you will not find social gospel, but many of Christ's blood washed children serving others joyfully and thankfully, because we realize we are saved by his grace alone. You will not find us in fellowship with false prophets who teach other than God's word, nor will you find us calling the Anti-Christ "His Holiness." You will find a united, unanimous church body with a message of life and death to share with others. Sure we are a small band, at times just learning how to best plow the field and sow the seed. The difference is that we have the greatest seed there is, the real gospel, Christ's complete atonement and cure for our fatal disease, sin. Considering this, we have what it takes to be the greatest harvesters of saints in the world. Pastor Norman W. Berg, the chairman of the WELS General Board for Home Missions (GBHM) who was invaluable to me in much of my research, has this to say about the WELS mission purpose:

"The purpose of the Home Mission program of the WELS throughout its 125 years can be summed up in its recent statement of purpose: 'The

continuing purpose of the GBHM is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all people within the limits of the domestic mission fields of the WELS.' This statement is only an institutional way of declaring that the function of the church or any of its visible parts is the following of the Great Commission to go into all the world and to preach the gospel to every creature.

Our home mission program from its beginning until now has been marked by this mission purpose with its dual object, proclaiming the good news both to those within the church and to those outside it. This is underlined presently in the first two of three stated objectives of our Home Mission Board:

"1. To reach the unchurched primarily by the establishment of mission congregations.

2. To conserve the membership of the WELS. It has been the changing moods of various times that has brought about a shift in emphasis as to which object of the proclaiming of the gospel received the greater attention, effort, and thought, those within the church or those outside it."⁶⁰

In the beginning days, the small WELS concentrated on gathering and consolidating their own. This was done out of necessity and inability to reach out further. In the 1960's we began reaching out in earnest. Because of the greater mobility and movement of our members to the larger U.S. cities, we were forced to concentrate on serving WELS people in isolated but heavily populated areas. Pastor

Berg remembers that in 1965, "Voices were heard to say, 'We're going too fast and too far!' But we couldn't help but believe it was the Lord Himself who was calling us into new areas through urgent appeals."⁶¹ In the late 60's and early 70's the GBHM had to be concerned also about disaffected confessional Lutherans from other synods seeking our help. Again Pastor Berg Notes,

"The many calls coming from concerned Lutherans caused the GBHM to list as a third primary objective besides reaching the unchurched and conserving membership, the objective, 3. To serve on request people who share our confessional concerns. A new rubric appeared in the Home Mission statistics in 1969, that of members received by 'profession of faith.' These were concerned Lutherans formerly of other synods not in doctrinal agreement with us. The figures in this column are now double those of adult confirmands."⁶²

To obtain a view of just how much this third objective has affected our mission efforts of the past, a survey of questionnaires was sent to all current synod-subsidized congregations begun since 1960. 250 replies were received along with many interesting comments. The information requested was a percentage breakdown of the synodical/religious background of the communicant membership of the nucleus of ~~the nucleus~~ of the mission at inception and of the background of the current communicant membership. The categories were: WELS, LCMS, Other Lutherans, and non-Lutherans.

The two primary matrices used in tabulating the results were ERA and the fourteen mission districts. (See Appendix J) This survey was courtesy of Pastor Berg, who comments on the results.

"During the days of the (pre-1960) LCMS/ALC efforts for merger, our missions experienced a fairly heavy influx of LCMS people in our nuclei. From 1953-1957 the percentage of LCMS people in the nuclei was in the low 40%'s...During the turbulent years in the WELS from the early 50's until the suspension of fellowship with the LCMS in 1961 and for the next several years, the percentage of LCMS people in our mission nuclei was low. (Avg.20%) Undoubtedly the rigors of the battle and the perceived 'precipitous' action of the WELS did not meet with the approval of even the conservative LCMS clergy and laity. The mid-1960's brought an increasing trend towards LCMS membership in new WELS missions (35%) The advent of the Lutheran Free Conferences may have brought greater good will among Lutherans... The action of the 1969 Denver convention of the LCMS in declaring fellowship with the ALC triggered a deeper confessional concern and greater appreciation of the WELS fellowship position. LCMS mission nuclei in WELS jumped to 50% or more. Seminex problems kept the rate up at about 35% through 1970-77...The actions of the LCMS conventions of 1979 and 1981 in issuing a protest to the ALC re its doctrinal positions and then suspending fellowship caused a dramatic drop-off from 1978 on. The figure dropped to 18% in 1978 and has stayed at an average of 21% since, with 16% so far in 1984."⁶³

The reason Pastor Berg concentrates primarily on the LCMS nuclei is that the other Lutherans in our nuclei were nearly insignificant. (See Appendix J) It is significant however, that during times of ecumenical efforts, we received the greatest number of confessional transfers. Also it should be made perfectly clear that the WELS is not in the business of being sheep hawks, flying over every flock, looking for stragglers among confused and misled sheep. Nevertheless, when you observe the ELCA's drift to the far left theologically, it is imperative that the WELS remain a clear bastion of 19th century (or 16th century) Lutheran doctrine, and as an evangelical, evangelistic, confessional synod.

We will admire and continue to welcome those who for conscience reasons take personally painful steps to take a confessional stand and then in cases to make it known through transfer to our fellowship. Also in connection with this, President Mischke cited a recent upsurge in the number of colloquies requested by Pastors and teachers from other synods. No doubt this will continue. To be honest, profession of fellowship hasn't exactly been the best way for us to do mission work, however. Research data indicates that in the case of congregations starting before 1970, those starting with more than 50% WELS members show a 31.4% better record of reaching 200 communicants before 1984 than those starting with over 50% LCMS membership. Also in the case of congregations starting from 1970-1979, those starting with more than 50% WELS members show a 38% better record of

reaching 100 communicants before 1984 than those starting with over 50% LCMS membership.⁶⁴

The big question, of course, is how much will the ALC, LCA, and AELC merger effect the influx of disenchanting into other Lutheran churches. The opinions are wide-ranging. Viewing both the national scene and particularly their specific fields, 43 respondents to our questionnaire made comments concerning the possible impact of the merger. 25 saw no major change in our work, problems, opportunities, or strategy. Nine felt there would be a slight shift to WELS, particularly of LCMS people, but also some ALC people. Nine felt it would have a negative effect on our work as to growth and as to our image. Typical of the comments indicating no change:

(From SA District)"We have noticed a widening gap between us and local ALC and LCA churches. We probably will not enjoy much of a real increase in real membership."

(From Florida)"My most successful mission work here is with other Lutherans from ALC/LCA and LCMS."

(From Georgia)"We will be thought of as just another Lutheran church...and I might say that there are not a lot of Lutheran churches that have a good name in the bible belt. Lutherans are liberals...the union will lower our recognition factor and lower the general public's assessments/evaluation rating of us."

