

WLCFS HISTORY 1965-1995:

**Changing to Meet the Changing Needs of the WELS with
the Unchanging Gospel of Jesus Christ**

by

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"Nothing ever stays the same." That's the way the saying goes. We live in a world that is constantly changing. Technology is constantly advancing bringing change to the way we do just about everything. Society changes. Their morals, ethics, values, and general outlook on life are constantly changing. And people themselves are constantly changing. As people go through life their situations change, their relationships change, and they themselves change physically, mentally, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. With these changes in peoples' lives inevitably also come difficulties, and problems, and troubles, whether they be the physical difficulties of old age, the emotional or psychological problems that result from broken relationships, or the overall spiritual problems that result from sin in its many forms. Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services (WLCFS), as an agency dedicated to helping members of the WELS through the various troubles and problems in their lives, has also undergone many changes over the thirty years of its existence as it has endeavored to meet the changing needs of its constituents. Yet in the midst of all this change, one thing has remained and will always remain the same, the forgiveness and peace that Jesus Christ won for all on the Cross of Calvary. With a firm hold on this unchanging Gospel of Jesus Christ WLCFS has continued to grow and develop to meet the needs of WELS members around the world. And that perhaps is the story of Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services: changing to meet the changing needs of the WELS with the unchanging Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The agency now known as Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services began as a direct result of a change in relationship between the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod and the WELS. When the WELS broke fellowship with the Missouri Synod for doctrinal reasons in the early 1960's it created a lot of changes. One of those changes was the fact that all joint ventures between the two synods had to be dissolved. At the time of the break the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod had been partners in running, among other things, the Home for Aged Lutherans, Bethany Lutheran Convalescent Home, the Lutheran Children's Friends Society, and Bethesda Lutheran Home (for the mentally

retarded). After the break members of the Wisconsin Synod decided that since they no longer had a facility for the aged that they could call their own and since the Home for Aged Lutherans and Bethany Convalescent Home could not together handle all the needs of elderly Lutherans in Milwaukee the time was ripe for them to open their own convalescent home.

In March of 1965 a temporary Board of Directors was established to look into the purchasing of a convalescent home for elderly WELS Lutherans. Soon afterwards the Green Tree Gardens Convalescent and Nursing Home, Inc. at 6800 North 76th Street in Milwaukee became available for purchase. The 113 bed facility with an adjoining 12 acres of land appeared to be everything the Board of Directors was looking for and so they purchased the facility and its property. On July 13, 1965 Articles of Incorporation were filed for the new "Wisconsin Lutheran Convalescent Home, Inc." On August 1, 1965 the doors of the new facility were opened with the stated purpose of providing "care for the spiritual needs of Lutherans in fellowship with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod during periods of their physical and mental incapacitation." At the time there were 26 residents in the new facility, but by September 1, 1965 that number had increased to 76. In those first months there were definitely major changes taking place at Wisconsin Lutheran Convalescent Home. New residents were being added, new staff was being added, a volunteer corp was being developed, by-laws were being written, administrative machinery was being put in place, and many other details for the smooth operation of such a facility were being attended to. But the biggest change of all, however, was just around the corner.

The Wisconsin Lutheran Convalescent Home fulfilled many of the needs for WELS members that had previously been met by the jointly operated Home for Aged Lutherans and Bethany Lutheran Convalescent Home. However, there was no WELS agency that was able to provide the kinds of social services provided by the Lutheran Children's Friends Society. That situation was quickly remedied. Exactly six months after the

Wisconsin Lutheran Convalescent Home had been incorporated, an historic meeting was held at Siloah Evangelical Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. At that meeting it was decided that the Wisconsin Lutheran Convalescent Home should expand its services to provide social services to the three Wisconsin Districts of the WELS. The three Districts, the Southeastern Wisconsin District, the Northern Wisconsin District, and the Western Wisconsin District, at subsequent conventions approved such an expansion of services and pledged their support for the new direction of the agency, including financial support. The initial suggested goal of financial support was \$2.00 per communicant member from each congregation in the three Districts. With the addition of social services to the list of services now offered by the agency, it was determined that the name "Wisconsin Lutheran Convalescent Home" was no longer an appropriate name for the agency. Therefore, on March 4, 1966 the name of the agency was officially changed to its present name, "Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services." With the change in services offered and the change in name also came a change in the official purpose of the new agency: "To care for the spiritual needs of children, adoptive parents, troubled families, the aged, the convalescent, and handicapped in a Lutheran welfare program including, but not limited to, custodial care, consultation, casework service, and the maintenance and operation of foster homes and to provide such other Christian welfare service as the Board of Directors may decide to institute" (The Haven, 1967, Fall issue).

Having convalescent care and a social services program offered by the same agency was, and is, somewhat of a unique situation. It was not necessarily the intent of the founders of the organization to provide these very different types of services under the framework of a single agency. As they sought a place to establish social services for WELS members in Wisconsin and as the facilities and property at 6800 North 76th Street became available, the Board of Directors saw an opportunity and took advantage of it. Thus it was more a case of special circumstance rather than one of plan and design that brought convalescent care and social services together under one roof at Wisconsin

Lutheran Child and Family Services. Such a union has brought some unique advantages and also disadvantages to the agency. Among the advantages is the fact that administrative costs, along with certain facilities and equipment, could, to an extent, be shared among the two divisions of WLCFS without a lot of duplication of efforts.

Another advantage was that with one agency welfare services could now be offered to the members of the WELS throughout the whole spectrum of their lives, "from the cradle to the grave." One of the disadvantages of such a union is the fact that the full spectrum of services is not always understood by the constituency that the agency is intended to serve. This, however, is a problem that is able to be solved to a great extent by public relations and marketing devices such as the Haven, the official newsletter of WLCFS.

