

WELS Historical Institute
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On the Cover: *La Iglesia Luterana De Barrancas* – the first WELS chapel built in
Puerto Rico, Barrancas in 1972

The pictures are courtesy of Tutor Daniel Voigt, Northwestern Preparatory School.

Synodical Proceedings of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin in St. John Church, Milwaukee, May 30 to June 3, 1858 A.D.

The members, namely pastors and congregational delegates, of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin assembled on May 29, 1858 for their annual convention in St. John Church in Milwaukee, having received an invitation from this congregation, served by Pastor Streissguth, to meet there.

Sunday, May 30, 1858

The synodical worship service was opened with a confessional sermon by Pastor Diehlmann. After the synodical sermon by Pastor Reim on Ephesians 4:3-6, holy communion was celebrated with members of the synod and of the congregation taking part. In the afternoon Pastor Koehler preached on the importance of [Christian] education, basing his sermon on Mark 10:13-16.

Monday, May 31, meeting of the synod

The synodical and ministerial sessions began with a hymn, a reading of II Timothy 2, and a prayer by the president, Pastor Muehlhaeuser.

The roll call was taken with the following preachers being present:

1. Johannes Muehlhaeuser of Milwaukee
2. Carl Goldammer of Manitowoc
3. Carl Koester of Davis
4. Jacob Konrad [Conrad] of Racine
5. Johannes Bading of Theresa
6. Daniel Huber of New Berlin
7. Elias Sauer of Hermann
8. Philipp Koehler of Nenno
9. Wilhelm Streissguth of Milwaukee
10. Gottlieb Reim of Helenville
11. Christian Stark of Kenosha
12. Carl Diehlmann of Montello
13. Philipp Sprengling of Newtonburg
14. Hennicke, excused because of illness, but was advised not to miss the next synodical session.

Congregational delegates:

1. Heinrich Dube of Grace Church, Milwaukee
2. Johann Schmidt of Pastor Conrad's congregation
3. Friederich Luecke of Emmanuel congregation in Theresa
4. Jacob Schmidt of St. Bethel [sic] congregation in Ashford
5. Philipp Hamm of St. John congregation in Milwaukee

Advisory members:

1. Mr. Steger from Racine
2. Mr. Nicolaus Schoof from Pastor Sauer's congregation
3. Mr. Maurer and Mr. Haase from Helenville
4. Mr. Wetzel and Mr. Koepfel [Koepsel] from Watertown [Lebanon]

5. Mr. Ziem from Beaver Dam
6. Teacher Schwanz from Hustisford
7. Teacher Rodemer [Bodemer] (candidate for pastoral ministry)
8. Teacher Sieker (candidate for pastoral ministry)

Pastor Muehlhaeuser, the current president, presented his synodical report to the synod. He expressed his thanks to the Lord for the present state of the synod, for its growth and expansion, its expectations and apprehensions in its working areas of Wisconsin, granted the synod by the Lord. He specifically referred to the confessional stand of the synod within the Lutheran Church, countering the charges being circulated against the synod. Finally he expressed the wish to be relieved from the presidency, which he has now held for eight years. He asked that it be transferred to someone else.

He then read 18 different pieces of correspondence, consisting of inquiries and of situations pertaining to synodical and non-synodical congregations and persons; also announcements and requests from students, candidates, vacant congregations, etc.

Before the election of synodical officials took place, the following resolution was adopted by the synod:

"In regard to the present president, the synod releases itself this year as it did last year from the stipulation in the synodical constitution that a person may not be elected more than twice in succession to the same office. Proposing Pastor Muehlhaeuser for this office by majority vote is being done with the avowed statement by the members of the synod not because the president covets this burdensome office or because the synod lacks other capable men, but because of his years of experience, his long residency in Wisconsin, his residence in the center of the synodical circle as well as in the metropolis of the state, his extended influential outside contacts, his proven loyalty and his religious zeal as well as other qualities which show him to be the most qualified for this office. However, this action by the synod, namely the just mentioned proposal to suspend the rules as they relate to the election of officers, should set no precedent for the future, but should be considered an exception because of a present need."

In the election which then took place the following were elected by majority vote: Pastor Muehlhaeuser, president; Pastor Streissguth, secretary; and Pastor Conrad, treasurer of the synod.

Then the parish reports of the members of synod were handed in after which it was resolved that these be handed in individually in the future.

Following is the compilation of the parish reports:

[Con.=congregation, Bap.=baptized, Conf.=confirmations, Com.=communicants, F=funerals, PS=parochial schools, SS=Sunday Schools, FM=foreign missions, HM=home missions, T=synod treasury]

Pastors	Con.	Bap.	Conf.	Com.	Fun.	PS	SS	FM	HMST
Muehlhaeuser	1	171	35	285	28	1	1	50.00	17.00\$3.00 713.00*
Bading	2	55	11	191	8	1	1	9.19	-2.00
Huber	1	30	18	180	4	1	1	-	25.002.00
Goldammer	1	115	15	274	9	1	1	9.80	-1.20
Conrad	2	64	13	250	9	1	1	32.00	14.002.00
Reim	4	23	-	180	6	1	-	-	--
Koehler	4	78	14	224	8	1	-	1.00	-2.52

Pastors	Con.	Bap.	Conf.	Com.	Fun.	PS	SS	FM	HMST
Koester	3	25	15	147	2	1	1	-	3,501.80
	31	12	96	2	1	-	-	2.47	?
	6	-	39	-	1	1	2.18	-	?
Sauer	2	45	12	-	3	2	-	2.50	-?
Sprengling	2	26	12	160	5	2	-	-	2.44-
Streissguth	1	113	20	245	25	1	-	5.63	12.00?
Stark	2	22	-	50	6	1	-	-	3.00 ?+
Diehlmann	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--

*\$700 for the purchase of an organ and \$13 for orphans.

+Collected for their own church

Pastors Roell and Fachtmann were accepted as members of the synod and co-members of the ministerium. Also the Evangelical Lutheran St. John congregation in Town of Polk was accepted into synod's membership and its delegate, Mr. Meyer, certified as a voting member.

After a closing prayer by Pastor Roell the synod adjourned to the afternoon.

The afternoon session was opened with a prayer by Pastor Koehler, whereupon the following committees were appointed by the president:

1. Examination Committee No. 1: Pastors Diehlmann, Fachtmann and Goldammer
2. Examination Committee No. 2: Bading, Huber, Sauer
3. Auditing Committee: Koestler, Sprengling, Dube
4. Concerning the congregation at Watertown: Koehler, Reim, Hamm
5. Concerning the congregation at Granville: Sauer, Konrad, Goldammer, Dube

The auditing committee gave its report on the figures as presented by the treasurer; the committee found the records to be in good order and the amount in the treasury to be \$72.18. The new treasurer reported that the amount of this year's synodical collection was \$23.54. The rest of the afternoon was spent on serious discussion of the current annual report as presented by the president, in which most of the pastors and some of the delegates participated. Pastor Streissguth was then asked to close the session with prayer.

In the pastoral session which followed the detailed account of the congregation near Watertown [St. Matthew, Lebanon] was discussed in order to come to a definite conclusion about the matter.

Then a report about several candidates for the pastoral office was given. And finally the statement detailed below was drawn up in order to be read aloud publicly in the next synodical session. The evening sermon by Pastor Fachtmann was based on Isaiah 62:1 and 2.

Session, Tuesday, June 1

The president read Psalm 118, Pastor Reim spoke the prayer. After this the statement drawn up by the ministerium on the previous day was adopted by resolution:

"Dear Friends! Since, in our synodical session yesterday because of the synodical report of our president, a lengthy discussion took place about the position which we as a synod hold in regard to our confession and to our position with church bodies that hold other beliefs, we consider it our responsibility to present to you briefly, precisely and conclusively our confessional stand: we base our confession on the *Unaltered Augsburg Confession* with voice and heart; we want to teach and act accordingly in our congregations with the same exactness as the said *Augsburg Confession* itself teaches."

Mr. Tuchmann, a delegate from the Burlington congregation, was presented to the synod.

The Evangelical Lutheran St. Paul congregation of Lomira and the Evangelical Lutheran (see below) Emanuel congregation of Theresa were accepted into synod membership under the condition that the congregational resolutions to join the synod be subsequently sent to the president.

In reference to the request directed to the synod by the St. John congregation in and near Burlington for acceptance into synod membership and for the sending of a preacher to them, it was resolved that the synod is wholeheartedly supportive of the congregation, and that it expresses its thanks for their confidence placed in our synod.

Thereupon the resolution was passed that in the future only such congregations will be accepted into synod membership which with their request for acceptance into membership hand over to the synod their adopted congregational constitution.

In reference to the relationship of a congregation to our synod, and vice versa, the resolutions adopted last year concerning this matter are again being published here:

1. Stipulations for new congregations applying for synod membership:

a) Each congregation that wishes to join our synod must accept the confessional books of the Lutheran Church, above all the *Unaltered Augsburg Confession* and Luther's *Small Catechism*, the latter to be used as the instruction book for the youth.

b) Such a congregation is bound according to God's Word to maintain discipline and good order in its midst. The preacher, because of his pastoral office, is the chairman of the church council and must together with the council take part in all congregational meetings.

c) In cases of disruptive disputes in which congregation members are involved in disagreements with each other, or a congregation member and the pastor, and a satisfactory solution cannot be reached, the congregation may bring the matter up before the synod, which in turn through its president or a special committee will investigate the matter in the congregation on location, and with God's help and counseling restore peace. If the congregation, provided the parties in contention are in agreement, would seek a ruling from the synod, the synod would conduct a conscientious and impartial investigation for the purpose of doing everything that is necessary to bring about unity for the well-being of the congregation.

d) If the congregation is without a preacher, it is obligated either to call a preacher who has been ordained according to church statute and is prepared to join our synod, or to turn to the synod for a preacher. However, the congregation maintains the right to elect and call the synod recommended preacher or to reject the synod's proposal.

e) Finally, the congregation is obligated to send a delegate to the annual synod convention together with a freewill offering for the synodical treasury.

2. Stipulations of the synod to the members of the synodical body:

a) The synod assumes the responsibility to care for its member congregations so that as soon as possible they are supplied with a preacher, and as long as they are vacant, they will be served with the preaching of the gospel and with the holy sacraments.

b) The synod is merely a counseling body when it comes to the self-governing of each congregation. No resolution of the synod, if it imposes anything upon the individual congregation, is binding on the congregation as a synodical resolution. Such a resolution can have binding power only if the individual congregation of its own free will accepts and ratifies it by means of a formal congregational resolution. If a congregation finds the resolution not in agreement with God's Word, or finds that it has no relevancy, the congregation has the right to disregard the resolution or even to reject it.