(From California) "The most striking effect the Lutheran union...may have on our mission effort is consternation on the part of the unchurched as well as those who already attend some

church regarding our failure to at least rejoice, if not to participate in, such a union ...I do not see numbers of disenchanted members of ALC or LCA churches approaching us about joining our congregation. Any disenchanted LCA or ALC people will probably turn first to LCMS churches."⁶⁵

To this last point one wonders what effect this might have on the confessionalism of the LCMS. Already within the LCMS conservatives, viewing the rapid liberalization of the ELCA and the mild response of the LCMS leadership to this trend in respect to the continued involvement of the LCMS in LCUSA and in many joint fellowship activities and programs at the local level, are becoming restless and impatient with what they see as a shift from the apparent swing back to "Old Missouri". Pastor Joel Gerlach, former Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor and ^{former} present home mission counselor of the California Mission District makes these observations,

"Unlike the 1960's the national climate is more conservative religiously, and because it is, some Lutherans are going to become disenchanted. Some will look for a more conservative Lutheran body. Missouri may be forfeiting a chance to be the haven for the disenchanted because her actions are not consistent with her profession. It could be that some disaffected Lutherans from other synods will take another look at us. It is possible that some of the reasons in the past for disenchanted members of other synods taking a look at us will have that same effect today. It is true that the same reasons are surfacing again. In view of the impending 1988

merger, including doctrinal concerns, discontent with leadership and traditionalism (bible translations, new hymnal, etc.) As a result, there may be some drift of the disaffected to the WELS. Because of the nature of the primary reasons for disenchantment particularly among ALC laity, my personal opinion is that any ALC drift will be more to the LCMS which appears more compatible and comfortable for ALC members."⁶⁶

Considering any possibility of defections, Jean Caffey Lyles again gives her view as an outsider:

"The new body would lose some conservative ALC congregations whose members regard the new church as too liberal and find Missouri a more congenial home. On the other hand, the LCMS's recent strong pronouncement ruling out the ordination of women could lead some LCMS women and men, who believe Missouri's stance on women's place in the church is too rigidly closed, to consider becoming members of congregations of a more mainline Lutheran body."⁶⁷

The future members of the ELCA of course do not foresee any merger dissatisfaction. Mission executive Kenneth Senft writes:

"I do not anticipate that there will be any defections. If there are, they will be congregations who are already defected from one or another of the three Lutheran church bodies. In my judgement, there is not any other Lutheran church that will pick up any congregations as a result of this unity."⁶⁸

ALC mission executive as usual shows a little more sensible approach:

"There is no indication of significant objection within the three merging churches that is going to cause some congregations not to join. Of course, there may be a few. There does not appear to be any move to form a new synod or continue as an old one. Some may be joining such groups as the Free Association of Lutherans. None of our district Presidents report more than scattered instances in which some indication is given that some congregations may not come along into the new church... Pastoral leadership is usually decisive as you can guess. When it is the pastor who is raising the objections, the congregation is often negatively influenced and often split. I hope it's a situation that doesn't happen with much frequency because it will be sectarian in spirit and destructive to the body of Christ."⁶⁹

Most of our WELS mission purpose chapter has been spent on the third objective, which is to "serve on request people who share our confessional concerns." We've concentrated on this area because obviously this is where the new church could have the most influence on our mission program. However, it is also third in our priorities, and in view of the current spiritual and ecclesiastical conditions in our land, definitely behind our first objective to reach the unchurched of our land with the Gospel. Pastor Berg offers these warnings and encouragements concerning the third objective.

"It is critical that we seek to attain our third objective by normally meeting the needs of other confessionally concerned Lutherans on an individual basis. We are dealing with individually disenchanted people.

We can not let the possibility of "winning over" disenchanted persons affect our unchurched

mission strategy. We need to remind ourselves again and again of our #1 home mission priority and objective.

We should indeed support and accept the support of truly 'fellow' confessional Lutherans in helping us reach the unchurched of our land.

We, however, need to be cautious of being caught in the trap of traditionalism and incipient legalism, which at times trail along with confessionally concerned individuals.

We must avoid the 'success syndrome which tempts us to gather in disenchanted people with little thought to the reason for the disenchantment which causes them to seek us out.

We need to respect the concern of the disenchanted person's pastor before we are convinced of the person's true position and motivation.

We, on the other hand, owe encouragement to the person taking the usually painful step of leaving a fellowship in which he has benefitted spiritually through the word and sacrament and concerned pastoral care. His confessional position, boldly taken, deserves our support.

We also owe the disenchanted a congregational atmosphere that vigorously underscores the prime objective of the church, the proclaiming of the gospel (joyfully) to make disciples of all men. The disenchanted should find a positive cause to make his painful confessional step even more spiritually uplifting and joyful. He dare not find merely a 'fortress' in which to hide from the 'ecumenical monsters' without."⁷⁰

As far as carrying out our other mission objectives, the WELS has made significant steps toward fulfilling their major purposes. Back in the late 70's and early 80's, the

GBHM had to be concerned also about solidifying and expanding coverage in metro areas. At all times the unchurched were a prime concern. But full understanding of and full concentration on the unchurched did not command full attention and effort. That is changing. The GBHM, in light of a changing mission picture, is altering its approach to opening exploratory fields. Its primary target areas are "ripe unchurched" mission fields in metroplexes, in larger cities, and in smaller "Heartland" towns with minimal regard to the size of the WELS or other Lutheran nucleus.

This approach is based on a GBHM consensus that the future for our synod lies in reaching the unchurched of our land irrespective of their former religious or non-religious background. Pastor Berg again describes the WELS mission emphasis today and in the future.

"Church planting accurately portrays the program which is supported by the budgetary account 'congregation subsidies.' This is the primary activity entrusted to the GBHM. A proposed change in the second official policy of the GBHM underscores the current direction in this area of work:2. 'To establish missions in areas with good unchurched mission potential' rather than ...'primarily in major population centers.'"⁷¹

Obviously the WELS mission purpose has evolved through the years. Sometimes it was out of necessity, sometimes to take care of special needs, sometimes because of the lack of money and manpower it was not what it ought to have been, but through the years we have learned some valuable lessons and made necessary

improvements. Nevertheless, no matter what was emphasized or changed, one purpose was held out as the highest priority: "Making disciples of all nations." God willing we'll keep giving people that fresh drink of water.

MISSIONS IN ACTION

Where are they?

The church has often been compared to an army marching forth into battle. Any army worth their salt will not just split up and rush off blindly into enemy territory. Rather they will establish their own territory and then plan which areas would be the most advantageous to attack. Then in an organized way they will scout the area and attack. Thus to begin, we're going to have to establish where the Lutherans are. It also will prove valuable to know where one might most likely run into an ALC Lutheran, an LCA Lutheran or a WELS Lutheran. (See Appendix K)

For the most part, Lutherans are a small city and rural area body of people. 32% live in the five Great Lakes states- Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Another 29% live in the seven North Plains states- Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, and Kansas. Only 18% of our nations population lives in the Great Lakes states and only 8% lives in the Northern Plains states. In all these North Central United States states, 61% of the Lutherans live, but only 26% of the U.S. population can be found there. Lutherans are particularly underrepresented in the South and the West. Some 33% of the nation's people live in the South, and another 19% in the

West. Among Lutherans, however, only 12% live in the South and 11% in the West. All total, 80% of the Lutherans reside in these 15 Northern states: New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, Nebraska, Texas, Washington, and California.⁷²

A breakdown of the different Lutheran bodies would look like this: 30% of the AELC and 35% of the LCA's members live in the Northeast- defined as Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and the New England states. A mere 2% of the ALC members live in the Northeast. About 75% of the ALC and 60% of the AELC members live in the 12 Northcentral states bounded by Ohio, Kansas, and the Canadian border. 40% of the LCA's members live in those states. Lutherans living in the South are much more likely to belong to the LCA. Lutherans in the West are more likely to be ALC. 16% of the LCA are in the South, that same percentage of ALC members are in the West.⁷³ The WELS are by far the heaviest in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The farther you go out from this hub in any direction, the fewer we get. (See Appendix E&O)

The next picture we want to look at is where are the unchurched. We do know they are out there. A recent Gallup poll showed that 33% of the population of the US are 'unchurched', that is, they have worshipped fewer than two times during the last 12 months.⁷⁴ The safest bet is that where the greatest concentration of population is, there you will find the unchurched. Between 1970-1980 the balance of the nation's population shifted from the Northeast and Northcentral states to the South and West. In 1970, 52% of the population lived in the Northeast and North-

central states. In 1980, 52% of the population lived in the Southern and Western states. Lutheran membership distribution remained unchanged; 77% in the Northeast and Northcentral states, 23% in the Southern and Western states.⁷⁵ One more rather interesting statistic concerns how people in the past became Lutherans. Naturally the greatest number of Lutherans were reared as Lutherans or became Lutheran following a marriage. In the Northeast, 78% became members in one of these two ways; in the Northcentral US 93%, the South 85%, and the West 82%. Lutherans generally do not get involved in community affairs, and yet the individual initiative of the person seeking out a church and choosing a Lutheran congregation is twice as important as the pastor or a program.⁷⁶

WHERE IS THE ELCA GOING?