The marriage between convalescent care and social services at WLCFS may indeed be unusual but it is beyond question that this unique union has been blessed by the LORD in countless ways over the years. One of the many and varied blessings WLCFS has received was the services rendered by Pastor E.F. Lehninger, who served as the Executive Director of WLCFS from 1966 until his retirement from the full-time ministry in 1991. Pastor Lehninger received the call to serve as WLCFS's Executive Director in March of 1966 and assumed his full time duties on January 1, 1967. Pastor Lehninger had previously served as the Executive Director of the Lutheran Children's Friends Society. His administrative abilities and his experience in the field of social services provided him with a unique set of gifts that seemed to fit perfectly into the unique structure of WLCFS. One of the major contributions and living legacies that Pastor Lehninger was able to provide was in the area of funding for the agency. With foresight and great determination Pastor Lehninger was able to keep WLCFS free of involvement with such funding agencies as the United Way and other such public or government funding. In this way he was able to keep WLCFS from having to compromise its Scriptural principles, thus keeping WLCFS free to pursue its goal of providing truly Christian welfare services to the members of the WELS. Pastor Lehninger was also a visionary and pioneer in the area of Christian counseling and welfare

services, leading WLCFS through the many changes it would experience in the first 25 years of its history.

The changes came very rapidly for WLCFS in those early years. As additional staff was added to help provide the wide spectrum of services WLCFS was designed to provide, it became clear that more space was needed, more space than the original facility could provide. Additions to the original building were needed. After careful study the building committee presented plans to add two new "wings" onto the original convalescent center. One wing would be a 48-bed resident center for the elderly. The other wing would be used for administrative offices and as the home of the new Social Services Division of WLCFS. On September 24, 1967 ground was broken for the construction of the new buildings. On June 28, 1968 the completed additions were dedicated.

The Resident Center, although it was added on as a wing of the Convalescent Center, was intended to serve a different purpose ^{for it was} than that of the Convalescent Center. The goal of the original Convalescent Center was to offer "restorative and skilled nursing care to men and women in a relaxed and spiritual atmosphere within a hospital setting." Anyone age 18 or older in need of such extensive nursing care was (and is) admitted, regardless of race, creed, national origin, or color. The Resident Center was not intended to provide such extensive care for its residents (although such services were definitely available on a short term basis as the need would arise). Instead it was to provide a home for the elderly in a group setting as they lived out the senior years of their lives. Among the requirements for those desiring to be admitted to the Resident Center were that they had to be a WELS member or a member of a church in fellowship with the WELS and be recommended by their Pastor, they had to be 65 years of age and a resident of the state of Wisconsin, and they had to be able to care for their own daily personal needs with minimal assistance from the staff. With the addition of the Resident Center another area of need among WELS members was being met by WLCFS.

Now that the Social Services Division of the agency finally had its own "home," it, too, was able to better meet the needs of the WELS with the different services it could provide. From the beginning the social services offered by WLCFS focused primarily on child welfare services. In the early years of its history it could be said that the Social Services Division acted mainly as an adoptive agency. It provided a variety of services to unmarried parents such as counseling, casework services, medical planning, and living arrangement services. At the same time, the agency helped the parents decide whether or not they wanted to keep the baby or place it for adoption. If the parent(s) decided to place the baby for adoption WLCFS then assisted in that process through its adoption services. Assistance in securing foster home care was also provided through WLCFS.

Although in the early years the Social Services Division spent the majority of its time in the area of adoptive services, there were other services that were available, particularly in the area of family counseling. Counseling services were offered, among other things, for those experiencing problems in marriage, in parent-child relationships, and in dealing with learning or behavioral problems of children at home or in school. WLCFS also provided consultation for pastors and teachers as they dealt with similar problems in their ministries. WLCFS counselors also stood ready to conduct Family Life Educational programs for church and school groups that might be interested in discussing various aspects of Christian family life. Although such family counseling and educational services did not make up a major part of WLCFS's social services program in the first few years of the agency's history (only 15 family counseling cases were reported in 1967) they continued to grow and become an ever increasing part of the overall program of WLCFS's Social Services Division.

In the early 1970's there were many significant developments at WLCFS, primarily in the Social Services Division. The most significant, perhaps, was the shift in emphasis from adoptive services to family counseling services. From the beginning of the agency, adoption services and services to unmarried parents had constituted the major area of

emphasis in the Social Services Division. By the early 1970's family counseling services had taken over as the major area of activity in the Social Services Division. The year 1972 was somewhat indicative of this overall trend. Two sentences from the 1972 Social Services report summarized the recent developments with the Division. It was reported that "only 48 unmarried parent cases were accepted for service in 1972, the lowest number in the history of the Agency." Yet "in 1972 we accepted 101 family service cases, the largest number in our history" (The Haven, Spring 1973).

Within the area of adoptive services there were two different trends that could be seen that were directly impacting the decline in the number of children being placed for adoption by the agency. Although the statistics did tend to vary from year to year, in general there were fewer unmarried parents coming to the agency seeking counseling, and of those being seen there were proportionally more who were deciding to keep their babies and not place them for adoption. However, at the same time that the agency was experiencing this decline in the number of children it was able to place for adoption, it was also experiencing an increase in the number of applications it was receiving on the part of married couples who were seeking to adopt these children. The ratio between the number of applications for adoption and the number of healthy white infants available for adoption was getting way out of balance. This situation led the Board of Directors of WLCFS to make a dramatic, but necessary, change in the agency's adoption policy. It was reported in the 1972 Summer issue of the Haven that,

"Beginning May 1st, 1972, Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services will accept applications to adopt only from couples with whom we can plan to place children who are medically or physically handicapped, black or black-white, slow to develop, siblings, or who are of school age. This means applications are accepted only for children other than healthy, caucasian infants or toddlers."