After the committee presented its report about the matter of the Evangelical Lutheran St. Matthew congregation in Town Lebanon, Pastor Bading, by synodical resolution, was asked to give a brief impartial account of the matter, keeping in mind all of the documents on hand. This took place with added discussion of the individual points by our president and by the delegates of the congregation who were present. This was followed by a more thorough discussion of the subject, which then was followed by a second reading of the committee report, after which the following sections of the report were accepted by the synod:

1. Since the Evangelical Lutheran St. Matthew congregation in Town Lebanon was being compelled to practice private confession, contrary to God's Word, to the clear and precise statements in the *Augsburg Confession* as well as to their own consciences, it was their undisputed right to protest the placing of such a yoke upon them.

2. Since this protest was not recognized by this particular preacher, and since, in addition to that, a portion of the congregation according to the documents on hand was given unchristian treatment, it was the duty of the ministerium of the Missouri Synod to listen to their repeated requests and to take care of the matter in a Christian manner, which was not done.

3. Since this congregation's request to the ministerium for an investigation was not acted upon by the district president nor by the synodical president, the rights of the congregation in its complaint against Pastor Geyer were not duly recognized. We therefore do not hold the congregation obligated to remain with its present synod, but it can turn to such a synod which holds the same articles of faith which it holds.

4. In the same manner, whatever was improperly done by the congregation in the course of these proceedings does not receive our approval, and we urge confession of the same and a seeking of forgiveness from God.

The work done by Pastor Bading in this case was given synod approval. Pastor Diehlmann closed the session with prayer.

The ministerial session which followed was opened with a prayer by Pastor Huber. Pastor Conrad was absent. The examination committee gave its report on the examination of Candidate Schwanz. It stated that Candidate Schwanz should first of all be assigned to the Northwest Conference so that after a period of a year and a thorough examination it can with a better judgment eventually recommend and support his application for ordination.

Pastor Sauer was given a leave of absence by the synod because of emergency family matters. Pastor Reim was appointed to fill his place on the examination committee. Mr. Lueck was presented to the ministerium as a candidate desiring to study theology.

Afternoon session, Tuesday, June 1

Pastor Stark gave the opening prayer. In reference to the Evangelical Lutheran congregation in Granville which previously had been a member of our synod and which under its present pastor, Mr. Buchren, *de facto* left our synod, the following was resolved: to publicly express the regret that Pastor Buehren forced himself upon the congregation in a dishonorable and sinister manner, and with a variety of machinations caused the congregation to separate itself from its synodical membership in order to lead it into the Old School Presbyterian Church.

In respect to the joining of our synod by the Immanuel congregation of Theresa it was resolved: since the synod at the earlier acceptance of said congregation was unaware of the fact that a part of the congregation was excluded by congregational

resolution from joining the synod, the synod declares that the resolution to accept the congregation into synod membership be amended with the requirement that the congregation's resolution which disagrees with the church's constitution be invalidated, otherwise the joining which has already taken place will be voided.

Pastor Stark was instructed to write a letter and send it to said Immanuel congregation. Further action is to be turned over to the Northwest Conference. Pastor Fachtmann gave an oral report of his mission journey stating that he found a great number of neglected members of the Lutheran church in and around Horicon, Beaver Dam, Mayville, etc. These people are willing to be served by our synod either temporarily or permanently. Pastor Fachtmann was asked to devote time for serving the area on various Sundays in the future. Mr. Ziem augmented the report with corroborating information.

The committee which was instructed a year ago to draw up a standard form for congregational constitutions which would be recommended for newly founded congregations presented its proposed congregational constitution. After the same was read, Pastor Sprengling closed the afternoon session with prayer.

In the ministerial session on Tuesday evening Pastors Streissguth and Goldammer reported on the pros and cons of Candidate Sieker's abilities; likewise Pastor Bading gave a report about Candidate Bodemer, who is ready and willing to undertake further studies for an indefinite period of time. Pastor Conrad reported about Candidate Seger. All three candidates desire to prepare themselves for the preaching ministry, as did also Mr. Fack, about whom Pastors Muehlhaeuser and Roell gave reports. All four were then referred to the examination committee for further consultation and examination. Pastor Fachtmann was instructed to share with Mr. Lueck the opinions of the ministerium about the qualifications of his son for the preaching ministry. Pastor Bading closed the session with prayer. In the evening Pastor Koester preached on Psalm 1.

Wednesday, June 2

The morning session was opened with a hymn and a reading from John 17. The prayer was given by Pastor Goldammer. After the minutes were read Pastor Binner was inducted as an advisory delegate.

Pastor Goldammer then presented the necessity of a travelling preaching [*Reiseprediger*] in a resolution. This was supported by Pastors Koehler, Sprengling and others with reports about the many scattered Lutheran congregations. The matter was then discussed with the following three points in mind: would such an undertaking be the will of God; would the synod have a qualified man for this work; and finally would there be available the required finances for such an undertaking, and from what should such be taken? The first question the Synod felt had to be answered with a "yes" because of the need. About the other two points Pastor Binner gave an informational report, citing the experiences of the *Kirchen-Verein des Westens* [an Evangelical Church body]. Further discussion was transferred to the ministerial session. The synod resolved that the current secretary of the synod, Pastor Streissguth, be given proof of identity and references for the Lutheran church magistrates and Mission Institutions of Germany in order that he might take the necessary steps for our local congregations.

After this discussion of the congregational constitution begun yesterday was continued paragraph by paragraph.

Pastor Koester was excused to go home for a funeral. Pastor Conrad closed the morning session with prayer.

The ministerial session was opened with a prayer by Pastor Roell. Examination committee No. 2 gave its report on the examinations of Messrs. Sieker, Bodemer, Fack and Steger. The result was the following:

1. All of the examinees possess a satisfactory knowledge of the history and doctrines of God's kingdom as recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and they in common possess a better than average elementary knowledge of insight and judgments. For this the committee can announce a favorable judgment.

2. The above named are equipped with devoutness and with many fine gifts for the preaching ministry. In addition they have manifested a sincere intention to conduct themselves in accordance with their Christian knowledge.

3. We do not hesitate to recommend continued study for the above named, and to offer them all the ways and means at our disposal.

In regard to the report concerning the examination of Candidate Schwanz it was finally established that Mr. Schwanz be assigned to the Northwest Conference for brotherly counseling and supervision, that he attend the monthly conference sessions, and that he at each session present a sermon written by himself, that he be directed to write out these sermons beforehand after having diligently prepared them, and then to memorize them. Furthermore, if, after the stipulated one year has expired, the Northwest Conference is convinced that he is qualified, the Conference with the consent of our president and by his direction can ordain him.

Pastor Roell was given permission to leave because of illness in his family. The session was closed by Pastor Stark.

Afternoon session, June 2

After the opening prayer the discussion of the congregational constitution continued. The session was adjourned with a closing prayer by Pastor Stark.

After the ministerial session was opened with prayer by Pastor Koehler it was resolved that Student Fack be sent to the pastor-seminary at Gettysburg—when and how to be determined by the synod president.

The resolution was passed that the organization of two conferences within the synod be recognized by the synod with its sincere blessing. One of these is named the Northwest and the other the Southern. Also that the resolution of the Southern Conference be adopted by the ministerium to ask the president to write a history of the synod from its inception up to the present time, and that the synodical secretary keep it updated by adding to it annually.

It was further resolved that it be the obligation of the pastors of synod to write an account of the history of their respective congregations from their inception, that it be written on the basis of five year periods, and that it be handed into the synodical secretary.

Pastor Huber was asked to draw up a serviceable order of business form by the next session of the Southern Conference.

The closing prayer was given by Pastor Sprengling. Pastor Goldammer preached on Jude verses 20 and 21 in the evening.

Thursday morning, June 3

The morning session began with a hymn and a spoken prayer by Pastor Steissguth. The following resolutions were adopted:

1. that 200 copies of the synodical proceedings be printed, financed from the synod treasury (in addition to the adopted congregational constitution contained therein; likewise 100 copies of the congregational constitution be printed.)

2. that the synodical proceedings and the congregational constitutions be sold for 10 cents apiece, the proceeds going to the synod treasury.

3. that the synod recognize with thanks the invitation of Immanuel congregation to hold the next convention in their church, but cannot accept the invitation until the

congregation fulfills the requirements of the synodical resolution pertaining to this congregation.

The place for the next year's convention was left to the decision of the president. The discussion of the church [formerly referred to as the congregational] constitution was continued. The session was closed with a prayer by Pastor Koester.

In the ministerial session that followed the resolution was adopted that Prof. Dr. Schaefer of Gettysburg be asked to give special supervision to our students sent there and to send us a report of the same.

After a sincere and at the same time heartfelt discussion over the present relationship of members of the ministerium towards one another Pastor Diehlmann took leave with the synod's approval.

Afternoon session, Thursday, June 3

The session opened with the singing of *A Mighty Fortress* and a prayer by Pastor Stark. The discussion of the church constitution was continued and finally with God's help completed. It is attached as an appendix.

Before the close the Southern Conference was instructed to undertake a revision of the synod's constitution for next year. This was followed by the adjournment of the convention to Trinity Sunday, 1859. Pastor Reim in the name of all closed the session with prayer.

Finally we still have the pleasant duty to express to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Pennsylvania our sincere thanks for the support of \$300.00 submitted us this past year. Indeed, the weaker our own financial means were so much the more we must thank the Lord of the church for turning our Pennsylvania brothers toward us.

Since Pastor Streissguth, the current secretary of synod, deemed it necessary to travel to Germany, I was selected secretary *pro tempore* until he returns.

I certify these minutes to be correct.

Theresa

John Bading

Puerto Rico Beginnings

by Roger J. Sprain

The Puerto Rican Mission Field was not the first mission of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod to Latin-Americans. I especially begin this way because we should recognize that Pastor Venus Winter shared the Gospel faithfully with the Latinos in Tucson, Arizona beginning in 1949-1950. He was a student of the language, highly complimented by many Latinos for his excellence. But I wish to mention him because he so well stressed Law and Gospel. Likewise he was our mentor helping us with our Spanish and also sharing with us his many years of experience in the work. We will be speaking of him again.

During January and February of 1963 Pastor H.C. Nitz of Waterloo, Wisconsin made a survey of the island of Puerto Rico. The chief reason for this survey was our synod wanted to do mission work in Latin America, especially South America. But it was decided that a stepping stone to South America might be advisable. Mexico was closed to foreign clergy. Puerto Rico presented an interesting alternative. Pastor Nitz noted that there are tens of thousands of "other sheep" among nearly three million Puerto Ricans whom the Lord included in his command "Go!" and of whom he said "Them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice" (John 10:16). He added that thousands of Puerto Ricans are being ensnared by a score or more of religions [falsely so called], and that there are a considerable number of tourists and military personnel who are Lutheran and who are not being served. (*Northwestern Lutheran*, April 7, 1963; hereafter NWL) This favorable report led to the decision to begin mission work in Puerto Rico. Pastor Edgar Hoenecke summed up his impression with the thought that the synod had both the opportunity and obligation to share our sound Christian position and influence.