The ELCA is hoping mightily that their new union will increase their mission efforts and successes. Since 1980 they have already united their efforts in many ways. Their reasoning is that especially in areas where Lutherans are scattered, congregations divided between three church bodies become closer neighbors for support, fellowship, and sharing of resources. Smaller, more concentrated synods would bring leadership closer to the people and allow sharper focus for mission. They're hoping for anything because frankly they have been in a bit of a slump lately as far as evangelism and the diminishing size of their church bodies. Dr Lloyd Svendsbye, vice president of the ALC confesses:

"The loss of hundreds of thousands of Lutherans to 'apathy and unbelief' makes evangelism more important than ever. We have lost 690,000 members from 1967 to 1980 or more than all the people in

Minneapolis/St Paul combined, or more than the entire population of North Dakota. (WELS membership is 415,000 total) Other denominations have had similiar losses."⁷⁷

Pastor Kenneth Roberts of the LCA answers the interview question, "Are we losing members faster than we are gaining them?"

"That's true- partly because congregations in fast-growing communities often are the ones that are losing people to inactivity at the faster rate."

"Are there other major causes for our loses?"

"Mobility is a big factor"

"Can the ^{ALC?} LCA do anything about that?"

"Absolutely! Many of our congregations are located in places that are losing population. We can't do much to stop those losses, but we are starting new congregations where we haven't had them before-often in places where our own people have relocated. Last year for example, we started 81 new congegations."⁷⁸

The ALC especially seems to be making valiant efforts to regain all their lost territory. At their 1980 general convention, they voted to make evangelism their church's priority for the decade of the 1980's. They admit that they haven't been that active in personal evangelism, because, "Part of our insecurity is tied to that long-ago era of Western Christianity when everyone was assumed to be Christian, and when citizens of a community or nation shared the same ethnic traditions."⁷⁹ The ALC has done the most to encourage cooperation with the LCA.

"We're doing everything in our power to make the transition into the new Lutheran church in evangelism as smooth and easy as possible. The ALC and LCA have had a high level of cooperation in evangelism

at least since 1976, when evangelical outreach began. We continue to cooperate with them in making materials, and performing other services. We don't do everything jointly, but we've been trying hard not to duplicate their efforts."⁸⁰

The LCA on the other hand, has needed prodding from the ALC and other financially supportive groups. They do plan to start at least 60 new congregations in 1986 with the help of the ALC. In 1985, they only planned to open 5 congregations, but Lutheran Brotherhood, lay pledges, and money from a "Mission Partners" program supplied funds to start 15 more. The LCA entered 1986 with 47 congregations still being developed. Mission executive Senft reported that in the division's 13-year history, 286 congregations have been organized and about an equal number of congregations have been closed or merged.⁸¹ In my questionnaire, Dr. Senft seemed to schwaffle about the development of new congregations in the future. He tended to talk instead about social and ecumenical goals.

The ALC on the other hand, is planning giant strides forward in their mission efforts. They planned to start 100 new congregations and ministers before January 1st, 1988, when their division for mission met this March, 14-16, 1986. The goal was announced by Dr James Berquist,

"We are doing nothing heroic, nothing spectacular, but only what the church expects of us: working right up to the end of the present church structure. Funding for the new ^{missions} will come from 5 sources: DSMA's 86-87 budget, United Mission appeal funds, divisions reserve fund, Mission partners program, and the commitment to mission program."⁸²

To me the multi-supportive system of funding their missions was impressive. They certainly give every effort and opportunity to support missions. In writing to me, Dr. Bergquist also thought that about, "Ninety percent of the ministries are making satisfactory progress, (he estimated) Of the remaining 10%, some should be discontinued because they are not feasible, and others have not or will not reach self-support status but are so essential they must be maintained."⁸³

Dr. Bergquist also noted that "the largest number of new congregations will of course be in the Southern tier of the US." He talked a little about the older congregations in the inner-city going through a transition into missions of sorts. This is a phenomina common in all the inner-city Lutheran congregations in any church body. Yet he states that, "We expect that all of the neighborhoods of every congregation of the new Lutheran church will be areas of mission."⁸⁴

Several times I've mentioned the ALC's "Vision for mission" program. It is designed to help congregations assess, analyze, and equip themselves to move from a custodial to a mission mentality. It encourages congregations to "witness to Jesus in their every day lives." "It also addressed the growing problem of inactive members in our congregations. Nearly 1/2 of the people who leave our congregations do so by becoming inactive rather than joining other church bodies!"⁸⁵ The LCA Nebraska synod is also running quite an extensive evangelism program in connection with their ALC and AELC

brothers. Pastor Anderson describes their efforts.

"We really come to know each other best by working together. I envision here an opportunity for members of our congregations in each community to come together introducing themselves to each other and introducing their congregations as members of the new Lutheran church to their community. Efforts will be directed to promote growth and witness in the church throughout the state and local communities served by our congregations."⁸⁶

This program will also include statewide media, worship, and rally events, and in-depth witness training opportunities in each congregation.

Another area ^{where} Pastors of the ALC, AELC, and LCA are to be involved in a series of regional workshops and a joint evangelism project is in their Michigan synod in the next seven months. The purpose of the project is, "Equipping Lutherans to teach and do evangelism." The goal of the institute is to "Bring into reality a theme that every person is a piece of gold." To do this, the institute will ask, "Why does a congregation exist?" and "How can a congregation best carry out its purpose?"⁸⁷ Questions that perhaps ought to have been asked long ago. At least longer ago than the 10 or 13 years when their Outreach committees began in earnest. Isn't it also interesting that the evangelism programs are being carried out in Nebraska and Michigan, two core Lutheran states. Those men, however, must be commended for their work. Even a volcano gives off a little light.

WHERE IS THE WELS GOING?

WELS is often compared to other Lutheran church bodies especially the LCMS, which are of comparable age, but vastly different in size. Such questions have been sparked even more lately because little WELS is the fastest growing major Lutheran body if not the only one. For this we give all the credit to our Lord. Really in the WELS we have not, as has been covered, wholeheartedly gone after unchurched. Never before have we had a full time executive for evangelism alone. Never before have we called a professor to the Seminary whose emphasis is on evangelism. Never before have we used manpower for traveling outreach teams. To be sure, the WELS is only warming up. In the late 70's and 80's our greatest success has been to establish regional outposts in metropolitan areas with good potential for winning the unchurched in these densely populated areas not served by us before. The next step would be to "ring" such metropolitan areas with several missions to more effectively serve the area.⁸⁸ Most of the time this has been affective. The author grew up in a small Kansas City congregation on the West side. Within 3 years we had grown to about 200 members. At that time another congregation was started on the Northeast side of town. Within 5 years another was begun in a suburb on the South side. Today all three are flourishing. That was twelve years ago in the mid 70's.