The agency did not want to give potential adoptive parents a false sense of hope by continuing to accept applications when they knew the number of children available was

continuing to decrease. At the time, the estimated waiting period for those seeking to adopt was as much as three years. In subsequent years, as fewer and fewer children were being placed for adoption through WLCFS, that waiting period would continue to increase.

The downward trend in the number of unmarried parents being counseled and the number of babies being placed for adoption did not always bring a corresponding decrease in the agencies time involvement in such cases, necessarily. For example, in 1974 it was reported that although the number of unmarried parents seeking services from the agency had declined over the previous year, the time involvement had actually increased. One of the major factors was that more and more of those seeking such services were under the age of 18, some even as young as 14 and 15 years of age. As a result parental involvement was required for these under age cases. Consequently the cases become more involved and often times more complicated, thus requiring more time involvement by the counseling staff at WLCFS.

Although the early 70's saw a decrease in the number of adoptions WLCFS handled and the limiting of the number of applications the agency would accept, there were also some very positive developments at WLCFS during that time. One of the most significant was the opening of WLCFS's first full-time area office in Black Creek, WI. It had always been the desire of the WLCFS to provide its services to every member of the WELS in the state of Wisconsin. In practice, however, that goal was not able to be met with only one office in Milwaukee. As a result, the Board of Directors began to entertain the idea of opening an area office. The planning for such an area office had actually begun back in 1971. Then in October of 1972 WLCFS began experimenting with this area office idea by sending one of its social workers into the Northern Wisconsin District several times a month to provide consultations with area pastors and teachers, counseling for families and individuals, and various other services offered by WLCFS. The Board of Directors then decided to proceed with plans to open an area office in the Fox Valley area, and the Black

Creek office officially opened for business on June 3, 1974. The extension of WLCFS's Social Services program through area offices was a concept that fit in very well with the overall purpose of the agency. As a result, many more such offices would eventually be opened in later years.

Besides the area office concept, WLCFS also sought to extend its services to its WELS constituency in other ways in the early 1970's. One of the ways it was able to do this was through its "Pastor As Counselor" workshops. These workshops were sponsored by the Special Ministries Board of the WELS and were offered to all WELS pastors in all the Districts of the Synod. Over a three year period workshops were held in all of the Districts to provide pastors with new counseling skills and improve their existing skills. With these workshops WLCFS was able to offer its expertise in the area of counseling directly to all the pastors of the Synod and indirectly to all the WELS members that these pastors served.

Closer to home there was another change at the WLCFS main office in Milwaukee. Another building project was in the works, this time for the addition of a chapel facility to be used primarily for the residents in the Health Care Division. As a Christian welfare agency WLCFS has always been interested in the spiritual welfare of the people it serves, both in the Social Services Division and the Health Care Division. In both these divisions it had always been recognized that the primary responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the residents at WLCFS and those seeking counseling from the agency still remained with the pastor(s) of the church to which these people belonged. Within the Health Care Division, however, a part-time chaplaincy program had been in place for a number of years to assist in the pastoral care of its residents. Part of the responsibility of the chaplaincy program was the conducting of regular worship services primarily for those residents who were unable to attend their own local church. The problem was that there was no specific worship area within the original facility, and during the construction project of the late 60's funds were not available to include such a facility. However, recognizing the need for

such a facility, the agency set up a chapel fund for the building of WLCFS's own chapel. In the meantime the dining room had to serve as a makeshift chapel for the Sunday morning and Wednesday evening worship services. In 1974 it was determined that finally there were enough funds in the Chapel fund to begin the construction of the new chapel. And on May 4, 1975 the day which many at the agency, both residents and staff, had been waiting for for such a long time had finally arrived when their own chapel was dedicated to the glory of God.

As WLCFS approached its tenth anniversary it could look back with thanksgiving on the many blessings God had showered upon the agency in the first ten years of its existence. The theme chosen for WLCFS's tenth anniversary celebrations was "Grace Received..... Grace Reflected." As part of the celebration of ten years of God's blessings in being able to serve the needs of the WELS WLCFS undertook a new project, the writing of its first book entitled "Living in Grace." The book was a cooperative effort on the part of many of the staff members at WLCFS and had as its primary goal "the restating of Christian principles and the offering of practical suggestions for living the Christian life in the family" (The Haven, Fall 1976). Among the subjects covered in the 11 chapters of the book are Identity, Communication, Family, Marriage, Parenting, Single Living, Aging, and Crisis. In the Forward to the new book WLCFS's Executive Director, Pastor Lehninher summarized the agency's intent in writing the book. He states, "We hope to stimulate you through our written word as well as our questions and answers to dig deeper for clarity to your unresolved problems. Our wish would be to have you continue to use your Bible as the best resource book available for answers to daily Christian Living."

The writing of the book "Living in Grace" was indicative of a new emphasis within the Social Services Division as WLCFS entered its second decade of ministry. This new emphasis was on providing educational services for the WELS members the agency served. During the first ten years of its existence WLCFS was properly termed a "crisis

oriented" agency. As people came to them with their problems or as other specifically identifiable needs were recognized by the agency, the staff at WLCFS was (and still is) ready and willing to help in any way they could. However, during the early and mid 70's the agency began to recognize a desire on the part of WELS Christians to receive more educational type services in the general area of Christian family living. As a result, the Board of Directors in 1976 resolved to provide another category of services within the Social Services Division called "Educational Services." The program was designed to "enrich and strengthen the lives of God's people through adult education programs, seminars and workshops." The whole idea of educational services was actually not something that was totally new to WLCFS. They had been providing such services since early on in their history. The difference now was that there would be a more concerted effort to develop and promote such educational programs.