It was decided to send a two man team to the island to carry out the Gospel work using the Christian Missioner Corps principle. The Christian Missioner Corps program came into being "because of limited resources in men and money for our missions it was necessary to devise a way of doing [mission] work which would conserve these while the scope of our missionary endeavor was being expanded." (NWL 6/28/64:205) "At present it works this way: Two pastors are sent into a field with instructions to prepare themselves thoroughly in the language and customs of the people. After a year of such preparation they are expected to build a church indigenously with the Christians gained, out of the resources of the area and without material support from the Synod. Charged with early training of elders to take full charge of the work, they are to shift their efforts to a new area, thus gradually building up a national church." (NWL 6/28/64:205)

I have several comments about this plan. All plans are ideal, or should be so drawn up that all anticipated bugs are removed. Even when that is done, putting such plans into action reveals practical difficulties. The biggest problem that arises with this plan is a catch 22 situation. Your best leaders, those whom you can train to become "elders", live in better areas of the island. But these same men, because of their background will want something concrete and positive to demonstrate that this church is there to stay. Yet in those places are found the highest costs to operate a church or congregation. ...This plan might work better elsewhere than with Latin Americans. ...But we made many, many mistakes which doomed this plan as ever being successful quickly. We

began working among the people with low resources. ...Finally, I am a firm believer in better training for all missionaries both for overseas work and for the United States.

In 1963, Pastor Rupert Eggert received the call to be the first missionary to Puerto Rico. After accepting the call Pastor Eggert enrolled in a Berlitz Spanish course in Miami. On March 15, 1964, Pastor Eggert was commissioned in a service at Ocean Drive Ev. Lutheran Church in Pompano Beach, Florida. One of the pastors present, who had been a student at Northwestern when "Rupe" was a tutor, said it gave him a great pleasure to exile to a small Caribbean island the man who had campused him (and me) several times for sneaking out without a "per." The same man later commiserated with me for having to work with our former nemesis. Pastor Eggert had some cross-cultural exposure and that together with his years of maturity and experience made him a fine leader for the team. His leadership would be and was important in setting up the mission. Language study, investigation of the island, radio work, housing, education for the children, communication, transportation, and many other matters fell upon his shoulders. It was nice to have someone on the island when we arrived. Pastor Eggert, his wife Anne, and their two sons, Randolph who was four and Michael who was five months, moved to the island shortly after his commissioning.

In late May of 1964 I received the call to serve with Pastor Eggert as the second man on the team. With my wife Ruth I had been studying Spanish in Douglas, Arizona where I was serving a dual parish. I had started studying Spanish because Douglas was about 60 to 65% Mexican American. For many of these Spanish was the first language. I was hoping to learn Spanish that we might better reach out to the community even using Pastor Venus Winter's radio tapes from Tucson. One of my classmates squealed about our activity, although I know the Lord didn't need that to know it.

Upon accepting the call we had to sell all our goods. We were allowed to take along only the very basics. A few precious items, if we had any, were to be put into storage. When we were ready to leave Douglas we had reduced our worldly goods to a trunk four feet by three feet by two feet, a round shipping barrel, four suitcases, and two boxes. It sure didn't seem like much.

Ruth and I were to be guinea pigs. We were going to Mexico to study Spanish for six weeks. We left our three children, John just about three years old, and our twin daughters, Rebecca and Deborah about one and one half years old, with my wife's folks in Appleton, WI. We went to Saltillo, Mexico. It was a very fine experience, but it was not long enough. Just about the time we were getting into the language the six weeks were up. (Today we send missionary families for six months.) But we recommend that such language study be continued.

One important factor that we should keep in mind is that the language training was insufficient. This later on would affect the work on the island in several ways.

After returning to Appleton for a brief vacation and a renewing of our relationship with our children who seemed hardly to know us anymore, we left for the island in September.

Arriving on the island in the afternoon, landing in San Juan, we had to make our first adjustment. The high humidity and heat were oppressive. In addition there was, bedlam—activity with people, more people, and more people. It was going to be different.

Rupe had obtained a nice little house for us with a three month lease, which he was lucky to get. He had a rental Volkswagen beetle or bug which we would share with them until more permanent transportation could be obtained. I don't remember how all

of us got to the house from the airport. Our trunk and barrel had not yet arrived on the island and wouldn't for a couple of weeks. It was an adventure.

As one looks back on it, one realizes that a lot happened quickly even though it may not have seemed so at the time. Rupe had lined up a language teacher whom we both used. Much time would be dedicated to language study. One problem we had in learning the language was the fact that the Puerto Ricans wanted to speak English with us. Puerto Rico is associated with the USA. Being USA citizens they can freely come and go to the mainland. So to be bilingual is a huge advantage especially for employment. Thus they sought to improve their English while we wanted them to speak Spanish with us.

We had to buy furniture. We looked for a more permanent house. We had to obtain cars. One problem that surfaced early and plagued us for a while was that neither one of us could not get a phone. We solved this by buying and assembling citizens band radio sets over which we communicated daily at prescribed times.

After we had begun our language studies anew we also wanted to begin surveying the island. The island is roughly 100 miles long and 40 to 45 miles wide, quite rectangular in shape. There is a coastal plain which surrounds most of the island. This plain runs from the seashore a short distance inland, then meets first the rising foothills, then sweeps up the mountains rapidly to a maximum height of 3,000 feet. The whole interior of the island is hilly with only small valleys breaking up this domination. At the time we began the work in 1964—it continued for another ten years—most of the roads were narrow, curvy, and not always well paved. In addition there were way too many cars for the roads, and major traffic jams and taking a long time to get any place were a way of life. Taking this into account, and after traveling to the four corners of the island we decided to divide the island up into three sections. Drawing a line on the map from north to south, from San Juan to Ponce, we eliminated the western half of the island, or better said, we labeled it C. We took the eastern half and divided it into two sections drawing a line from west to east, along a line from Caguas to Humacao thus forming more or less northern and southern sections. The northern we labeled A and the southern B. We said we would thoroughly survey these areas and see where we should carry out the work. We were not going to work in the San Juan area because the LCA was active in that area with about seven or eight congregations. (Besides we were more or less told not to work that area.) I believe that what we did up to this point was well done and a strategy that I have repeated again in other fields.

We began the survey by driving to the various areas and cities in the part marked A on our maps. We particularly noted what religious work was being done. We practiced our Spanish. We talked to many people. It was obvious that the Pentecostals were particularly present. Of the cities in the area we felt that Humacao held the most promise. There was not a great deal of protestant religious activity there. We learned that it was probably true that various groups had tried but had not had a great deal of success.

It was about this time that we began to work in earnest on a religious broadcast. We felt that biblical knowledge was poor and thus our programs ought to convey many of the simple Bible stories and their applications to the people. With a musical introduction provided in Spanish by the DMLC choir and the choir from the Chapel of the Air program, our program, *ASIDICE LA BIBLIA*, consisted of telling a Bible story with its application, and concluding with a prayer and an offer of a free Bible to anyone who wrote. The program was begun on the Humacao radio station to cover that area. We will never know until heaven the total results of those broadcasts. We did receive some contacts and attempted to follow up on them. These resulted in the beginning

eventually of a Bible class or two in the home. But in the Humacao area there were no great lasting results. But another advantage was that in our surveys, when we went out and talked to the people, we could ask if they had heard the program. If not, we pointed it out to them and encouraged them to listen. For others who heard the program it provided us with a bit of an introduction to the people and removed the total lack of being known as a legitimate religion. You have to remember, that outside of the San Juan area the name Lutheran was not known, or if it was, in one or two instances, it did not have a good reputation since the Catholic Church had taught the people that we were descendants of a scoundrel.

Having thoroughly scouted area A on the map over the period of a couple of months we decided to go on to area B, the southeastern quadrant of the island. We basically followed the same procedure. In this area the city we felt had the best potential was Guayama, which lies almost due south of San Juan on the southern coast. There was a Methodist church there located even on the plaza, but it was not of great size. There were some Pentecostals around but not any church of any size in the city. In fact, the Pentecostals were still in the amoeba stage, splitting apart and starting other small groups in small sheds and carpports.

Having decided on these two cities, Humacao and Guayama, we decided to do extensive canvassing in both cities. At this time we were still learning the culture and looking for prospects with whom we might begin the work. I recall one humorous story while doing this canvassing. A little old lady had a small old building, about half the size of one of our garages. It sat right along the sidewalk next to a small home. In this building with the wood shutters swung open she rolled cigars out of tobacco leaves. (Puerto Rico produces little tobacco and coffee but what is produced is considered some of the finest in the world.) But she not only rolled these little cigars she also smoked them. One was in her mouth, half smoked, which she removed from her mouth as we approached. She sort of held it behind her back. When she learned that we were pastors, I saw the little butt make a small arc through the air as she flicked it out the side window. Considering the distance, and it was behind the back, it sailed perfectly through the side window. It was quite a shot.



The WELS church in Guayama - 1989

During this period of canvassing we began services in the San Juan area. The services consisted of a ten minute sermon in Spanish and another in English plus a brief liturgy also in Spanish and English. Rupe and I switched the Spanish and English each week. We had a mixture of Anglos and Puerto Ricans present and therefore the dual nature. At this time the Spanish service portion was more of a practice for us as we needed work in using it in public services. I remember my first sermon theme in Spanish was "God Is Love." And I really stuck to the basics. It was still a tough task both writing and delivering it. This was possibly true because not only did a lot of Puerto Ricans speak English to us, we also spoke English in our home, at least with the kids present because we, thinking our children would live in the States, wanted them to know their mother tongue. I remember when we first arrived on the island, we purchased a small black and white T.V. which would serve us years until it was stolen in Colombia that our son John came to us crying. We couldn't understand why because he had been with his sisters in the living room. He said, "Even Yogi Bear speaks Spanish." Actually the children learned Spanish better and faster than we did but they had their heartaches too. It was not long before a few Puerto Ricans began to attend these services, especially our neighbors across the street with whom we became very good friends.

After canvassing the two cities, I don't remember anymore the reason why, we decided to split up the team, having one man stay in the San Juan area, serving the very few people we had there, and then the work in the Humacao area also. The other man was to move to Guayama. Neither Rupe nor I wanted to say who should do what. We asked the Executive Committee for Latin America, who was in agreement with the idea to split up, to make the decision. I think we were thinking that Rupe and his family would move to Guayama and the Sprain family would stay in San Juan, most particularly because most of the contacts were in the Sprain neighborhood. The Executive Committee decided that the Sprains should move to Guayama and that is what happened.

At this time Phillipps 66 was building a refinery and a nylon plant in the sugar cane fields just outside of Guayama, so housing was tight. The only house we could get had rooms so small I had to change the doors to open out because they wouldn't open in with our humble furniture inside. The house was also already occupied with giant cockroaches that could fly or leap about six feet. The cupboard under the sink had to be replaced because of rot. This was the home of the small cockroaches who were not happy we were driving them out. Later on my wife told me that her father, who helped me replace the cupboard, had said to her that he never thought one of his daughters would have to live in a house like that. The Lord was good, we were in it only a year I think.