In the last 3 1/2 years, 56 new missions have begun. In 1983, 16 were started. In 1984, 17 were started. In 1985,

ten were started. In 1986, 3 have been started to date. (5/20/86) In addition, the WELS has begun 34 New Mode Missions since 1984. Pastor Berg describes the New Mode Approach:

"In response to the challenge of reaching the unchurched, which is our mandate from the Lord and the synod, the GBHM has inaugurated a pilot project approach to opening new fields, commonly known as the 'New Mode' or 'Alternate Approach' to exploratory mission work. This program is intensive in its survey of the community and thus a very people-oriented approach. Its emphasis, program, and techniques all zero in on the unchurched with limited attention to any WELS nucleus present. Twenty-six recently authorized mission/manpower openings have been designated 'New Mode' openings. A consultation on September 11-12, 1984, with the first six men called to such openings, together with 5 mission counselors, resulted in enthusiastic confirmation of the value of and the procedures for the 'New Mode' approach with minor adjustments. An orientation/consultation session for five newly-called mission explorers followed on April 2-3, 1985"⁸⁹

Basically, the program works by selecting a high potential unchurched area. The Pastor is then sent in to canvass and follow-up. When he has developed an interest, he might start bible classes in his home while continuing his evangelism effort. When he reaches a certain size, he begins services. The difference is we pick the area where we go, not an already established nucleus located in a "Ghost town" The Pastor also has time to concentrate on evangelism instead of sermon work, and the many other chores a pastor has in an or-

ganized situation. The bottom line is that a congregation who starts evangelizing continues its healthy habits until they need to knock down the walls and add on. Finally, it's much easier and cheaper to pull up unsuccessful new modes and try other areas. Out of the 34 New Mode Missions, 18 have begun regular services:

Amarillo, TX	Fayetteville, NC
Portage, WI	Glendale, AZ
Anchorage, AK	Madison, WI
Juneau, AK	Miami, FL
Roswell, NM	Pleasanton, CA
Ocala, FL	Jupiter, FL
Mississauga, ONT	Toledo, OH
Elk River, MN	Abilene, TX
Universal City, TX	Fayetteville, AR

Notice that 13 of these are not in the Lutheran core area.

They are in the South and in the West. In fact, a total of 67 mission efforts in the past 3 1/2 years have been in the South and the West. (See Appendix C&D)

As for the future of the WELS mission program, Pastor Berg explains,

"The 1985-86 goal of the GBHM as to the number of mission/manpower openings was 22 and for 1986-87 also 22. Budgetary restrictions forced the GBHM to 'put a hold' on calling for 15 exploratory openings authorized in 1984-1985. This moratorium was lifted after the severe budget-cutting process due to the optimistic commitment of district mission boards to increase evangelism efforts and greater financial support by mission congregations which would release subsidy funds for 1985-86 openings. In its April 1985 meeting, the GBHM granted no new mission/manpower openings, and will have no budgetary funds for any such openings in fiscal 1985-1986 unless commitments to growth and financial support becomes a reality."⁹⁰

The WELS has the message, the motivation, the means, and for now the manpower. Any setbacks ^{that} we have experienced ^{that} or will effect us in the future will be monetary. Four elements are needed for an effective reaching out: Identity, manpower, opportunity, and resources. Its ironic that the WELS greatest problem with evangelism hasn't anything to do with evangelism, but with stewardship of our gifts in a materialistic society.

DISASTER OR INDIFFERENCE

To be honest, this chapter is kind of a mop up chapter, covering all the other various effects that will most certainly play on the Lutheran mission scene. The first thing that has to strike you about this situation from the title of our paper to the final page, is the awesome difference in size between the tiny WELS and the massive ELCA juggernaut. It will indeed be a church body with clout. The leadership will be powerful and very influential on the American and world scene. Jean Caffey addresses this issue.

"First it will change the balance of power in American Protestantism. The new church's tentative membership in the NCC is bound to have an impact. The new church will maintain existing membership levels for 2 years, then decide on future involvements. Even this initial and tentative participation of the new 5.3 million member Lutheran body is important for the NCC. The LCA has been a moderate or even relatively conservative voice among the liberal elements of the council. The addition of the ALC's strength probably will increase this moderating or conservationalizing influence.

"The fact that the Lutherans now have only 1 executive level staff member in the NCC and that achieved only after long and Pained Lutheran complaints- is sure to change. The current NCC executive staff is dominated by Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and other non-member communion, the Roman Catholics.

Should the new ELCA for some reason decide to withdraw from membership in the 31-denomination council of Protestant and Orthodox bodies, its defection probably would be fatal for the NCC and the occasion for a realignment on the US ecumenical scene.

Its hard to imagine a NCC that could credibly represent mainline Protestantism without Lutheran participation, but ALC Presiding Bishop David Preus has called for an ecumenical realignment and proposed a new interdenominational forum that could be more inclusive of US Christianity, including more conservative evangelical groups."⁹¹

Another result of ELCA's enormous size will be their media impact. This by the way, is already being felt in the Minneapolis/ St Paul and Nebraska areas, where the new church is experimenting with massive media campaigns with the theme, "The Welcome Place" and billboards proclaiming, "The Good News, Live at 9 and 11."⁹² Pastor Scholz addresses this media problem.

"We should find it easier not to join, regularly worship or commune in congregations affiliated with one large, liberal Lutheran church rather than keeping track of the fine distinctions between the present 3 Lutheran church bodies. That lessening confusion, especially in the minds of non-Lutherans, that will come when a multi-million member Lutheran body, flexing its media grabbing muscles, will presume to publicize the 'Lutheran' position on various social and political

issues. To some extent, we do it already, but in the future we will have to expand more effort to tell the world that that pseudo-Lutheran church, numerically powerful though it may be, does not speak for us."⁹³

The ELCA will also have many problems as we have seen. A few we haven't covered are relocated executives. Obviously there will be a few too many chiefs to run all those indians. No doubt some will go back out into the trenches. Colleges and Seminaries might also need to be combined or relocated. This will not be done in the near future. The Seminaries still will be a problem for the ELCA missions because of a shortage of pastors which is not really a shortage at all. Dr. Walter Weitzke of the ALC's Division for Theological Education explains,

"The past few years when as many as 70 Seminary graduates did not get calls for 2 years or more; and the 50 who do not have calls at present time may have difficulty seeing that a shortage of pastors does exist. One reason the oversupply was challenged was that many graduates without calls had special stipulations about which parts of the country they could be assigned or were clergy couples for whom it was difficult to find places where both could serve. Other graduates included a stipulation that would provide employment opportunities for a spouse. There is a danger in the present system of trying to be so accommodating to personal needs that a sense of commitment to the mission of the church is diluted."⁹⁴

In 1986 there will be 192 total Seminary graduates from ALC Seminaries. 2 fewer than last year. (26% women, 66% married, 43% over age 30, 10% clergy couples) With another

22 candidates, there will be 214 in all. Yet there will be about 70 who do not get the calls because there weren't enough places that filled their requests. Thus 150 positions will yet remain after call day.

Most likely all this hubbub will have little effect on the common layperson. Jean Caffey Lyles gives her opinion.