In February of 1977 WLCFS took another step toward reaching out with its services to all the members of the WELS within the state of Wisconsin when the Board of Directors decided to proceed with plans to open a second area office in Tomah, WI. The Tomah office was originally scheduled to open on September 1, 1977 but plans actually ran a little bit ahead of schedule and the Tomah office became operational on August 1, 1977. The Tomah office was designed to serve WELS members in the western part of the state of Wisconsin. With the opening of this office WLCFS now had full time offices in all three Wisconsin Districts.

In 1978 WLCFS again endeavored to extend its services farther than it ever had before, this time at the encouragement of the Conference of Presidents of the WELS. The Conference of Presidents formally resolve "that the WLCFS be encouraged to serve the social needs of WELS families to the extent that is legally possible and when it is called upon to do so" (The Haven, Summer 1978). Legal restrictions would prevent WLCFS from being able to offer its full range of social services to WELS members outside the state of Wisconsin, but there were some services that could be provided such as

consultation services for WELS pastors and teachers, services for unmarried parents who wished to place a child for adoption, and leading educational workshops at the request of any WELS congregation or organization. The staff at WLCFS definitely took this encouragement to heart. Even though it was a very challenging request, they look upon it as another opportunity to reach out with the healing Gospel to others who were in need.

Reaching out to those who were in need was also the reason behind the expansion in 1978 of WLCFS's Foster Care Program. Foster care had been a part of the Social Services Division's program from the beginning but it had primarily been for younger children. Now the program was being expanded to include any child up to age 17. The Foster Care Program was provided for any WELS family that had a child in need of a temporary alternative living situation. The problems that might arise which would necessitate the need for foster care for one or more of the children in the family could vary widely, ranging from illness on the part of one or both parents, to behavioral or emotional problems on the part of the child or the parents, to child abuse or neglect. The Foster Care Program at WLCFS was designed to actually be an extension of the social services already offered to families, yet always keeping the best interest of the child in mind.

Along with the expansion of WLCFS's Foster Care Program, 1978 also saw WLCFS opening another home for a special segment of its constituency, the group home for the mentally retarded. For some time there had been concerns among WELS members about what was being done for the mentally retarded within the WELS. This concern was officially expressed at the 1973 Synod Convention where the Special Ministries Board of the WELS was directed to look into the need for and the feasibility of providing some kind of residential service for the mentally retarded. At the 1975 Synod Convention a subcommittee of the Synod Special Ministries Board reported that there was a need and urged that Special Ministries Boards be set up on the District level to look into providing such residential services for the mentally retarded in their areas. In April of 1978 the Special Ministries Board of the Southeastern Wisconsin District encouraged WLCFS to

consider the feasibility of establishing a group home for the mentally retarded. Again WLCFS eagerly accepted the encouragement it had received and by May 1, 1978 they had purchased a house adjacent to the Milwaukee office property to be used for that purpose. The house was intended to accommodate 4-5 residents plus the group home parents. The philosophy behind this smaller group home idea rather than a larger institutional type facility was that it would be more comfortable for the residents and would hopefully allow them to function at as high a level of independence as possible. After some needed renovations to the house WLCFS began accepting applications for its group home for the mentally retarded. Again, another example of WLCFS recognizing a need within our church body and stepping forward to meet that need.

Another need among WELS members that WLCFS recognized was the need to provide some kind of program for those caught in the addictive sin of alcoholism. WLCFS had been dealing with alcoholics and their families from the start of the agency. As the years went on the agency was becoming more and more involved in the whole area of alcoholism and counseling for alcoholics. For some time it was felt that some kind of formal program for alcoholics and their families needed to be established. Finally in 1979 WLCFS began its own recovery group for alcoholics and their families called "Alcoholic Awareness" with the help of two lay-leaders (a recovering alcoholic and his wife). This program is based on the 12 steps approach of Alcoholics Anonymous yet it was adapted to be firmly grounded in the truth of God's Word. The program consists of two groups. The Recovery group is a closed group for those who admit to or think they might have a problem with alcoholism, and those whom other people feel have a problem with alcoholism. The Support Group is designed for people whose lives are affected by an alcoholic. This group might include family, friends, pastors, employers, and the like. The program also includes "Open Meetings" which are intended to serve more as educational meetings and are open to anyone who might be interested in the subject of alcoholism.

The Alcoholic Awareness Program was received very favorably and by 1983 there were as many as 16 different groups meeting throughout the state of Wisconsin and in Illinois.

Although the Social Services Division of WLCFS continued to expand and grow in many areas of service in the mid and late 70's, its adoptive services didn't fare quite as well. The agency was able ^{to} begin accepting new applications from potential adoptive parents for a brief time in 1975 and again in 1978. In both cases, however, there was only a two week window in which these applications were accepted and the waiting time remained long, as much as five years or more. In 1979 the application list was reopened on a permanent basis but the acceptance of applications was restricted. It is interesting to note that from 1975 to 1978 the agency actually saw a fairly dramatic increase in the number of unwed parents coming to the agency for counseling. Yet during that same time period the number of children the agency was able to place for adoption continued to decrease.