The house was so small I had to have an office outside the home. I found one at a reasonable cost in a nice building above the local supermarket. Behind this building was a large empty field about the size of a large city block. Beyond this field some 200 yards away lay the slum area of Guayama. Little did I know when I first saw the slum that this middle class white kid would soon be the *padre* to many of the people.

Somehow I got to know a few of the kids from the slum area called Gran Stan Bran. If I remember correctly I went out to practice Spanish with them once in a while when I saw them coming to the store. I know I wanted to practice my Spanish more. Well it came about that I suggested that we play some baseball. I had in mind that after baseball we would also study some Bible stories. I brought over my mower, and they brought some hand sickles. We soon carved out a little playing field. I had to bring the ball and bat because they were poor, very poor. The second Saturday after playing ball,

I said, "Would you like to get some refreshments?" So we got some soda pop and sat under a big tree. I asked them if they knew anything about the Bible, such as, do you know how this tree came to be. I told them the story of creation. In preparation for this event I had run off some pictures of the creation story to color. I also had bought some crayons. They found old cardboard from behind the supermarket and after the story they had quite a time drawing. These were ten and twelve year olds. I admit my Spanish still needed some work. But we decided to do it again the next week. And the week after that. We were getting more and more ballplayers and Sunday School kids. My Spanish took off—in fact, an adult male from Gran Stan even noted how much my Spanish had improved. (But we should note one point here, I had departed from the basic Christian Missioner Corp Plan. The kids were not adult leaders who could be trained quickly.)

On the fifth Saturday while we were gathered under the tree, a little lady came walking out to where I was with the kids. I thought, oh no, she is going to tell me to go away and not bother the children. But to my surprise the conversation went something like this. "What are you doing here?" "I play baseball with the kids and then we study the Bible. Look here, we are studying the story of Adam and Eve." I showed her the picture the children were coloring. "Humph, (which I later learned was one of her favorite expressions) next week you come to my house. You and the children. You can come there and have the class." What a pleasant surprise. Well, I had a leader, a little old lady, in a slum area.

On the Saturdays after that we would have class at her house. She left the people in the area know, and soon we had an average attendance in the twenties. It wasn't long before *Doña Josefa* had people from other small rural slums stopping by on Saturdays. Almost everyone would ask me to come to their area. Within a month or two I had more than I could handle. I would always try to investigate new areas to see if we could somehow bring people together. Often it was impossible because they didn't have funds and we were trying to be careful about the money we would spend, not launching programs that the local churches could not later pick up. In Gran Stan Bran I visited all the homes, totalling about 50. The social rejects were there, from the non-educated to the cripple, from syphilis, from alcoholics—both men and women—to the family castoff. They surely needed the Lord and His Word and the Lord had sent me.

Because they couldn't read and write (they also did not have electricity or plumbing) I decided not just to tell the Word but also to show it. So I purchased filmstrips, a battery operated projector, portable screen, and a battery. For the next year I had the weekly project of matching the Spanish Bible to the filmstrip. The filmstrips were a hit. Fighting off mosquitos, we would have as many as 50 people for the Wednesday showings. Naturally there was always reviews and application afterwards.

After about a year, *Doña Josefa* one day said to me, "Pastor, do you mean to tell us that to be saved, to go to heaven, all we have to do is believe in Jesus, that He is our full Savior?" And of course I said, "Yes, that is what I have been teaching you since the beginning. Look at the Bible story I was going to read to you today." We read the story and she said, "Humph," shaking her head yes. Then she said to me in her now usual commanding tone like she was my mother and I was her son, "Get me a picture of my Savior Jesus. I need a picture of my Savior Jesus." Well, of course, I got her one. After that every time I would stop by to visit her she would say, *Un momento* pastor, and before I could read to her she would run into her bedroom to get the picture of Jesus and hold it to her breast as she heard God's Word.

I would like to quickly interject here before continuing with the Guayama story that Pastor Eggert was faithfully working the Humacao area. The work in San Juan sort of dried up as I recall. But in Humacao there were several households in which Rupe worked. However, he worked with more adults than I did at first. And I almost think his work was more difficult because of the area. Even to this day we have not had a great deal of success there numerically, though there were from the beginning a few whom Pastor Eggert led through the Scriptures in instructions. He also surveyed Las Piedras, which is a little west of Humacao, and had a family or two there. He also handled a great deal of the military base work on the western, northern and eastern coasts. Finally Rupe had to take care of the administration work which is never just a few items. Ralph Martens, who would serve for 19 years in Puerto Rico and whom the Lord would bless with taking our humble beginnings and through the Word causing them to grow mightily, took Rupe's place about a year after Rupe left.

In Gran Stan we built our first chapel. We bought an old building, which had served as a one room house not far from *Doña Josefa's*, for \$200. (Remember this was a slum.) It would seat about 20-25 people. The old dried out wood soaked up quite a bit of paint. We made rustic crude benches because that is all we were capable of doing. We had a tiny altar in one corner. Here we met on Sundays. And it was from this chapel that we buried *Doña Josefa*. The church and yard were packed for her funeral. We walked carrying the casket to the cemetery. This is one person I want to see in heaven.

There is one other very interesting story that came out of the Gran Stan Bran area. A lady, an alcoholic in her late forties lived here. I had seen her a few times, even as early as 9:00 in the morning, asking for money which I did not give to her because she wanted to buy rum. One day the people reported to me that she was very sick and was going to die. They thought I should visit her, so I went to see her. She lived in a small shack on short posts, the building being about 10 by 12 feet. When I stepped into the place I immediately stepped out again because the smell of urine and vomit was overwhelming. I stood in the doorway which permitted me a little fresh air. The lady lay on a very soiled and torn mattress with no sheets. Besides the bed on the floor were a bucket partially filled with vomit and a water pitcher and glass. All her drinking had ruined her insides. But she was sober and so I could speak to her. I used the Law and told her how she had utterly wasted her life and because of that she was damned. But I also told her that in spite of all her sins, Jesus had died for her too. I regularly visited her, teaching her the basics of Christianity for the next three weeks. Then for some reason, I did not go the next week, but returned again the following week. When I returned, she really scolded me for not having come the previous week. That scolding was one that made me very happy. I knew that she was desperately clinging to the Lord as her only hope. And she died with only that hope, the only hope we also have.

One of the places we were led to from Gran Stan Bran was a place called Las Mareas. It was about a three to four block long row of houses on one side of a dirt road, all facing the ocean about 200 yards away. Again the work was mostly with children, with one or two entire families. Here too, some of these children would later grow up and become leaders in the work.

The main reason for mentioning this group is that they later would be relocated with other people from scattered isolated areas in a new housing development called Barrancas. This was the Lord's hand working to bring together several of our people into one area. This gave us a solid core for forming our first permanent congregation.

It is in Barrancas that we purchased a large lot from the government for \$1.00 (US) and we built a permanent chapel. For this chapel the people gathered their own sand

and gravel, made their own blocks and built the chapel. It was a year's work! And the chapel of concrete, concrete block and steel, seated 100 people. On dedication Sunday there was a standing room crowd, about 130. Many of the local people came out of curiosity. But afterwards we averaged over 30 and that steadily grew.

Before the chapel had been completed, Pastor Rupert Eggert had left, being called to serve as Friendly Counselor to the Mexican field. We began to use vicars after he left. If my memory serves me well, the first was Carl Leyrer, followed by Philipp Lehmann and then others.

The number of members in Puerto Rico grew slowly. Yet there was always so much to do. The number of persons with whom we talked about Jesus is unknown, but it is a large number, and there was an unending opportunity. The fruits of the work are both visible and invisible. But I hope that you too might have the opportunity to visit some of our vibrant congregations that exist on the island today. You, with us, will thank the Lord for these blessings!



*The WELS church in Guayama
The detail is a Christmas display.*

Three Vignettes of My Youth

Mildred O. Meyer

School Days

School days. Nostalgia floods over me as I recall those glorious, fun-filled challenging grade school days.

The school I remember so fondly was one room in the basement of our church. A large pot-bellied stove was in the middle of the room. Boys sat on one side, girls on the other. Despite this separation of the sexes, we were allowed to play together on the playground. Of course, some correct young ladies felt those of us who played ball with the boys were a disgrace to womankind. This, however, did not deter my friend Alvina and me.

A student named Heinrich built the fires in the pot-bellied stove. Heinrich took great pride in being the keeper of the fires. It was a self-assigned task which he relished. Even on the coldest of mornings he arrived at school long before anyone else.

Our teacher sat on a raised platform in the front of the room. From this vantage point he saw all that went on. The students sat in double desks. It was permissible to help one another, as long as we kept our voices subdued. There were few teaching aids, and no special programs for the exceptional student.

We had classes rather than grades. If I read well, I was in an upper class for that subject. If I had trouble with math (arithmetic we called it), I found myself in a lower group. There was a recitation bench beneath the teacher's dais where we assembled for our various classes.

Corporal punishment was allowed in those days. A door in the back of the classroom led to a woodshed. I remember our teacher taking a child into that dreadful room only once. The scoundrel was my own brother. When we reported the incident at home, he received further punishment.

One day a student from the local high school appeared at the edge of our playground. In a small town like ours news spread rapidly. Most of us were aware that Chuck had been expelled from school for a week. Lonely Chuck wanted to join in our play. He offered to make "Prisoner's Base" more exciting. He would umpire our ball games.

He received a resounding no. We had no sympathy for the miscreant. The cause of the punishment was unknown to us. We did know, however, that the teachers and school boards were just. We were too simple minded to realize the guilty had his rights. Leave that to a later generation of judges and lawyers.

There were no school buses. Weather permitting, the students walked home. No one seemed concerned about the two or three miles. When the winter snows fell and the temperatures dropped, a horse drawn sled drew up to the school. The children would scramble in and sit on bales of hay and wrap themselves in heavy robes. It looked like a lot of fun. Living in town, I felt a bit envious.

We had no library, but our school did have a big dictionary and a large globe. When my assignments were completed, I spent much time discovering strange words in the dictionary. That globe took me to the far away places of my storybooks. Tilting the globe a bit, I would be in a land of palm trees and sunshine. When I slanted the globe in another direction, I was transported to a land of eternal snow. There was no end to what that globe could provide for a budding imagination.

Minnesota winters can be very severe. When the mercury dipped below zero, Mother packed lunches for us. We could eat at school rather than walk four blocks home at noon. Most of the children brought their lunches in an emptied syrup or lard pail.

When noon arrived, I took my lunch home and ate it there. I preferred the cold walk home to taking a trip to the outhouses behind the school. I'd rather freeze my nose than another part of my anatomy. At least at home we had indoor plumbing.

Every morning began with a devotion followed by lessons in catechism and Bible history. A good foundation was laid for catechism days ahead when our pastor would take over religion instruction in the upper grades.

We were supposed to have singing every day, but having so many classes that was often impossible. However, the last 15 minutes on Fridays were always devoted to singing. How we loved that! There was a portable organ in our classroom.