"It is harder to see what impact the union will have for local congregations. Their national body may have a new name, their magazine a new look, and they may send their national offerings to a new address, but many laypeople in local congregations will wonder what all the fuss is about.

Local church life may not change much in places where only one of the 3 merging groups is represented. The new design may bring changes in terminology that local folk have to get used to, and they may see more reported about their national church, in newspapers, magazines, and on TV. But Ascension, Zion, and Trinity Church will live out its parish life much as before.

But where Lutherans from all 3 branches live, the awareness of change could be more profound than just seeing new faces at district or synod meetings. In some cases, the change could mean a decision to have one strong congregation in a neighborhood rather than 3 struggling ones. In towns where the various branches of Lutherans have been friends and co-workers for years, the reaction is likely to be: 'What took them so long?' We should have done this years ago. There wasn't that much separating us."⁹⁵

Not to put down the lay person, but he has much more important things to think about than church hierarchy. After all, that's why he calls men who can better handle those

things to serve him. On the outside, the layman probably sees this union in a neutral way. Martin Marty might have a good point when he says,

"People don't choose denominations. They choose churches (local congregations)...denominational loyalty has suffered...its only a matter of time... before the majority of people in a given denomination (in their minds, that is) just go to churches within that denomination."⁹⁶

The biggest disadvantage in the judgement of the larger merging bodies is that the WELS and the LCMS will be left out. Dr. Bergquist clarifies this view and other disadvantages he sees.

"The main disadvantage for the smaller groups of Lutherans who may not come into the new church may be an increased sense of isolation and development of the sectarian spirit. We must remember however, that God doesn't depend upon organizations to get his work done. He calls forth faithful people to be his stewards of his gospel and participants in his mission. Normally that means that we seek fellowship in cooperation with other Lutherans and other Christians. A divided Lutheranism in the USA is perhaps unavoidable for several historical and theological reasons. But it does very little to give emphasis to the common witness to the gospel of Christ which is our common calling as Lutheran Christians. That to me is the main disadvantage, in that it presents a spectacle of divided Lutheranism to the larger society within which we are called to be faithful in mission"⁹⁷

In this thesis, we've covered a great many opinions of different human beings, some of which may never come to pass. That means that they all to one extent or another are corrupted

by sinful motives, desires, and all the other corruptions that cause us to stray from the one path; that of our Lord Jesus Christ. This paper was written simply to show what the factual opinions and situations are, not to give all the answers. There are many areas where the ELCA has serious theological problems. It is my hope that in some way this paper will help someone to line up these issues, purposes, and practices next to scripture and make their own judgements. Perhaps the greatest miracle of all is that God chooses such helpless fools to carry His word and yet in spite of us, accomplishes so much.

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Appendix A

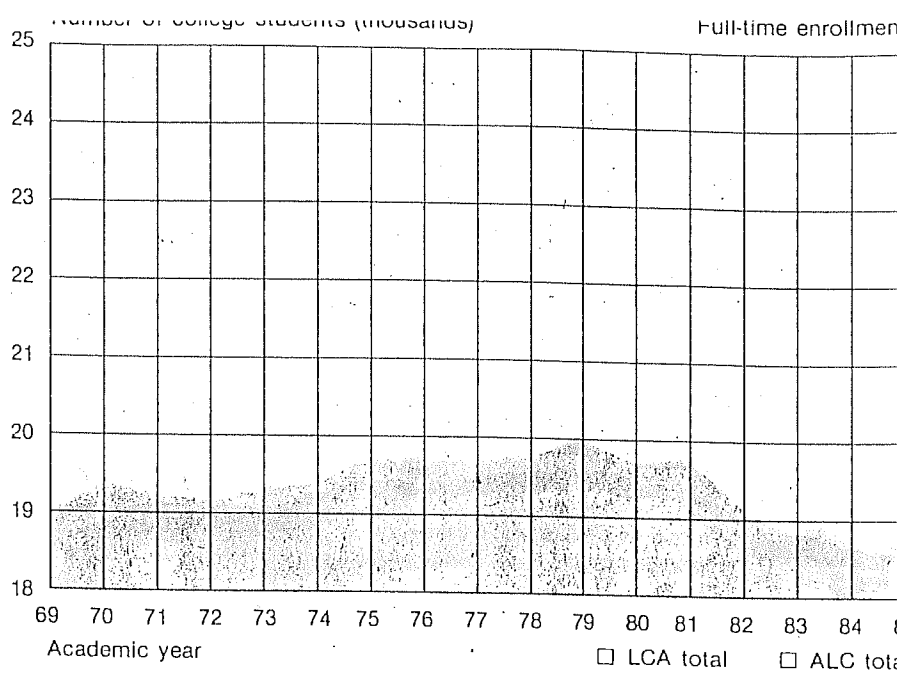
THE NEW LUTHERAN CHURCH'S MERGING BODIES' 1983 STATISTICS

	<u>Ministers</u>	<u>Congregations</u>	<u>Baptized Members</u>
Lutheran Church in America	8,324	5,794	2,925,008
American Lutheran Church	7,310	4,901	2,342,692
Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches	665	272	110,934

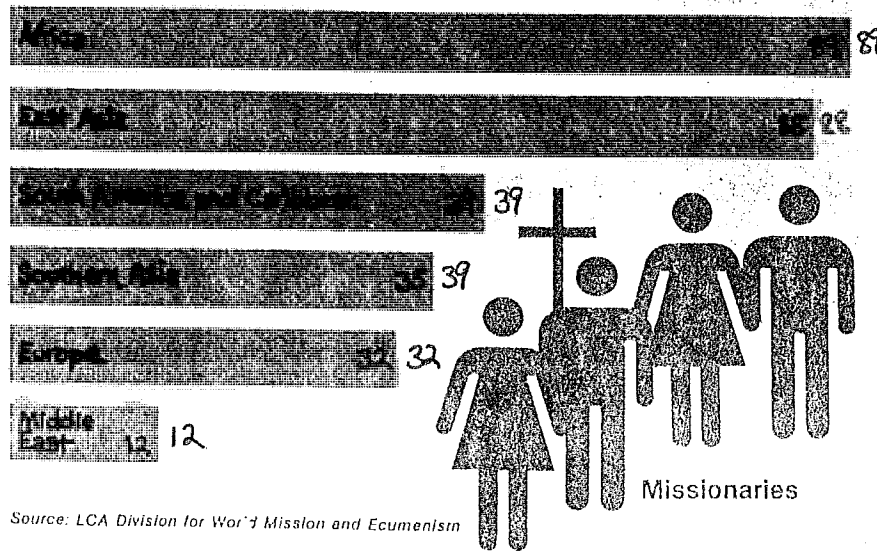
(For the sake of comparison we provide the following pertinent 1983 statistics)

Lutheran Church Missouri Synod	7,682	5,794	2,630,947
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	1,194	1,193	414,199
Evangelical Lutheran Synod	106	111	20,556
All U.S. Lutheran Bodies	25,758	18,590	8,511,190