Although WLCFS's adoptive services were on the decline as the agency entered the 1980's there were other areas of WLCFS's services that were continuing to expand and grow. Perhaps the most significant area of expansion came in the Health Care Division. For years the Health Care Division had been providing two different types of residential service, skilled nursing care in the Convalescent Center and an intermediate level of care in the Resident Center. Yet both of these types of care were in an institutional setting. The problem, however, was that there were many senior citizens who wanted to be able to live in worry-free, stable and secure environment yet who also wanted to maintain an independent lifestyle in a non-institutional setting. Seeing this need and desiring to fulfill it, WLCFS decided that the best way they could do that was to spawn a "sister" agency. This sister corporation became a reality in 1981 with the formation of the "Wisconsin Lutheran Retirement Community, Inc." and the planning began immediately for the building of what would become known as "Luther Haven." The groundbreaking for the new retirement community was held in November of 1981. The first residents began

moving into Luther Haven in November of 1982, although the formal dedication and grand opening of the facility wasn't until August of 1983.

Although Luther Haven was a totally separate facility and organization from WLCFS it still had an impact on WLCFS's Health Care Division. With the opening of the new retirement community many of the people that might otherwise have come to WLCFS were now going to Luther Haven. The result of this situation for the Health Care Division of WLCFS was that residents who continued to come to WLCFS began to be less and less able to take care of their own physical needs and began to require much more extensive nursing care services.

In the early 80's there were also continued developments in the Social Services Division of WLCFS. The agency continued to follow through on its endeavor to bring its services to all the members of the WELS in the three Wisconsin Districts. Between 1980 and 1984 WLCFS opened three new area offices. The first was an area office in the inner-city of Milwaukee which was intended to reach out primarily to the black community in the inner-city. This office was officially opened on October 7, 1980. In 1984 two more area offices were opened, one in Wausau, WI to serve the north central portion of the state, and a second office in Morton Grove, IL to serve the northern portion of Illinois and particularly the greater Chicago area. The opening of the Morton Grove office marked the first full-time area office for WLCFS outside the state of Wisconsin. Yet this did not necessarily mean a change in the boundaries from the original area that WLCFS was intended to serve because the Southeastern Wisconsin District actually extends to cover the northern portions of the state of Illinois as well. Therefore the Morton Grove office simply serves the the members of the Southeastern Wisconsin District who happen to live outside the state of Wisconsin in the state of Illinois. Other changes in the area offices included the moving of the Tomah area office to Eau Claire and the Black Creek office to Appleton.

As the agency continued its program of expanding through area offices it did not do so without set backs. When the area office in the inner-city of Milwaukee was opened the feeling was that there was a need for such social services in that area. Whether that need was there or not, the client base which they planned and hoped for never materialized. The facility simply was not being utilized to any great extent by the community. As time went on and this trend did not improve in a significant way it became clear to the Board of Directors that it simply wasn't practical to continue operating an office in that area. Therefore, with a great deal of regret, the decision was made in 1984 to close the area office in the inner-city of Milwaukee. Services, however, would still be offered to the inner-city through the main office for those who desired them.

Even though WLCFS experienced some set backs it continued to press on with its mission. A new round of nationwide pastoral counseling workshops was provided for all the pastors of the WELS. This time, however, it was Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and in particular Seminary president, Armin Schuetze, that took the lead in securing the funds for the workshops and coordinating them. WLCFS continued to lend its assistance and expertise to this program of workshops, mainly in the person of Mr. Fred Matzke who was (and still is) the agency's Supervisor of Family and Educational Services. Since that time the Seminary has taken over the primary leadership in providing such "in-service" counseling training for pastors, although WLCFS does continue to cooperate the Seminary in providing these services. One such cooperative effort was the writing of the book "The Counseling Shepherd" co-authored by Prof. Schuetze of the Seminary and Fred Matzke of WLCFS. The book was based on the material presented in the pastoral counseling workshops that the two of them jointly conducted during the mid 80's. The book was intended to help pastors in the continuing development of their counseling skills and is still being used as a required text book at the Seminary.

Other types of workshops and educational programs also continued to be offered through the Social Services Division of WLCFS. People began more and more to see

WLCFS not only as a place where they could go when a crisis hit but also as a place where they could receive assistance in preventing these crisis situations from developing. WLCFS was happy to be able to provide such "preventive" services through its Educational Services department. The topics on which WLCFS staff members were available to speak covered a wide spectrum. Included among such topics were "Alcohol, Drugs and You," "Women in Depression," "Sex Education," "The Aging Process," "Stress/Time Management for Teachers" along with many others. WLCFS also continued to develop new educational programs as they became aware of specific needs and demands for them. As WLCFS approached its 20th Anniversary plans were made to produce a new educational film-strip/cassette and discussion series entitled "Living in Grace." This new educational series was based on the book "Living in Grace" which WLCFS had produced in celebration of its 10th Anniversary. This 20th Anniversary project seemed very appropriate for WLCFS considering the agency's added emphasis on educational services during the second decade of its existence.

In 1985, as WLCFS was on the verge of entering its third decade of service to the WELS, it was also on the verge of instituting a new program in the Health Care Division, Home Health Care. The Home Health Care Program is designed for people who need some assistance with their daily needs and activities but do not require the skilled nursing care that an institution such as a nursing home provides. In years past such people might have been forced to move to a retirement community or a resident center like the one provided by WLCFS. Yet the desire of these people was to stay in their own homes as long as possible. The Home Health Care Program was designed to assist them with that goal. By sending a Licensed Practical Nurse or a trained Nursing Assistant directly to the homes of these people to give them the help they need when and where they need it, WLCFS would be able to help them maintain their own independent living arrangements for a longer period of time than would otherwise have been possible. After receiving licensing from the state of Wisconsin, WLCFS began offering Home Health Care services

in Milwaukee County. This was just another example of WLCFS recognizing a need on the part of its constituency and doing its best to meet that need.