We sang hymns, folk songs, and always *America*. How straight we stood and how our voices rang as we sang. We truly believed this beautiful land of ours was the greatest on earth.

Ten years ago I visited my former home town. The church and basement school no longer existed. The area had been transformed into a playground complete with slides, swings, and monkey bars. Across the way stood a large church and beautiful school with many rooms. It was evening as I lingered at the site of our basement school. The playground was deserted.

Deep in reminiscence, I thought I heard voices from long ago. A sweet, almost inaudible sound, gaining volume slowly until the voices rose in a mighty crescendo. Now the words were audible . . . "My country, 'tis of thee." I stood transfixed until the voices subsided. In vain I listened, hoping to recapture the sound. It was gone. Perhaps it had just been the song of the night wind rushing through the treetops.

Circuit Rider's Bride

Rosina was 17 when she met Karl. The petite brunette was assisting her half-sister Sophie serve Sunday dinner. Dr. Leininger, Sophie's husband, had invited his church's guest preacher and a young would-be missionary named Karl Boerneke to share the meal. It soon became evident that Karl found Rosina most interesting.

Although subsequently Rosina told friends she was attracted to Karl because of his devout Christian character, 60 years later she admitted to me, a granddaughter, that Karl's good looks also played a part.

Karl Boerneke had been sent to America by a German mission society. Before accepting a call to a parish, Karl decided to study for a year under the guidance of Pastor Walther, the renowned theologian. Pastor Walther was concerned about the spiritual lot of the many Germans who left their fatherland and were now scattered throughout Wisconsin and Minnesota. Karl was assigned as circuit rider for a large area in Minnesota.

The clapboard house which awaited the newly wedded couple may have seemed very humble to Rosina, who had been working as a maid for a wealthy Chicago family. The parsonage was furnished, sort of. The last man to have served the area left behind whatever he had acquired. Someday when Karl and Rosina would leave, they were expected to do the same. Personal preference played no part.

"I can knit and crochet and make things that will really make this house into a home," thought Rosina, "but that will have to wait until winter. Right now there is work to be done outside."

The yard was a mess. To Rosina's delight, however, there was a bush of purple lilacs. How Rosina loved flowers! The lilac was her inspiration. Yes, a vegetable garden must be cultivated for practical reasons, but there would also be a flower garden. The shabbiness of the little house faded away in dreams of roses, lupine and lily-of-the-valley.

Soon Rosina was on her own. How lonely she must have felt when Karl left to ride on horseback from place to place, seeking out the scattered Christians. He estimated he would be back in four to six weeks. There was much work for Karl. He had sermons to preach in homes, make arrangements for further visits, marriages to perform, baptisms, encouragement, admonitions. Most of the adults had had some Christian instruction in the homeland. Much was forgotten here where there was no church building, no congregation, where life centered on subsistence. Also a Methodist circuit rider had covered the area some time before with resulting confusion.

"It's the children I'm concerned about," Karl confided to Rosina when he returned. "With the parents already so indifferent, what is there left for the children? There are six who should be prepared for confirmation. They are scattered here and there. I cannot possibly spend enough time with each to properly prepare them to partake of the Lord's Supper."

Arrangements were made to house the children in the parsonage. While Karl was gone, Rosina would be their instructor.

"But where will they sleep?" asked Rosina.

"The loft. We'll string up a blanket through the middle. A boys' and a girls' dormitory."

"Surely there'll be shenanigans."

"Not if you are firm from the beginning."

Bible stories, catechism, a hymn or two, meals, laundry! Rosina's head must have spun from the magnitude of it.

"Remember these are children of German settlers. They will pitch in and help with the household and yard chores. They are used to that."

The parents brought the children together with a load of wood, a ham, a crate of live chickens, a barrel of flour—whatever they could afford toward the keep of the children.

Soon Karl was on his way again. Rosina was on her own. Frightened? Of course. But she knew who to go to for comfort and assurance.

There were no shenanigans, possibly because so strict a schedule had to be maintained. Household duties first thing in the morning, then lessons. Daily bread must be baked. That posed a problem until Rosina persuaded one of the older boys to be the baker.

"That's a woman's work," he protested.

When Rosina told him about the bakers in Chicago, the lad was intrigued.

"You mean they get paid money for that?"

"Yes and some get to be quite wealthy."

Now the would be baker asked to be taught to prepare the bread sponge in the evening. He would do a complete job.

Since the children had few reading skills, most of the work had to be done by rote. The telling and discussion of the Bible stories was a real joy for Rosina. At first her students were hesitant but finally overcame their initial shyness.

Sundays were very special days. No lessons! The night before all had to take a bath in the tin laundry tub, and each one had the privacy of the kitchen. Unaccustomed

to such cleanliness, some protested. Surely they would meet their deaths from the resulting coughs and colds. Fortunately, this did not occur.

Sunday morning there was a church service in the parsonage, with Rosina reading a sermon Karl had prepared. Then they joined in singing the hymn they learned the previous week and in reciting the Lord's Prayer. It was abbreviated, but it was a service just the same and just as pleasing to the heavenly Father.

Some of the children were awed by the appearance of the Sunday dinner table. There was a white tablecloth and a plant or flower in the middle of the table. It was kind of strange, but nice just the same. The children felt it good to remember to keep their elbows off the table. Just to make the day even more special there were molasses cookies, and later in the day Rosina would pop corn or make syrup candy. Yes, Sundays were very special.

Evenings after dishes had been washed there was study hour. Gathered around the table the children studied the assigned memory work. Rosina sat in her rocker knitting and helping with strange words. When a child felt he knew his assignment, he would come to Rosina to recite. If satisfactory, there was a word of praise for him. If not, he went back for more study.

When Karl returned, there was an examination. All were praised, both children and teacher.

"That made it all worthwhile," my grandmother confided to me 60 years later.

I doubt Rosina had ever been exposed to a book or article dealing with the duties and responsibilities of a pastor's wife. She was just determined to do her best, to be a faithful helpmeet to Karl. Isn't that what the Lord asks of all? Faithfulness.

Mrs. Beech Changes Things

We walked as a family . . . mother, father and children. This weekly trek to church was a pleasant occasion. Each wore his best attire: father his dress suit, mother a huge hat whose ostrich plume wound around and finally rested on her shoulder; the boys slightly uncomfortable in starched white shirts; the girls giddy with self-admiration in rainbow-hued dresses.

But when we arrived at church, the family unit dissolved. Father joined the group of men who lingered outside discussing weather, crops and the state of the economy. Mother herded her brood into the building where we took our accustomed seats on the left side. The bell tolled. The men and older boys filed in. The male constituent occupied the pews to the right. Nothing strange about that to a seven-year old. It was the custom. Mother might at times murmur the whole business of admonishing fell on her shoulders, but that was as far as it went.

We hadn't heard of the atomic bomb in those faraway days. In fact, any adult with the least bit of schooling knew the atom couldn't be split. But the bomb did fall on our church one sunny morning in May. Mrs. Beech, a newcomer to the community, walked into church and sat on the right side next to her husband. Didn't she know any better? There was a general commotion with quite a bit of whispering and nudging. Mother's face telegraphed "faces front or else."

Didn't Mrs. Beech really know any better? She must be awfully stupid if she didn't catch on. Well, if no one enlightened her, Pastor Koehler surely would. He was really strict as we children found out on the few occasions when our teacher was absent and pastor took charge of our one room school.

I was disappointed. Pastor Koehler (of Trinity, Long Prairie, Minn.) stood up before the altar singing in his beautiful baritone, *Der Herr sei mit euch*. Apparently he

noticed nothing amiss. The congregation responded with a shaky *Und mit seinem Geiste*. All but Mother. She always changed the *seinem* to *deinem*. She had been reared in a parsonage and had to be a bit different than other folks.

Perhaps pastor wasn't aware of Mrs. Beech's breach of etiquette. Maybe he hadn't seen her. But once he got into that tall pulpit to deliver the sermon, he could see everyone, and then he would set Mrs. Beech right.

Well, if Pastor Koehler was aware that something extraordinary had occurred, he certainly didn't show it. He went about delivering the sermon just as always.

Seven-year-olds have big ears. Nothing was said at the dinner table about Mrs. Beech's unprecedented behavior. Later I did gather bits of what was supposed to have been a private conversation.

"If we can worship as a family during our home devotions, why can't we in church?"

Father didn't have much to say to that.

"You could help quiet the children."

Father had even less to say.

Summer rolled by. A few brave souls joined their husbands in worship on the right side of the church. Finally it got to be so common that the whispering and nudging ceased. There were some, however, who never could give up the old custom.

Then one Sunday Father entered the church building with us. He propelled Mother to her accustomed pew, stood aside as we all filed in and then sat down with us on the "left" side of the church. As Pastor Koehler entered the pulpit that Sunday his eyes met mine, those kind, amused looking eyes. If I read his message aright, he was saying, "It's all right, little girl. Families should worship together."

Many changes have taken place in the church since I was seven. There have been new hymnals, changes in the liturgy, new translations of the Bible, greater mission outreach. All changes were accompanied with some protest. One change we will never tolerate. The Word must never be changed. It must be taught and preached in its purity as Pastor Koehler preached it, as my present pastor teaches it. The unchanging, beautiful gospel of God's love for sinful man will always remain the heritage of our Lutheran church. No change there.

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Lutheran Beginnings in Mexico to 1985

Brian L. Dose

Forward

Although Lutherans in Mexico make up only a very small portion of the population, the importance of their story should be obvious. We have our Lord's command to preach his good news to the outermost ends of the earth, and just across the border there are over 60,000,000 people who have very limited opportunities to hear it preached faithfully. Added to the great need and potential in Mexico, Hispanics are predicted to become the largest ethnic majority in the U.S. by the end of this century.

Lutherans in Mexico are also of interest in more general terms. The story of Lutheran mission work there shows the concerns and efforts of mission work everywhere: the battle with government regulations and limitations, the challenges of a new language and culture, the working relationship between expatriate and national. With a knowledge of their story our prayers for them can have faces and names—rejoicing in their successes and pleading for help in their struggles. And as a branch of the church militant, the concerns of our Mexican brothers mirror our concerns. How do we maintain a loving confessional Lutheranism, showing love and loyalty for God's Word as well as love and concern for the universal body of Christ? How do we serve all men in every need and maintain our primary purpose of salvation for his soul?

For the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod the story of our brothers across the border is of special interest. The translation of "WELS" into Spanish is a bit difficult. The most common translation for "well" is *pozo*, which can also mean "deep hole" or "pit." Unfortunately, this latter sense has been reflected on occasion in the attitude that the support we're giving to Mexico hasn't paid off very well. Fortunately this "rat hole" view has not prevailed.

It is this writer's hope that this survey of Lutheranism in Mexico will provide a better background to assess our work there by offering some information on the potential and problems of mission work in Mexico. Also, it is hoped that by looking at the successes and struggles we may see that our work there is not a *pozo* but a *manantial*, truly a source of opportunity to serve, a spring with which we share the Water of life.