Appendix B

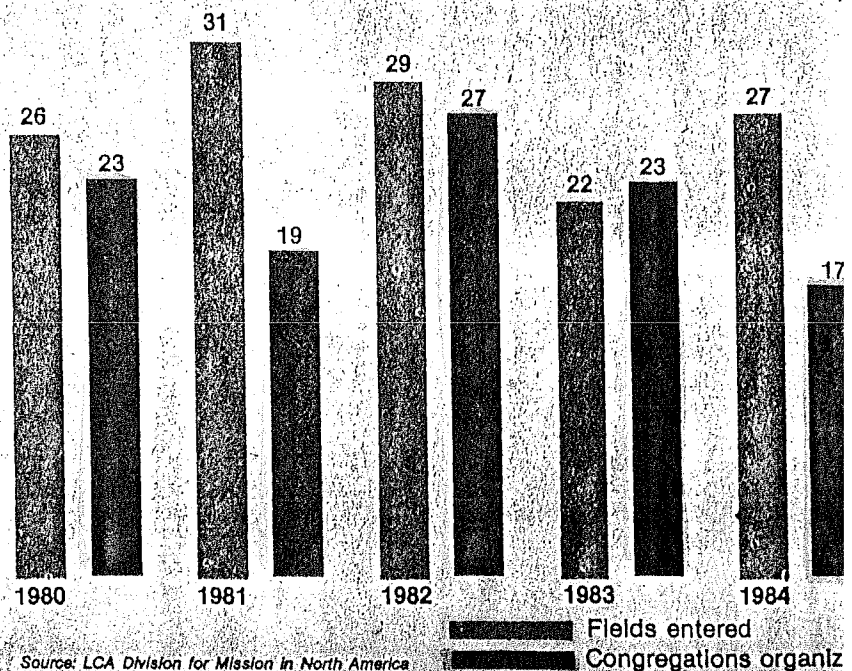


The Lutheran Church in America through its Division for World Mission and Ecumenism has 253 missionaries serving around the world.



Source: LCA Division for World Mission and Ecumenism

From 1980 to 1984 the Lutheran Church in America entered 135 new ministry fields and organized 109 new congregations.



WELS HOME MISSIONS

Home Mission Statistical Information

Reached "Interest Subsidized" status- Receiving no operating subsidy

1983-84

Sedona, AZ	Lake Orion, MI
Shepherd of the Hills, Tucson, AZ	Wichita, KS
Paradise Valley, Phoenix, AZ	Trumbull, CT
Grand Blanc, MI	E. Wenatchee, WA
W. Lansing, MI	Weslaco, TX
	Corvallis, OR

1984-85

Penryn, CA	Nampa, ID
Canyon Country, CA	Beverly Hills, FL
Alpine, CA	Lawrenceville, GA
Zoar, Detroit, MI	Port Washington, WI
Sauk Rapids, MN	Loves Park, IL

Reached total self-support- Receiving no operating or interest subsidy

1983-84

Reno, NV	Thousand Oaks, CA
Sierra Madre, CA	Torrance, CA

1984-85

Sun City, AZ	Lake Orion, MI
Paradise Valley, AZ	Jacksonville, FL
Mission Viejo, CA	Clearwater, FL
Colorado Springs, CO	Middleton, WI
Yucaipa, CA	

New Missions- Received Mission Status

1983-84

China Grove, NC	Wasilla, AK
Antigo, WI	S.E. Anchorage, AK
Traverse City, MI	Portland, ME
Clovis, CA	Roswell, GA
Succasanna, NJ	Tyler, TX
Kearney, NE	N.W. Houston, TX
Thornton, CO	Hayward, WI
Baton Rouge, LA	

1984-85

W. Albuquerque, NM	Poway, CA
Kenai, AK	Daytona Beach, FL
Austin, TX	Vienna, WV
Cape Coral, FL	Fort Worth, TX
Cincinnati, OH	Sugar Land, TX
Plano, TX	

WELS HOME MISSIONSManpower Granted1983-84

Miami, FL (Hispanic)
 Madison, WI (Hispanic)
 N. Glendale, AZ
 Pleasanton, CA
 Aurora, CO

S.W. Anchorage, AK
 Deltona, FL
 Jupiter, FL
 Ocala, FL
 N.E. San Antonio, TX
 Succasanna, NJ

1984-85

Gilbert, AZ
 Panama City, FL
 Fayetteville, AR
 Newport News, VA
 Kenai, AK
 Portage, WI
 Irvine, CA
 Elk River, MN
 N.E. Atlanta, GA
 Spokane Valley, WA

Bozeman, MT
 Sherman, TX
 Fayetteville, NC
 Kearney, NE
 Juneau, AK
 S.W. Tucson, AZ
 Colorado Springs, CO
 S.W. Omaha, NE
 Amarillo, TX
 LaFayette, IN

Current Exploratory Fields *=with resident manpower or authorized
 +=begun regular services

1984-85

* N.E. Tucson, AZ
 *N. Glendale, AZ+
 *Gilbert, AZ
 Cottonwood, AZ
 *S.W. Tucson, AZ
 *Pleasanton, CA+
 *Irvine, CO
 *Aurora, CO
 *Colorado Springs, CO
 Custer, SD
 *N.W. Toledo, OH+
 *Elk River, MN+
 *S.W. Omaha, NE
 *Poughkeepsie, NY
 *Roanoke, VA
 *Newport News, VA
 *Fayetteville, NC+

*S.W. Anchorage, AK+
 *Juneau, AK+
 *Spokane Valley, WA
 *Miami, FL (Hispanic)+
 *Ocala, FL+
 *Jupiter, FL+
 *Deltona, FL
 *Panama City, FL
 *N.E. Atlanta, GA
 *Abilene, TX+
 *Fayetteville, AR+
 *N.E. San Antonio, TX
 *Sherman, TX
 *Amarillo, TX+
 *So. Waukesha, WI
 *LaFayette, IN
 *Madison, WI (Hispanic)+
 *Portage, WI+

1985-86

*Roswell, NM
 *Mississauga, ONT+

*Universal City, TX+

Exploratories Discontinued

Red Deer, ALT
 Green Valley, AZ
 Springfield, MO
 Richmond, VA
 Dickinson, SD

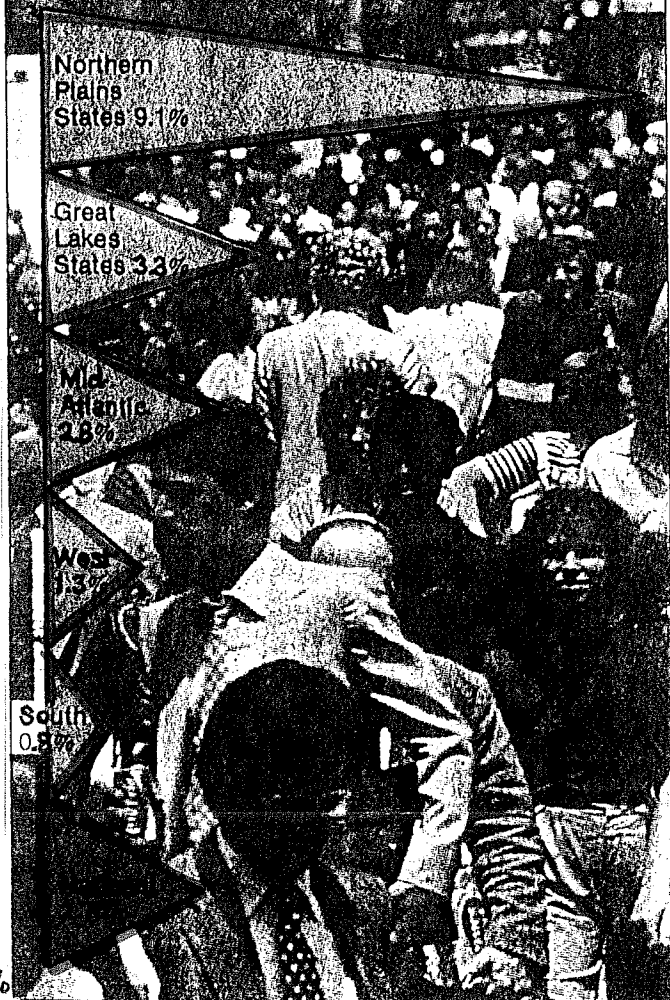
Moses Lake, WA
 New Richmond, WI
 Boise, ID
 San Angelo, TX

Where We Live

Lutherans make up 2.3 percent of the population nationally. Their highest population percentage is in the Northern Plains states. Lowest is in the South.