Another unmet need that was recognized by WLCFS was the need for some type of service or program for singles. In 1986 WLCFS began offering a singles support group which eventually blossomed into a new program at the agency called "Singles Ministry." The new program was not seen so much as being "crisis-oriented" in providing therapy, but rather as being more support and educational in nature. The purpose of the Singles Ministry as stated in the Holiday 1988 issue of the Haven is "to provide an atmosphere in which single adults - those single since birth, divorced or widowed - can sense and learn about God's love, strengthening and healing." Among some of the goals of the Singles Ministry were included:

- to develop a greater sense of belonging within the church; to become an integral part of the body of Christ.
- to develop an increased awareness of singles within the local congregations by the membership of the church at large.
- to provide learning and fellowship opportunities cultivated in a spirit of Christian love.
- to provide organizing and planning materials for local WELS singles groups.
- to identify special talents and gifts of the individual to be used for service within the church.
- to provide an opportunity for mutual sharing and encouragement on issues especially relevant to singles.

The original intent in forming a Singles Ministry at WLCFS was not necessarily that it would become a permanent part of the Social Services program but rather that the group that would be formed would eventually take over its own operations and become a more or less independent organization, which is exactly what has happened over the years. WLCFS sponsored the organization and provided its expertise in the early years of this ministry and with that support the organization, now known as WINGS (WELS Network of Growing Singles), was able to get off the ground and take flight on its own.

In the late 80's WLCFS continued to extend its services throughout the state of Wisconsin by opening two new area offices, one in Fort Atkinson (1986) and one in La Crosse (1987). This brought the number of area offices up to six. One of the goals in creating area offices was to be able to offer WLCFS's services to all WELS members in the state of Wisconsin within about an hour's drive from where they live. With the six area offices and the "satellite" offices that they provided in their respective regions this goal was able to be met to a great extent. In 1993 WLCFS opened its newest area office bringing it up to its current total of seven area offices. This latest area office again saw WLCFS extending its services outside the state of Wisconsin, this time in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area of Minnesota. However, WLCFS had yet to extend its services much farther than the three Wisconsin Districts as this area of Minnesota was connected with the Western Wisconsin District of the WELS.

The Mid-Year issue of the Haven reported some encouraging news in the area of adoptive services. Only half way through 1989 the number of children placed for adoption through WLCFS had already surpassed the total placements of the previous year. In 1988 only 11 children had been placed compared to 14 through the first half of 1989. This good news, however, was short lived for by the end of the year that number had increased by only 2 bringing the grand total of adoptions in 1989 to 16. This was somewhat indicative of the trend in adoptive services throughout the decade of the 80's. There were times when adoptive services seemed to be doing relatively well and other times when they didn't do so well at all. For example, in 1984 the agency placed 28 children for adoption, the highest total for the decade of the 80's. Yet the following year only 7 children were able to be placed, resulting in the lowest total for the decade. Although the number of adoptions did tend to fluctuate from year to year during the 80's, the overall trend through the decade was still one of steady decline. Applications for potential adoptive parents did continue to be accepted on a restricted basis during this time, but the waiting list remained relatively long compared to the number of children being placed.

But not all the news was bad news as WLCFS entered the 1990's. In fact most of it continued to be good news. Adoptive services may have been way down from years past, but the rest of the agency continued to grow and expand. In fact the agency had grown so much over the years that more space was needed at the main office in Milwaukee to keep up. Final approval for the building expansion came in 1989 and the construction began towards the end of that year. The building project was for the purpose of providing more space for Administrative and Social Services offices, the Administration building entryway, receiving and central supply, Health Care offices and staff facilities, residential private rooms, and OT/PT facility. The construction continued through 1990 and was finally completed early in 1991.

As WLCFS entered the 90's it now had a new look. But the changes in the outward appearance of the main office building were not the only changes going on at the agency, there were also many changes going on inside. One of the most significant changes on the inside was the beginning of the "WELS Care Line" which went into operation on May 1, 1991. The WELS Care Line is a 24-hour national toll-free 800 number intended to provide Christian counseling and consultation services to all WELS and ELS members throughout the country. This is a cooperative venture with WELS Lutherans for Life. The Care Line would be staffed by the professional counseling staff of WLCFS during its normal business hours (8am to 5pm CT, Monday - Friday). For the remainder of the time the line would be staffed by trained volunteers provided by the Waukesha Chapter of WELS Lutherans for Life. Obviously the Care Line was not able, nor was it intended to, provide intensive counseling and/or therapy over the phone, but it could offer some limited counseling and consultation and could be used as a first step in acquiring more extensive counseling services if such services should be required. The original estimations were that the Care Line might handle 3-5 calls per week in the early going. These estimations fell way short of the mark as 90 calls were received in the first month of operation, and since then the calls have continued to pour in.

The WELS Care Line was definitely a major development in the Social Services Division in 1991, but there were many other developments during the year as well. Within the Educational Services department a new program was developed called "The Caring Christian." This program was designed to help train lay members to better be able to serve one another in their times of need. In the area of adoptive services specialized assistance for "The Search" was put in place and made available to adoptees who were seeking to locate their biological parents. In the Alcoholic Awareness Program a new booklet was written and published (1990). The booklet was entitled "Walking His Paths in Recovery" and was intended as a devotional booklet for alcoholics and their families.

Although there were many positive and exciting developments at WLCFS in 1991, there was also one sad development. In 1991 Pastor E.F. Lehninger announced his retirement from the active ministry and from his position as the Executive Director of WLCFS effective July 31, 1991. Pastor Lehninger had served as the Executive Director of WLCFS for 25 years, almost from the time of its inception in 1966. During a time when there were many misgivings among WELS members about the whole area of "Christian" counseling because they felt that too often this was just a thin disguise for humanism, Pastor Lehninger was able to keep the focus of WLCFS fixed firmly on the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result he was also to a great extent able to allay the fears of many people who had concerns about the philosophy of the agency and the types of services it was offering. Although the day Pastor Lehninger retired was a sad day for WLCFS the agency would continue on with its mission to reach out to the members of the WELS with its Gospel-centered social welfare services.