I. Institutions and Revolutions: The Mexican Background

The ruling party in Mexico for the past half-century or so has been the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). The apparent contradiction in the terms of this title has actually been attempted in practice as this country, after being torn apart by over 100 years of bloody revolutions, sought peace by institutionalizing the revolutionary spirit. These two contradictions—the conservative, authoritarian institution and the vibrant, restless revolution—coexisted under the same political banner. If this is hard for us to comprehend, it underscores the need to look at the history of religion in Mexico in order better to understand the situation in which Latin Lutheranism finds itself. The forms of Christianity south of the border also show this institutional revolutionary contrast. One of the worst blunders a missionary to Mexico could make would be to assess Mexican Lutheranism on the basis of only his own background.

A Lutheran from the U.S. finds many forms of Mexican Christianity unfamiliar—hardly a surprise. But the same would probably be true of most of his Catholic countrymen, in spite of their common attachment to Rome. If the Reformation had

little effect on Mexican Christians until the 20th Century, neither did the Counter-Reformation and its checks on some of the Roman abuses. Yet the social implications of Vatican II have been embraced here enthusiastically. Through the window thrown open in the early 1960's, the Vatican has felt a chilling wind blowing in from Latin America—liberation theology.

The Catholic Church in Mexico from the beginning has been a revolutionary institution, conservative and authoritarian but incorporating and accommodating the opposition. On the heels of the conquistadors came the Franciscans who brought Rome to the Indians in garb they could recognize.

The friars built a Christian church above the ruins of every pyramid, placed a saint's statue where each minor god had stood, a statue of the Virgin in place of each goddess, and adapted their religion to the Aztec rites: even Communion was recognized by the Aztecs, as symbolic sacrifice such as they already celebrated.¹

Eugene Nida calls the result "Christo-paganism," a complex mixture of faith and superstition.² These pagan-rooted beliefs and practices can be seen in the preoccupation with death, devil figures in church processions and roadside shrines for the restless spirits of auto accident victims.

In the political arena, however, the Mexican Catholic Church has been more institutional and often opposed to revolution. And its relationship with the government is important to our purposes since we must also work under the church/state situation that has developed from over a century of conflict. The highly privileged status Rome enjoyed under Spanish colonial rule was also guaranteed by the constitution of 1923 as the official religion of independent Mexico. The Catholic church was given a third of the new tricolor flag (the white bar symbolizes purity of religion) and retained control of a vast portion of the property and other forms of wealth. The control of the church continued unchallenged until the liberal revolution and the new constitution of 1857 tried to curtail her power by ordering a divestment of property not devoted to religious functions, prohibiting her civil immunity, establishing secular education, and especially in declaring religious freedom. These terms were mostly ignored, as the church regained control during Maximilian's brief reign and retained it through Diaz's dictatorship (1876-1911). Yet it was during this period that American protestant missionaries began activity south of the border.

After another revolution the new, and current, constitution of 1917 was more strongly anticlerical. Even church buildings became state property, no religious schools were permitted and all expatriate clergy were forbidden. Again these measures went unenforced, but fearing that someday they would be, the Roman Church publicly protested in 1926. President Calles answered this challenge with strict enforcement, and a bloody three-year rebellion was ignited between the government and Catholic guerilla bands called *cristeros*.

The church/state relationship was relatively calm with the Catholic Church being content with the return of some of her privileges (in practice if not officially) and the government apparently satisfied in knowing the legal restraints still being there should it choose to use them. American Protestants are often puzzled by this arrangement under which they also work. What does Romans 13:1-7 say about civil laws which are merely handy and apparently not binding? The Wisconsin Synod kept its missionaries in residence across the border in El Paso, yet current statistics showed 5,648 foreign missionaries and personnel at work in Mexico.³

The attitudes toward religion in Mexico resulting from Rome's privileges and conflict with the government also posed other problems for the American protestant. There was a strong religiously-conservative group which viewed the Catholic institution with great affection and great loyalty. It saw their church as an integral part of their heritage, Indian as well as Spanish.⁴ Also, it was common to hear conservatives remark that Mexico was much more economically prosperous and politically stable when the Catholic Church was the strongest. Opposition to the church was often seen as an attack on the well-being and heart of the country. In contrast, many among the liberals and the young saw Catholicism as an imperialistic oppressor, an attitude that sometimes was transferred to foreign-based protestant churches. This was reflected in the fact that traditional denominations accounted for only 22% of Mexican protestant churches while pentecostal groups, largely indigenous, made up 64%.⁵

With this history of institutions and revolutions in Mexico, Protestantism encountered many difficulties. And some wondered why be so concerned about evangelizing a country that is so heavily Christian already. The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 specifically excluded Latin America from its consideration for this reason. In its defense it should be noted that the needs of the many other fields almost entirely untouched by the Gospel were more pressing. Yet in spite of the 96.2% of Mexicans professing Catholicism in 1970, there were undoubtedly great needs for spiritual care here also. Only one in four Catholics meet the minimum requirement of church attendance.⁶ How much genuine faith was present faced with the still-common Cristo-paganism? Also, questions arose about the extent of actual spiritual care. Grossmann remarks that even in 1960 there was only one priest for every 4,500 Catholics, and he tended a parish averaging 235 square miles.⁷ Given the dependence upon clergy in the Roman Church, this statistic is especially a problem. Eventually the great needs were recognized, and at the International Missionary Council in Ghana (1958), Latin America was described as one of the most promising Protestant mission fields in the world. And many had answered the call by them.

II. Opportunity and Unity: Lutheran Beginnings in Mexico

By the mid 1930's the stabilizing political situation and the calmer church/state relationship gave Protestant missionaries better prospects for work in Mexico. Although religious freedom had been officially declared in 1857 and some foreign missionaries came to Mexico shortly after, the Catholic Church was still very much in control until the 1920's. And her opposition to Protestantism was sometimes violent, to the point of inciting a mob to kill an American Congregational minister and his Mexican assistant in Guadalajara in 1872.⁸ But the attitudes were changing. An example can be seen in the descriptions of Martin Luther in school textbooks. While this writer was in Mexico (1983) he had the opportunity of comparing a turn-of-the-century history text with one currently being used. The former described Luther in the *anathema sit* manner, claiming that he was a sick and incorrigible rebel from his youth and that his father was forced to move to Eisleben because he had murdered someone in Moehra. The new edition, however, praised Luther as a revolutionary who stood up against the well-known abuses of Rome.⁹

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) recognized the opportunity the changing attitudes and practices presented and at their convention in 1938 resolved to

enter work in Mexico.¹⁰ They would be the first Lutherans to begin a Spanish Mission south of the border, yet they weren't the first Lutherans there.

Already by 1861 a group of German-speaking Lutherans had joined together, but was served only intermittently for years. In spite of being formally organized under the auspices of the Evangelical Church of the Old Prussian Church in 1904, the congregation had no resident pastor from 1908 to 1927.¹¹ Finally, in 1927, it reorganized under Rev. C. Frieling of the LCMS.¹² This group remained German-speaking and expanded its activity with outposts in the widely scattered areas of Puebla, Monterrey, Guadalajara, Torreon, Chihuahua and Tapachula. In 1956 it became a member of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and was assisted by the foreign office of the Evangelical Church in Germany in acquiring pastors. In 1977 4,000 members were being served by three resident pastors and an assistant.¹³

Other foreign language Lutheran activity should also be mentioned here. In 1954 work among Scandinavians began in Mexico City. With assistance from the LWF and the Church of Sweden providing a pastor, the congregation officially organized in 1957. The Scandinavians shared facilities with the English speaking Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, which was a 1963 merger of an LCMS congregation (organized in 1948) and an ALC one (1959). These two American bodies also cooperated in establishing an English speaking congregation in Guadalajara in 1968.¹⁴

These groups seem to have had little or no effect on their native Mexican neighbors as their efforts were limited to serving immigrants and visitors of their own heritage. Also, when looking at the 1980 Lutheran statistic totals for Mexico, one must remember that of the 9,100 members,¹⁵ nearly 6,000 were not truly Latin.

The opportunity for a genuine Mexican Lutheran mission came from the Mexicans themselves. Two native born Mexicans came in contact with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod while serving as pastors in the Methodist Church in Texas. One, Felix Segovia, became convinced of the Lutheran teachings by studying a copy of Walther's *Law and Gospel*,¹⁶ was instructed and received into fellowship. Segovia and the other, Cezar Lazos, went on for training in the LCMS and re-entered Mexico as missionaries. Lazos arrived in Mexico City in 1940 and established the San Pablo congregation. Segovia began in Monterrey in 1941 and organized the congregation of Santa Cruz. Five more congregations were established, and the Concordia Conference of Mexico was organized in 1947. A seminary also opened in Monterrey in 1947 but was closed in 1959 for a lack of national students.

In the 1940's, three other Lutheran mission endeavors also began in Mexico. The Latin American Lutheran Mission, (LALM) an independent "faith mission," was started by Myrtle Nordin Huerto in 1942. The group was interested primarily in training Mexican nationals as evangelists and building an indigenous church.¹⁷ After some early success and several relocations due to changing government regulations, the LALM set its base in Laredo, Texas and supported the Ev. Lutheran Church of Mexico, which was centered in Saltillo.¹⁸

The World Mission Prayer League (WMPL) began work in northwest Mexico in 1944 with two women missionaries. This group, based in Minneapolis, was founded without any synodical ties or support and was open to "anyone willing to pledge prayer fellowship provided they were members in good standing in some Lutheran Church." Their guidelines also stated that "the mission would stand squarely upon the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church."¹⁹ Along with organizing their own congregations and serving among the Nauhatl Indians, they assisted the ALC mission effort by transferring to that body several congregations in the 1950's. The WMPL experienced

problems both with keeping expatriates in the country and with declining membership. Hence they joined with the Association of Free Lutherans to form the Lutheran Apostolic Alliance of Mexico, headquartered in Mazatlan.²⁰

The Mexican mission work of the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) began in 1947 with one man, and it would center around him for over two decades. This gifted individual would also play a key role in another Lutheran body's mission work in Mexico. For both these reasons his story will be treated in greater length.²¹

David Orea Luna was the professor of literature and church history at the Seminary of the Church of the Nazarene in Mexico City when, in the early 1940's, complaints were brought against a Lutheran pastor, Cezar Lazos. Lazos was accused of corrupting several of the Nazarene Seminary students with Lutheran doctrines, so the faculty sent Orea Luna to deal with him. The plan backfired. Since Orea Luna also came to agree that the Lutheran teachings were biblical, the Nazarene officials sent him to Monterrey to separate him from Lazos. But the questions still were burning, and Orea Luna found the answers he needed from another Lutheran pastor in San Antonio, Texas. He entered a bible college in Texas (ALC) and was confirmed. As he wrote to a colleague, "I found the truth and understood that the Lutheran Church was the only church which was teaching the evangelical doctrine with purity."²²

A short time later Orea Luna entered the Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, and after ordination was sent to Mexico City in 1947 under the auspices of the American Lutheran Church (ALC). He gathered a congregation and, in addition, used his literary gifts to further spread the gospel in establishing the magazine *El Amanecer* ("The Dawning") in 1949. With ALC sponsorship the work spread, and in 1957 nine congregations and preaching stations formed an independent body called the Mexican Lutheran Church (ILM), electing Orea Luna as president. From the beginning he had been instructing pastoral students, and around 1957 he helped establish the Augsburg Theological Seminary in Mexico City. He attended the 1957 LWF Assembly in Minneapolis and became part of the committee to produce a Lutheran Hymnal in Spanish called *Culto Cristiano*.