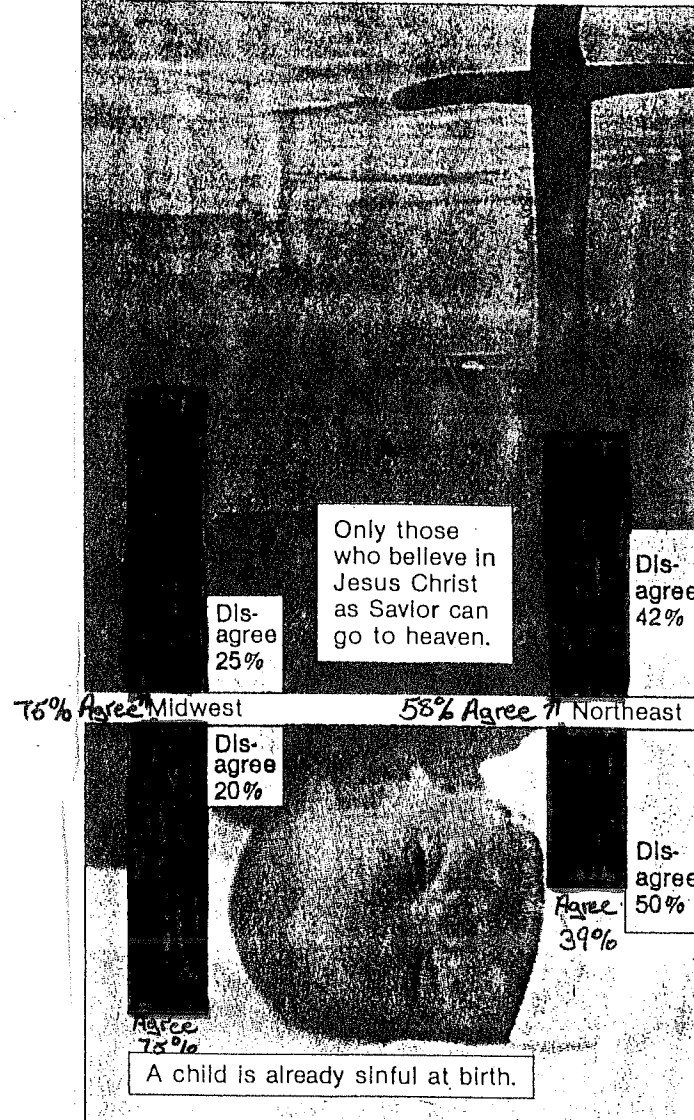
Lutherans as a percentage of the population.

2.1%

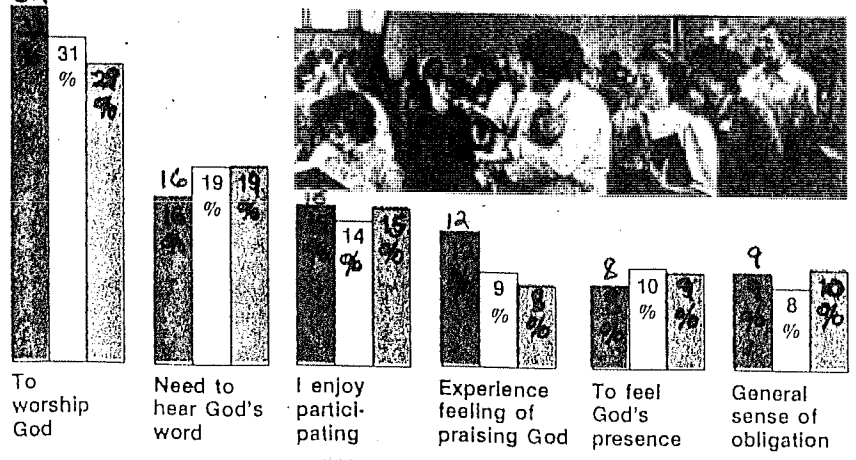


What We Believe

Lutherans differ sharply by region on certain theological questions.



Members of the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in a recent survey listed their strongest reasons for attending church.



Source: Profiles of Lutherans

LCA

ALC

AELC

Acceptance of Some Lutheran Beliefs

<u>Statement of Belief</u>	Percent of Group Indicating Agreement or Disagreement					
	Under 21	Over 55	North- east	North Central	South	West
Property belongs to God.						
Agree	55	79	57	78	72	75
Disagree	19	9	24	10	13	13
Only believers in Jesus go to Heaven.						
Agree	60	75	58	75	70	73
Disagree	21	16	29	15	20	18
Child sinful at birth.						
Agree	61	67	39	70	62	65
Disagree	25	21	50	20	27	24
Religions lead to the same God.						
Agree	60	55	72	55	59	50
Disagree	27	33	20	34	32	38
Gospel is God's rules.						
Agree	41	66	64	54	56	45
Disagree	32	27	24	35	34	46
God satisfied with one's best.						
Agree	45	39	61	38	47	36
Disagree	33	47	27	48	39	54
Adam and Eve fal- ling into sin not real event.						
Agree	10	19	33	15	20	15
Disagree	78	65	53	73	68	74

Degrees of Difference Perceived Between Lutheran Church Bodies, and Percentage Weights Assigned Three Major Factors by Laity and Clergy.

Degree of Difference Perceived and Percentage Weight Given to Factor	Factors in Differences Perceived					
	Doctrinal		Political		Historical	
	Laity%	Clergy%	Laity%	Clergy%	Laity%	Clergy%
<u>Slightly Different</u>						
No answer	20	11	33	9	25	5
Under 30%	36	76	31	36	27	15
30-59%	25	6	23	44	29	44
Over 59%	19	7	13	11	19	36
<u>Moderately Different</u>						
No answer	11	5	20	4	17	4
Under 30%	29	54	39	40	39	32
30-59%	34	32	29	43	33	43
Over 59%	26	9	12	13	11	21
<u>Quite Different</u>						
No answer	9	2	28	12	24	9
Under 30%	18	26	42	57	48	55
30-59%	27	30	25	20	24	28
Over 59%	46	42	5	11	4	8
<u>Extremely Different</u>						
No answer	17	0	40	34	38	26
Under 30%	11	13	37	32	47	55
30-59%	22	12	16	10	12	15
Over 59%	50	75	7	4	3	4

Appendix H

Top Six Functions of Congregation
as seen by laity and clergy

<u>Function</u>	Percent placing function in top three		Percent placing function in 4-6 place		Percent not listing function	
	Laity	Clergy	Laity	Clergy	Laity	Clergy
Sunday morning worship	92	92	3	4	5	4
Holy Communion	78	72	11	15	11	13
Christian Education of children	61	39	23	43	16	18
Members' support of one another in time of need	12	18	41	45	47	37
Youth Programs	7	2	41	17	52	81
Ministry of service to persons with special needs	7	7	41	26	52	67
Bible study for adults	12	28	30	41	58	31
Bring new members into church	7	18	23	24	70	58
Fellowship occasions (Dinners, picnics)	3	1	17	12	80	87
Opportunities to participate in broader work of the church	3	6	16	32	81	62
Service projects to meet local social concerns	4	3	11	14	85	83
Weekday prayer or worship services	3	3	8	4	89	93
Small groups for sharing personal insights, concerns	2	3	7	11	91	86
Church-sponsored recreation	1	0	6	1	93	99
Evangelism	1	5	0	1	99	94