In 1992 WLCFS continued to pursue its objective of extending its services directly to as many WELS members as possible through area offices. In addition to opening its area office in the Twin Cities, WLCFS also began discussions with Pastor Brian Terrell of Tuscon, Arizona. Pastor Terrell was a former WELS pastor who had left the ministry to pursue a counseling degree and to devote himself to the establishment of a WELS

Christian counseling agency in the Tuscon area. When WLCFS first got together with Pastor Terrell it was originally thought that this might be an opportunity to open a WLCFS area office in Tuscon. It soon became apparent, however, that the idea of maintaining an area office at such a great distance from the main office in Milwaukee was simply not practical. WLCFS was not willing to just drop the whole matter, though. Seeing the need for a WELS counseling service for the many WELS congregations in the state of Arizona, WLCFS was willing to assist Pastor Terrell in establishing his own independent counseling agency, Lutheran Counseling Services of the Southwest. This assistance was primarily in the form of a \$30,000 grant to be paid over a three year period, \$15,000 in 1992, \$10,000 in 1993, and \$5,000 in 1994. Later on the WLCFS increased that grant to include \$5,000 in 1995. As WLCFS had generously received from others over the years, it now in turn was able to generously give to others as well.

1992 also saw some steps taken by WLCFS toward fulfilling a long held dream of building a retreat center. The dream began a number of years earlier when 37 acres of land near West Bend was graciously donated to the agency. The suggestion was that the land be used to build a retreat center for the agency. In 1992 a special planning committee began studying the actual size and structure of the potential retreat center which has been tentatively named "Paradise Hills Retreat Center." The envisioned retreat center would include such things as conference rooms, meeting areas, and break-out group facilities as well as motel-type rooms for overnight lodging. The purpose of the retreat center would be to provide a place for WLCFS to host various types of workshops, seminars and retreats, yet it would also be available to other synodical, congregational, or organizational groups for various kinds of meetings or retreats they might sponsor. Or the facility could be used by individuals who simply want to get away for a while in a relaxed setting for Christian growth and renewal. Although no definite plans have been set, the dream still remains that Paradise Hills Retreat Center will become a reality sometime in the not too distant future.

The Alcoholic Awareness Program also continued to grow in the early 90's. In 1992 a second devotional booklet, "Love Beyond Our Imagination," was published and made available through the WLCFS main office in Milwaukee. In 1993 a book entitled "Conquerors through Christ," edited by John Cook, was also produced by WLCFS. The first half of the book focuses on understanding and dealing with alcoholism from a Christian perspective. The second half of the book provides personal stories from various people involved with the Alcoholic Awareness Program at WLCFS. Along with the printed material that WLCFS produced for and about alcoholics and alcoholism, the agency, in an effort to assist parish pastors in serving the needs of alcoholics and their families, also offered workshops for pastors in 1993 on the topic of counseling the alcoholic and the family. The Alcoholic Awareness Program has become a strong and vibrant part of the Social Services Division and all indications are that it will continue to be so in the future.

During the same time that many programs offered by WLCFS continued to grow and flourish, there were other programs that did not fare as well. One such program was the group home for the mentally retarded which the agency started in the late 70's. At first the idea of such a group home was fairly well received and WLCFS was glad to offer the service. But as the years went on people started to become dissatisfied with the services offered, not with the quality of the services, but with the location in which those services were offered. The problem was that the parents of the residents increasingly became ^{dis}unsatisfied with the idea of sending their children away. Instead they wanted to have them live closer to their own homes. WLCFS, however, was not in a position to offer a large number of group homes in all the various areas that people wanted them. This coupled with the fact that people had choices of other group homes that often were closer to their own homes led to a declining interest on the part of parents in sending their mentally retarded children to the WLCFS group home. At the same time WLCFS began to rethink its philosophy in providing such a group home for the mentally retarded. It was

determined that if the mentally retarded were receiving spiritual care and growth through their home congregation while they lived in a group home that was not run by a WELS group then the need for WLCFS (or another WELS agency) to run such a group home for the mentally retarded did not appear to be as great as it once was thought. All of these factors led to the decision in 1992 to close WLCFS's group home for the mentally retarded.

Another program that saw some decline in interest in the early 90's was the Educational Services Program. When WLCFS officially instituted its Educational Services Program in 1976 the demand from the general public for educational kinds of services was relatively high. This trend continued on into the 1980's and as the demand for such services increased WLCFS continued to increase its emphasis on developing and offering them. But by the early to mid 90's the agency was no longer placing as great an emphasis on such programs. The reason for this was two-fold. First of all the interest in such services on the part of the general public and of the WELS had begun to fade out to a certain extent. As interest waned, WLCFS again began to reconsider to what extent it should be actively involved in promoting educational/preventive services and to what extent it should be providing primarily counseling and crisis-oriented services. Another factor that came into play in this regard was the fact that during this same time period the Synod became much more involved in developing programs of discipleship and adult education. Therefore, due to the somewhat declining interest in educational services on the part of the public as a whole and due to a desire not to duplicate efforts in competition with the Synodical offices, WLCFS has seen its mission return to more of its original emphasis on providing mainly counseling type services. The agency does, however, still offer quite an extensive program of educational services and is ready and willing to provide those services when called upon to do so. The educational services continue to play a strong role, albeit a secondary role, in the overall program of the Social Services Division, and as

far as anyone can tell they will continue to be an integral part of the services offered by WLCFS in the future.