One can't help but stand in awe and praise God when looking at the energy and talents of David Orea Luna. The many gifts God pumped into him Orea Luna used for the good and gain of his church. Not only was he a pioneering missionary, able teacher and administrator but also a poet, playwright and hymn writer. In addition he translated many Lutheran writings and confessional statements into Spanish. But undoubtedly the most important gift God gave him was a great love and loyalty for His Word. It was this great love that led him searching to the Lutheran church, that led him to bring this church back to Mexico, and finally it would be his loyalty to the Word that would lead him to break from the church he had helped to establish.

In the period of 20 years since Lutheran mission work had begun in earnest in Mexico, the opportunities were taken and were bearing fruit. But it didn't come easy. The Lutheran missionaries were bringing a unique gospel message to a people entrenched in centuries of Roman legalistic heritage and often disillusioned by the ritual and authoritarianism. There always is the problem that dissidents will look for a different church more out of rebellion than out of conviction for the truth. The widespread poverty could at the same time alienate the people from the affluent American church or give it a materialistic attraction. Government regulations prohibited any religious group from holding services, advertising or giving public invitations before obtaining a church building—a catch 22 in mission work. Also, the expatriate missionaries continually worked under the threat (and sometimes execution) of the foreign clergy expulsion law.

Even the native Mexican pastors found the going rough in their own country. Cezar Lazos' experience offers a telling example. Before beginning his work in Mexico, he served in Houston where he established an Hispanic congregation. During the 28 months he was there he confirmed 50 adults, organized a Sunday School with an average attendance of 105 and a Christian day school with an enrollment of 42 children. Yet, after he arrived in Mexico City, the sheaves didn't come in so easily. Lazos writes:

In the beginning my work in Mexico City was very hard and trying. Many a time I thought after a day's work that it was in vain to try to establish our church in Mexico. But after much earnest prayer I began to feel ashamed of my weakness, and I asked God to give me more faith and courage to face the difficulties and not to be afraid to give up my life, if need be, for the sake of our Savior.²³

During the early years of mission activity in a new country and culture, there usually is a period when the new church bodies struggle to find their identity and define their objectives. With the extreme pressures, doctrinal and social as well as practical, there always is a strong temptation to spend a little orthodoxy to buy a little expediency, all for the good of the greater cause. And the parent groups back home can complicate the matter even more with their purse strings and allegiances. If this sounds familiar, it's because the pioneering Lutherans in the United States struggled with the same questions time and time again. They were difficult questions for Mexican Lutherans also, and the same troubling road was chosen by many—unionism.

In 1960, five Lutheran groups met in Mexico City to discuss a plan to join their pastoral training efforts into one theological center. The proposal seems to have originated in the ALC, which approved it at convention in 1960.²⁴ It was also soon approved in committee by the LCMS, which had closed its seminary in Monterrey in 1959.²⁵ The new Augsburg Center for Theological Studies opened in 1965 for the pastor training of the Mexican Lutheran Church (ALC), the Caribbean Mission District of the LCMS (which included the Concordia Conference of Mexico), the German Ev. Lutheran Church in Mexico, the Scandinavian Congregation in Mexico (LWF), the World Mission Prayer League and the Colombia Synod (ALC). The faculty included professors from most of the bodies involved plus Rolf Lahusen from the Center of Ecumenical Studies of Mexico. This Augsburg Center became part of the Mexico City Theological Community, a group project including the seminaries of the Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Disciples of Christ and Congregational churches. Along with sharing buildings and library, they also offered the opportunity to take courses in any of the related institutions.²⁶

This Augsburg Center venture showed a new trend in Lutheran mission work in Mexico during the early 1960's, a trend that also had its roots in the changing attitudes of the parent groups in the United States. Strong doctrinal stands were giving way to increasing cooperation and offers of fellowship. During this time Dr. Lueking of the LCMS remarks:

Once the scholastic confessional tradition had served its functional purpose of rendering consciences clean and rallying financial support, its usefulness ended. For the exigencies of the work abroad called for a concentration upon the fundamentals of the evangelical understanding of Christianity.²⁷

This new view became the official policy in the LCMS at its 1965 convention with the adoption of a series of mission resolutions which came to be known as the "Mission Affirmations." These resolutions were a result of the *Mission Self-Study and Survey* carried out by Martin L. Kretzmann and included a call to repentance of "our individual and corporate self-centeredness," urging greater cooperation with other Christian church bodies. The individual sister churches overseas were given the authority to determine the extent of such cooperation. Also, stronger efforts in social concerns were greatly encouraged.²⁸

These Mission Affirmations stirred up a long controversy, and the LCMS constituents in the U.S. lodged official protests and calls for clarification of the disputed points. But the guidelines remained standing although many perceived moderates in the mission board were removed during the 1970's. In Mexico the opportunity given by the new policy was taken for greater unionistic efforts and social activism. In 1968 the LCMS supported congregations formed the Lutheran Synod of Mexico and eliminated from its constitution an article on doctrinal standards in order to allow close relations with other Lutheran bodies in Mexico.²⁹ And especially in connection with the Augsburg Center there would be a crisis over the ecumenical and social activities of Mexican Lutheranism, a crisis that meant opportunity for a new confessionalism.

III. Renunciation and Invitation: The WELS Crosses the Border

The opportunities for mission work among Latin Americans had not gone unnoticed by the WELS. In 1948 Venus Winter became its first Latin American missionary. After exploratory services in Phoenix, he settled in Tucson where he established a Spanish congregation, began radio broadcasts and eventually started a Christian day school. Until his retirement in 1981, Winter remained in Tucson faithfully serving the people and also giving invaluable advice and help to the Synod's other Spanish efforts.

Tucson would be the only Spanish mission for another 15 years, yet the vast potential in Central and South America demanded more effort. A committee from the Board for World Missions studied the possibilities for a new mission, and after a trip into Mexico reported in 1960:

Your committee is convinced that we should not begin mission in Mexico at this time. We feel we should stay on this side of the border and investigate the heavily populated Spanish areas which exist in such cities as Phoenix and El Paso in our Southwest.³⁰

So the Board looked for a different avenue into the Latin work which would be more accessible and less difficult. After another survey in 1963, Puerto Rico was chosen as the Spanish stepping stone. Also, in 1966 Ernest Zimdars was sent to El Paso, Texas, where it was hoped a foothold could be made in the large Mexican city of Juarez just across the Rio Grande.³¹

Before this could happen the opportunity came from an unexpected source. Again, the Mexicans themselves opened the door. David Orea Luna from the beginning in 1960 had opposed the planned merger of the Augsburg Seminary in Mexico City. He feared and continually warned against the liberal theology and ecumenicism that such a venture would bring. Orea Luna had attended the LWF Assembly in Helsinki in 1963

and came away convinced that "the majority of Lutheran bodies had fallen into rationalism and great deviations from the Lutheran doctrine."³² The tendencies in the ILM, of which he was still president, also disturbed him. So in late 1964 Orea Luna wrote to O.J. Naumann and requested information about the WELS' confessional position. Materials were sent, and Luna recognized the faithfulness to Scripture in the WELS' doctrine and practice. But for three more years he would battle to save the church he had helped to establish.

The problem centered around the Augsburg Seminary. Under the presidency of Robert Hoeferkamp (LCMS), some of the faculty were teaching false doctrines. Orea Luna charged:

Some professors had departed from the truth of the gospel and from confessional Lutheranism. They were denying fundamental doctrines such as: verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, the virgin birth of Christ, the vicarious atonement of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the immortality of the soul, the existence of the devil and hell and the reality of sin.³³

There were also instances of public altar fellowship by the faculty with other sects, including Roman Catholics. Along with the false doctrines and unionism, the faculty was actively encouraging social revolution in the classrooms. Orea Luna presented a well-documented protest to the Seminary's administration which showed more time was spent studying Marxist doctrines than the Lutheran Confessions.³⁴

The writings of Marx and *The Diary of Che Guevara* appear to have been popular textbooks among the students. A majority of the student body was from Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador and Panama, and according to one Mexican pastor, some admitted to having been imprisoned in their own countries for taking part in subversive movements against the government. The same pastor reports an incident during an evangelism class at the Seminary in which the students threatened to walk out on strike unless assignments were suspended in order to have another hour of Marxism.³⁵

The administration of Augsburg Seminary did not act on Orea Luna's protests, so he took his case personally to the ALC in the United States. Apparently on his trip to Nebraska and Minnesota he found no friends of confessionalism there, for he returned to Mexico and, on July 17, 1967, proposed to the ILM that they separate themselves from the Augsburg Seminary and also from the ALC. The declaration of separation was signed by, in addition to Orea Luna (the president), the secretary, treasurer, and vice-president, seven other pastors and two laymen. However, shortly afterwards all but two (Luna and the then treasurer, Pastor D. Chichia) withdrew their signatures. When Orea Luna tried to convince them again of the need for doctrinal and confessional integrity, the secretary of the ILM replied, "Mr. Luna, our children are not going to eat with pure doctrine."³⁶ This must have been especially painful for Orea Luna since he had confirmed and instructed most of these men.

Orea Luna again contacted President Nauman in November of 1967, requested more information and, if possible, an interview to clear up some points of doctrine which were not entirely understood by him. At the regular convention of the ILM in early December, he and Chichia presented their withdrawal from the body "out of love for the truth and for confessional Lutheranism."³⁷

The proposed interview was held from March 18 to 21 of the next year with a committee appointed by Pastor Immanuel Frey, president of the Arizona-California District of the WELS. The outcome was favorable, and the two Mexican pastors,

severing all ties with the ILM, formally applied for membership in the WELS. After a successful colloquy was held at Tucson on May 1, 1968, Orea Luna and Chichia were received into membership in the AZ-CA District. These two pastors were enthusiastic about their new church and the WELS responded in kind.