Acceptable Levels of Church Involvement in Specific
Social Issues as Seen by Laity and Clergy

<u>Specific Social Issue</u>	NO		Percent Favoring				Church body	
	<u>Laity</u>	<u>Clergy</u>	Discussion in sermon	in sermon	Congregation as congregation	Congregation as congregation	officially	officially
	<u>Laity</u>	<u>Clergy</u>	<u>Laity</u>	<u>Clergy</u>	<u>Laity</u>	<u>Clergy</u>	<u>Laity</u>	<u>Clergy</u>
Church-Government relationships	36	10	17	45	25	49	45	76
Education in schools	37	17	22	46	36	61	32	49
Rights of minorities	38	11	30	65	31	67	36	71
Substance abuse prevention	40	14	28	54	34	67	28	54
Equal treatment under the law	46	14	23	53	25	62	29	63
Medical-Care issues	53	20	14	37	23	54	23	58
Handling of crime and criminals	55	21	23	47	18	50	18	52
Local Zoning laws	67	33	5	15	24	52	4	8
Business-government relationship	73	38	8	26	10	31	11	42
Elections and candidates	75	50	8	17	12	24	6	17

RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF WELS MISSION MEMBERSHIP
Survey for Essay: Possible Effects of Pan-Lutheran
Union on our Home Mission Field

Note: Questionnaires were sent to all current mission congregations and to all self-supporting congregations started since 1960. Two hundred and forty-one (241) were tabulated.

By Eras

Era	# Cong.	Current % Membership				Nucleus % Membership			
		WELS	LCMS	O.L.	Etc.	WELS	LCMS	O.L.	Etc.
Pre-1960	17	39	26	12	23	55	31	7	7
1960-64	21	59	14	17	20	66	23	6	5
1965-69	50	44	23	11	22	55	33	9	3
1970-74	50	42	23	12	23	50	34	11	5
1975-79	62	44	23	13	20	57	26	10	7
1980-84	41	52	22	11	15	61	19	10	10
TOTALS	241	46	22	12	20	56	28	10	6

By Mission Districts

District	# Cong.	Current % Membership				Nucleus % Membership			
		WELS	LCMS	O.L.	Etc.	WELS	LCMS	O.L.	Etc.
AC	12	40	23	8	20	61	26	9	4
CA	21	39	26	14	21	47	38	8	8
NA	26	41	23	14	22	59	26	11	4
PN	13	44	20	14	22	71	20	5	4
SA	33	47	20	13	20	52	25	13	10
SC	19	41	30	8	21	32	56	5	7
"Pioneer" Districts	124	43	24	12	21	52	32	9	7
CO	9	53	22	10	15	67	25	3	5
DM	17	49	27	12	12	59	32	5	4
MI	27	42	20	14	24	50	25	19	6
MN	21	42	24	12	22	56	32	8	4
NE	12	43	29	7	21	68	18	7	7
NW	9	74	11	4	11	76	15	8	1
SW	13	50	19	6	25	57	30	3	10
WW	9	59	12	11	18	73	8	10	9
"Heartland" Districts	117	49	20	12	19	61	23	11	5
TOTALS	241	46	22	12	18	56	28	10	6

Abbreviations: O.L.= Lutherans other than WELS or LCMS
Etc.= Non-Lutherans

Steve P. Soukup
5357-A North 38th
Milwaukee, WI 53209
March 7, 1986

Dear Sir:

I realize that you must be an extremely busy man, not only in your ministry, but especially considering the events of the Lutheran Church in the past few years. Considering this, I realize that you might not have the time you would like to answer all my questions. I beg of you, however, to at least give me some information in this area or even references to certain articles I might be able to research. Perhaps also there might be an expert in these areas with more opportunities to answer my questions. Please feel free to give this request to anyone who could help me.

I am a student at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, WI.. My questions have to do with the formation of the New Lutheran Church. They are primarily concentrating on the practical influence of a United Lutheran church on home and foreign missions. The information, if you would permit, will be used for a historical thesis on this highly influential event. I realize that at this point the greater portion of the answers to these questions will be speculation. I am just looking for your respected opinion based on the few facts you might be able to give me.

1. How will the New Lutheran Church union affect home missions in the United States?
2. How will the New Lutheran Church union affect foreign missions?
3. Where will there be the greatest concentration of new missions already established in the United States?
4. Where will there be the greatest concentration of new missions in other countries?

5. What areas of the United States contain the highest concentration of Lutherans in the New Lutheran Church?
6. Are there plans to expand in any particular way as far as missions? If so, when, where, and how?
7. Will there be a momentary moratorium on missions while the New Lutheran Church organizes?
8. Obviously there has not been much objection in the 3 synods to the union. Do you think that there will be enough objection to the union to cause any defection at all? If any, how much? In what areas? Will there be enough to form their own synod, or continue as an old one? Or will they join other synods?
9. How much will a united Lutheran Church body affect your media impact on society? If so, in what ways?
10. How much will a united Lutheran Church body affect the training of missionaries and pastors? If so, in what ways?
11. To be sure, you are rejoicing in your unity and there will be many blessings for you because of it, but what disadvantages do you foresee for those few Lutherans who have not yet joined the New Lutheran Church? How will the union affect them?

Any help you can give me in any of these questions would be greatly appreciated. May God richly bless your efforts to spread the Good News of Christ to all people.

May the glory be to Him,

Steve O. Loukup

5357-A North 38th
Milwaukee, WI 53209
March 7, 1986

Dear Sir:

I realize that considering the season and your schedule you must be a very busy man. It is then with a great deal of humility and understanding that I make this request of you. As you well know from your days on the Seminary Campus, each Senior must extensively hold forth on some particular topic of modern church history. The topic I have chosen is not only modern, it hasn't happened yet. I have undertaken to write on the New Lutheran Church union and the effect of that union on their mission effort and ours, home and foreign. I realize that this topic is three-quarters speculation and opinion. Hopefully this will save me volumes of research. Considering this, I must lean heavily on the thoughts of their church leaders and ours. If in any way you could answer any of these questions or refer me to some appropriate information, it would be greatly appreciated.

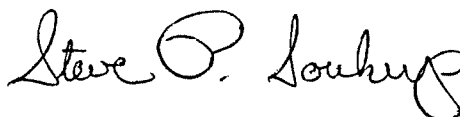
1. How will the New Lutheran Church union affect home missions in the United States?
2. How will the New Lutheran Church union affect foreign missions?
3. Will the New Lutheran Church affect where we will concentrate on new missions in the future?
4. In what areas are our synod planning to expand as far as missions in the near future?
5. Do you think that dissatisfaction with the New Lutheran Church union will cause enough defection from their Synod to influence the Wisconsin Synod? If so, in what ways and how much?
6. Will New Lutheran Church defections affect the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod as far as dissatisfied New Lutheran Church liberals might be taken in?

7. What affect will the New Lutheran Church's public and media influence have on the Wisconsin Synod?

8. What will be the public's reaction to those few synods who stand alone?

Thank you for your time and your wisdom. God bless you in your work.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steve P. Soukup". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Steve P. Soukup