The same, however, cannot necessarily be said of the adoptive services offered by WLCFS. As the agency entered the 1990's the number of adoptions it handled, which were already low to begin with, continued to decline to the point that only a handful of such adoption were being processed each year. This led the agency to close its application list for potential adoptive parents. A number of factors could be cited to help explain the steady decrease in adoptions at WLCFS over the past 20-25 years. One is that the stigma of being a single parent is no longer as great in our society as it once was. A second factor is that there are more resources available to single parents now than there was in the past that make it easier for them to care for their child (or children) on their own. Therefore many more single parents are simply choosing to keep their children and not place them for adoption. Another factor is what is called independent adoptions. In the state of Wisconsin and in other states it is legal for single parents to place their children for adoption independently of an adoption agency. As a result more single parents are choosing to place their children for adoption on their own instead of going through an adoption agency such as WLCFS. Also, with the legalization of abortion and the relative ease with which abortions can be obtained today, more women are choosing this alternative to solve the problem of an unwanted pregnancy rather than carrying their baby to term and then placing it for adoption.

Whatever the reasons may be, the fact still remains that WLCFS is at the present time handling only a small number of adoptions each year. This has led in recent years to the agency's reevaluation of whether or not to continue offering adoptive services as part of its Social Services program. Part of the reason for this discussion is the fact that the state of Wisconsin is not willing to license an agency to provide adoptive services unless they handle a certain number of adoptions each year. In recent years WLCFS has not always been able to meet this minimum requirement set up by the state. What this means for the

future of adoptive services at WLCFS is hard to tell at this point. The real possibility does exist, however, that adoptive services, which was the primary focus of the Social Services Division when the agency began, may no longer be offered by WLCFS in the near future.

The closing of adoptive services, if it should come to that, would definitely be a sad day for WLCFS. But such a decision, if it should occur, must be kept in perspective. Such a decision would indeed be a major change in policy, but in practice, however, it would be relatively minor considering that the agency has handled a relatively small number of adoptions in the past few years. In any event, WLCFS will carry on with its mission to serve the needs of as many people as possible with as many services as they are able to provide. On the "eve" of its 30th Anniversary there some exciting new developments at WLCFS that will help the agency do just that.

One of the most recent developments within the Home Health Care Division is the addition of a full time chaplain to oversee the Chaplaincy Program. WLCFS has always been committed to serving the spiritual needs of its residents as well as providing for their physical needs. In the past that was accomplished through a part time chaplain who would work in cooperation with the residents' home pastor. In the past, when the chaplain was only part time, his responsibility was mainly to conduct regular worship services and also to make calls on residents who were WELS members when their own pastor was not available to do so. Now that the chaplain position is full time it is intended to be more outreach oriented. The chaplain will continue to serve the spiritual needs of WELS members in the nursing home, as was done in the past. But now he will also be more active in reaching out with the Gospel to other residents who are not members of the WELS yet who desire to have a pastor call on them.

Within the Social Services Division of WLCFS there are also some exciting new developments and plans in the works. At the present time the agency is looking into the possibility of opening an area office in the state of Michigan. Currently the agency is in the process of discussing the idea with the pastors and congregations in Michigan to

determine their desire to have such an area office and to what extent it would be feasible to operate an area office in Michigan. It is interesting to note that interest for an area office in Michigan goes back at least as far as 1970 when the Michigan District officially requested that WLCFS look into opening an area office in the state of Michigan. And now, some 25 years later, it appears that a Michigan area office may actually become a reality. Current discussions are progressive relatively well and it is hoped that a Michigan area office might be opened somewhere in the Saginaw - Bay City - Flint area as early as 1996. If such an office should materialize, it would be the first such area office to be opened outside the geographic area covered by the three Wisconsin Districts which WLCFS was originally designed to serve.

Another major project that is currently under way at WLCFS is the development of a new program entitled "Theological Certification for Therapists." The funds being used to develop this program came from a \$25,000 grant which WLCFS received from Aid Association for Lutherans. Such a program would be designed to provide a formalized course of theological study for Christian counselors. WLCFS has always been very selective in the hiring of its staff counselors to make sure they have counselors who are well grounded in the Scriptures and the Lutheran faith. Many of their counselors have attend Lutheran grade schools and/or Lutheran high schools. WLCFS also already offers some theological training for its counselors in the form of in-service workshops conducted by the pastors on its staff. This planned project of Theological Certification for Therapists would simply further the goal of WLCFS to provide solid, Bible based, Christian counseling to the members of the WELS the agency serves. Perhaps a bigger benefit of the program would be to offer even greater assurance to the members of the WELS who might be concerned about the type and quality of Christian counseling they might receive from WLCFS counselors. By offering theological certification for all its counselors WLCFS would be better able to calm such fears and assure its constituency that the counseling they receive from the agency is based squarely on the truths of Scripture. It is

envisioned that this program, with its two-fold benefits, might also be made available to any and all WELS Christian counselor, even those not employed by WLCFS. The program is still in the planning stages with a target completion date set for December 31, 1995.

Things are definitely changing at WLCFS, just as they have done over the past 30 years. As WLCFS stands on the threshold of its fourth decade of ministry new challenges and new opportunities continue to present themselves. And WLCFS is continuing to change to strive to meet them. What does the future hold for WLCFS? No one is able to tell for sure, but whatever the future holds change will certainly be a part of it. As the saying goes, "Nothing ever stays the same." But that is only partially true. As the future unfolds there are some things that will never change. The first is that people will always be struggling with sin and be hurting by its consequences. The second is that the Gospel of peace and forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ will always be the only real and ultimate source of help and healing for these people. In light of these two facts, WLCFS stands ready to enter its fourth decade - changing to meet the changing needs of the WELS with the unchanging Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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