The situation of this new Lutheran mission was precarious, however. Aside from the usual difficulties, Orea Luna and Chichia lost their church buildings and housing as a result of their withdrawal from the ILM, a crippling loss in view of government regulations on public worship and evangelism. The WELS was facing another large deficit in the operating budget that year, but funds came in an extraordinary manner. As E. Hoenecke, Executive Secretary of the Board for World Missions, reported:

When the news of the successful colloquy was announced to the Synodical Council at its May meeting, a spontaneous offering was gathered as a token of thanksgiving to God whose Word does not return void. Enough was gathered in that spontaneous offering to support the little mission for almost two months!³⁸

Other extra-budgetary gifts began to come in, and a corporation was created to represent WELS interests and to transact its business in Mexico. Soon a house was bought for Orea Luna and a church site acquired. Although only one congregational worship could be conducted for over a year, 60 people from Orea Luna's congregation in Mexico City stayed with him and another 30 in Guadalajara (served by Chichia). The 40th Biennial Convention of the WELS in 1969 authorized and funded the Mexican Mission as a part of the Latin American Mission Board.³⁹ The new mission was on its way.

The year 1970 was a banner year. The new chapel in Mexico City was completed and dedicated in July. *The Message of Salvation*, began to air over a radio network in eight principal cities around the country in August and the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mexico (IELC) was formally organized in November with Orea Luna as president. Always the gifted writer and teacher, Orea Luna resumed publication of the magazine, *El Amanecer*, after a hiatus of three years and formed the Martin Luther Theological Institute where he was instructing two students for the ministry in his home.

Manpower increased when a pastor from Puebla, Carlos Avendano, withdrew from the Lutheran Synod of Mexico (LCMS), was received into membership by colloquy and began serving the members of his congregation who had come with him. The next year the congregation built their own chapel in Puebla. Also Felipe Luna Garcia was sent to serve in Juarez, under the supervision of Pastor Zimdars in El Paso.⁴⁰

To handle this growing work, Ruppert Eggert was called in 1971 from Puerto Rico to be the Friendly Counselor to Mexico. Because of government regulation he would reside in El Paso and serve the Mexican Mission from there. Eggert was also called to be the director of the Latin American Seminary which was planned for El Paso. The need for this seminary soon became unfortunately urgent.

On March 7, 1972, the Lord suddenly called home his faithful servant David Orea Luna. The temptation is strong to here present a fitting eulogy for this faithful and dedicated man, but the aforementioned list of God's accomplishments through him serves better. The loss of Orea Luna to the Mexican mission work, however, could not be so easily covered. Added to this loss was Pastor Avendano's resignation from the ministry for personal reasons, also in 1972.

Two of Orea Luna's students transferred to El Paso and were instructed under Eggert and Zimdars. As vicars they also served the vacancy at Juarez created by moving Garcia to Mexico City. Another student, Jose Lorenzo Perez, resumed Avendano's

position in Puebla. Under God's grace the work continued: in 1973 a new chapel was dedicated in Juarez and a new mission was started in Saltillo under Vicar Daniel Perez from the Seminary in El Paso. Two new developments soon caused more difficulties and another shuffling of personnel. Pastor Zimdars left El Paso to accept a call to the new venture in Colombia, but the vacancy was eventually filled by David Haeuser. Pastor Luna Garcia, in Mexico City, was suspended because of neglect of duty and unchristian conduct, which had caused a loss of members in the congregation. Pastor Chichia transferred to Mexico City and D. Perez filled his empty spot in Guadalajara, forcing the closing of the mission in Saltillo.

Despite the losses and moves, God's Word was being spread, and evidence was seen of its promised effectiveness. The chapel in Guadalajara was dedicated in 1975 after many delays and tangles. The three Mexican vicars, J. Perez, V. Guillen (in Juarez) and D. Perez, were examined and ordained. Two more students enrolled at the Seminary, and Pastor Gary Pieper came to El Paso as Missionary to Mexico to lighten Eggert's duties. To replace Orea Luna's magazine, Pastor Martens in Puerto Rico began to edit *El Mensajero Luterano* ("The Lutheran Messenger"), which is distributed to all the Latin American fields. By 1977 a new chapel-seminary building was completed in El Paso, several parsonages purchased in the various Mexican cities, and land was acquired for a second chapel in the Juarez area.

The following years were a welcomed period of relative stability and opportunity for development. The discouragements still continued as religious broadcasting was banned in Mexico until 1980 and one of the Seminary students, Juan Rubio from El Salvadore, joined the LCMS. Josue Saucedo, however, completed his studies and vicarship and was ordained in 1979 and was sent to Guadalajara.

Long vacancies in the expatriate staff at El Paso was a problem. Eggert left for Tucson to replace the pioneer and patron Venus Winters, who retired in 1981. Pastor Paul Hartman from Puerto Rico arrived to assume the position of Friendly Counselor to Mexico and pastor to the San Juan congregation in El Paso. Larry Schlomer brought his experience as Theological Director in Colombia to head the Seminary in El Paso and assist at San Juan. Though there were no students at the time, a comprehensive plan was developed and implemented for the continued theological study of the Mexican pastors. Plans were also being made to make El Paso the seminary for the national students from all the Latin American fields. There were several good prospects who were currently being trained with Bible Institute courses in their own countries. Also, Pastor Mark Goeglein arrived in El Paso from Colombia in 1984 to coordinate the mass media and literature programs for all of the fields.

A fitting end to this survey of the IELC and WELS mission work in Mexico is the Santa Cruz congregation in Monterrey. The beginnings of the IELC under Orea Luna and its determined struggle for the sound teaching and practice of confessional Lutheranism are paralleled with the story of Santa Cruz. Begun by Felix Segovia in 1941, this large congregation later withdrew from the LCMS affiliate and for three years struggled on without a pastor, except for the ministrations of the retired and aged Segovia. It approached the WELS and applied for membership with the IELC. After a long series of examinations of their own positions and interviews with representatives of IELC and WELS missionaries, Santa Cruz joined the IELC on April 1, 1984 and called D. Perez of Guadalajara as its pastor. As reported in *El Mensajero Luterano*: "The first of April was not only a union between a congregation and a synod, but also a celebration of fellowship in the same faith and hope."⁴¹

Mexico was and is a land of dominating institutions and restless revolutions, a land of great and urgent opportunity for the gospel but with countless threats to its purity

and purpose. The WELS with faith and hope crossed the border into Mexico under God's grace and direction. With the same faith and hope in our Lord, our Mexican brothers are working with us to proclaim the gospel. May love and loyalty for God's Word encourage us in this great work.

NUESTRO TRABAJO CON NUESTROS HERMANOS MEXICANOS
"UNA CELEBRACION DE CAMPANERISMO EN LA MISMA FE Y ESPERANZA."

ENDNOTES

1. Victor Alba, *History of Mexico* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), p. 41.
2. Eugene Nida, *Understanding Latin Americans* (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1974), pp. 106-124.
3. David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 491.
4. 55.1% of the population is *mestizo*, of Indian and Spanish descent, and 29% is pure-blooded Indian. Barrett, *op. cit.* p. 491.
5. W. Read, V. Monterroso and H. Johnson, *Latin American Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1969), pp. 164-166.
6. Barrett, *op. cit.* pp. 487, 490.
7. R. Grossmann, "Latin America: The Intellectual and Spiritual Background," *Lutheran World*, Vol. VIII: No. 4 (Dec. 1961), p. 227.
8. John Thiessen, *A Survey of World Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1961) p. 359.
9. It should be noted that the earlier text was published when the Catholic Church controlled the schools while the latter came from secular sources.
10. Proceedings of the 37th Regular Convention of the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, 1938, p. 190-191.
11. *Lutheran World*, Vol. 24: No. 2-3 (1977) p. 317.
12. *Lutheran Witness*, Vol. 44:195-196.
13. *Lutheran World*, *loc. cit.*
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 317-318. See also *Lutheran Mission Directory, 1980*, (Geneva: Department of Church Cooperation, LWF), pp. 184-185.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 316.
16. *Lutheran Witness*, Vol. 58, No. 4, p. 58.
17. Andrew Burgess, *Lutheran World Missions* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1954), pp. 222-224.
18. *Lutheran Mission Directory, 1980*, p. 182.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 233-237.
20. *Lutheran World*, Vol. 24, Nos. 2-3 (1977), p. 317. See also *Lutheran Mission Directory, 1980*, p. 182 and *The Lutheran Church in Mexico*, an uncataloged essay by R.A. Eggert, 1981.
21. The sources for the following information are the memorial issue dedicated to Orea Luna of *El Amanecer II*, Nos. 25-26 (*Marzo y Abril*, 1972) and Eggert's essay, which includes his personal recollections as Friendly Counselor to Mexico and also draws from class notes taken by one of Orea Luna's students.
22. "Semblanza Biografica," *El Amanecer II*, Nos. 25-26, p. 8.
23. C. Lazos, "A Call from Mexico City," *Lutheran Witness*, Vol. LIX, No. 24 (Nov. 26, 1940), p. 411-412.

24. Official Minutes of the 1960 Convention of the American Lutheran Church, pp. 135-136.

25. Reports and Memorials of the 45th Regular Convention of the LCMS (1962), p. 110.

26. R.F. Gussick, "Growing Latin American Lutheran Cooperation Since World War II," *Lutheran World*, Vol. XV, No. 4, 1968, p. 313. See also *El Amanecer II*, No. 1, (*Marzo* 1970) p. 14.

27. F.D. Lueking, *Mission in the Making* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 227. See also his discussion of the "turning point" of LCMS mission strategy and practice, pp. 302-307.

28. Proceedings of the 46th Regular Convention of the LCMS, 1965, pp. 79-81 and Convention Workbook (of the same) pp. 113-140.

29. J.H. Kane, *A Global View of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 485.

30. "Report to the Nine Districts", May 1960, p. 10.

31. "New Openings for the Gospel," *The Northwestern Lutheran*, March 1, 1970, p. 74.

32. "Semblanza Biografica," *El Amanecer II*, *Marzo y Abril* 1972, p. 9.

33. D. Orea Luna and D. Chichia Gonzales, "Aclaracion Historica." *El Amanecer II*, No. 1, *Marzo* 1970, p. 13.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

35. Carlos Avendano "Por que Renuncie al Sinodo Luterano de Mexico," *El Amanecer II*, No. 4 *Junio* 1970, pp. 6-8.

36. "Semblanza Biografica," *El Amanecer II*, Nos. 25 & 26, (*Marzo y Abril*, 1972), p. 9. See also "Aclaracion Historica," *El Amanecer II*, No. 1, (*Marzo* 1970), pp. 13-14, where Luna and Chichia state that the pastors received an increase in salary for retracting and remaining with the ALC and Augsburg Seminary.

37. "Aclaracion Historica," *El Amanecer II*, *Marzo* 1970, p. 14.

38. "The Lord Calls Us Into Mexico," *The Northwestern Lutheran*, June 9, 1968, p. 187.

39. "Proceedings . . . WELS, 1969, p. . See also "Reports and Memorials", 1969, pp. 73-74.

40. The information for this section and following is drawn from R. Eggert's essay and the reports of the Executive committee for Latin American Missions, as found in the respective *Reports and Memorials of the WELS*, 1968-1983.

41. *El Mensajero Luterano*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (Sept.-Oct., 1984), p. 6.

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