

WELS Historical Institute

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Volume 9, Numbers 1 & 2



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Cover photograph: Jimmy Declay, an Apache Indian and fellow WELS member, as a young soldier in World War II, directed traffic as Allied Troops entered Rome, Italy on the heels of the German Army. Photo from *Fort Apache Scout*, Volume 28, Number 5.

Organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin

Translated by Arnold O. Lehmann

On December 8, 1849 Pastors Muehlhaeuser, Wrede, Weinmann and Meis met in Milwaukee in the church meeting room of the Evangelical Lutheran congregation to consider and to address mutually the important matter of organizing a synod in Wisconsin. This meeting was opened with a hymn and prayer, after which the matter in question was placed on the table for discussion. After addressing the same from all angles the preachers unanimously desired and deemed it necessary to start a synod in Wisconsin immediately, and then resolved:

1. that the synod which is to be founded bear the name "The First German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin" and that this specific name and title remain with it forever;
2. that for this time the officers of said synod be elected for a period of two years.

In this election the following persons were chosen as officers:

Pastor Muehlhaeuser as president

Pastor Weinmann as secretary

Pastor Wrede as treasurer

The president, Pastor Muehlhaeuser, was then instructed to write a constitution which would embody the confessions of the synod, and to do this as quickly as possible.

Finally, as the last item on the table, it was resolved that the next year's synod convention be held on May 27, 1850 in Granville, Wisconsin, to which members are to bring along their annual reports.

Done on December 8, 1849 in Milwaukee

John Weinmann

Synodical Convention of the Evang. Luth. Church of Wisconsin

On May 26, 1850 the ministerium met in Granville Wisc. Pastor Wrede is the preacher of the local congregation.

On Sunday morning, namely on the Festival of Holy Trinity, the president preached the convention sermon on Ezekiel 33:7. The ministerium attended the Lord's Supper with the congregation.

In the afternoon the secretary preached on John 16.

On Monday, May 28, there again was a service prior to the session. Pastor Blies [Pluess] preached on Psalm 133.

The president opened the session with a powerful prayer. Present were the following preachers:

Pastor Muehlhaeuser from Milwaukee
Pastor Wrede from Granville
Pastor Weinmann from Racine
Pastor Blies [Pluess] from Sheboygan
Pastor Meis from Schlesingerville

The reports from the congregations were handed in and read aloud.

Pastor Muehlhaeuser: 2 congregations; 40 children baptized; 18 youth confirmed; 180 took communion; 4 funerals

Pastor Wrede: 3 congregations [Space was left for statistics but none were entered.]

Pastor Weinmann: 2 congregations; 14 children baptized; 3 young persons confirmed; 90 took communion; 2 funerals

Pastor Blies [Pluess]: 4 congregations; 18 baptisms; 16 confirmands; 221 took communion; 9 funerals

Pastor Meis: 7 congregations; 18 baptisms; 18 confirmands; 180 took communion

Total: 18 congregations

90 baptisms

55 confirmands

671 took communion

15 funerals

The Evang. Luth. congregation of Milwaukee upon its request was accepted as a member of the organization and its delegate, Mr. Rammel, was certified by the synod.

The president then explained to the large assembly the purpose of the synod and presented in a convincing manner the advantages to congregations joining a synod. This clearly stated presentation received the plaudits of all present.

Then the constitution as drawn up by the president was read. It was discussed article by article, and after several changes were made was unanimously adopted.

By resolution it was adopted that a committee consisting of Pastors Wrede and Weinmann be authorized to have a suitable synodical seal designed during the course of the year.

Pastor Wrede closed the morning session with prayer.

Afternoon Session

Pastor Weinmann opened the session with prayer.

The following resolution was then adopted:

that the pastors have an offering taken in those congregations of theirs which belong to the synod, that it be taken 14 days prior to the annual convention, and that it be designated for the synod treasury.

It was resolved that each preacher who is a member of our organization take an interest in working especially with the youth as well as in conducting day schools, Bible study classes, mission classes, etc.

Mr. Konrad [Conrad], at present a colporteur, who has had a strong desire for the preaching ministry for a long time, was presented to the ministerium. He was examined and because of his already acquired knowledge was found to be qualified to be accepted as a student of theology. Then by majority vote it was resolved that Mr. Konrad could commence his studies with Pastor Wrede, and that he be obliged to take up his studies now with all diligence. After this the president gave several members of the synod short *theologumena* [theological theses] upon which meaningful discussions took place.

The final matter brought up for discussion was about the neglect of home devotions by many families, and accordingly it was brought to the attention of the pastors present that they work with all diligence to have home and family altars established in our congregations.

Finally it was resolved that the next annual meeting be held again on the Festival of Holy Trinity. The place where the convention is to be held could not be given definitely at this time.

The convention adjourned and the president thanked the Granville congregation most sincerely for their friendly reception and great hospitality. He then closed the convention with a prayer and the benediction.

In the evening, at the pastor's session, it was brought to our special attention that it is most necessary for us in these last times of ours to join with one another in the unity of the spirit to battle, by virtue of God's grace, against the ever-increasing and overtaking devilish unbelief in Wisconsin.

Done in Granville, Wis. May 28, 1850

John Muehlhaeuser, president John Weinmann, secretary

[The first constitution was then added in the secretary's handwriting. It consisted of ten articles and a closing article, followed by:]

We, the undersigned, herewith declare that we regard this synodical and ministerial constitution to be the foundation of our church union, and we pledge ourselves before God and each other to carry out our obligation as members of this body according to it.

[Eighteen signatures follow of which all but four were added at later dates, no doubt when each member joined the synod. The first four were: John Muehlhaeuser, John Weinmann, Wilh. Wrede and Casp. Pluess.

A translation of this first constitution will appear in a later issue of this *Journal*.]

Synodical Convention of the Evang. Luth. Church of Wisconsin

On June 15, 1851 the ministerium assembled in Milwaukee. Pastor Muehlhaeuser is the local pastor.

On Sunday morning, the Festival of Holy Trinity, the secretary of the synod preached the convention sermon on Matthew 22:1-10.

In the afternoon Pastor Bliess [Pluess] preached on Hosea 14:10. Monday morning, June 16, at 9:00 the business meeting began. The president opened the session with a powerful prayer.

Present were the following preachers:

Pastor Muehlhaeuser of Milwaukee

Pastor Wrede of Granville

Pastor Weinmann of Racine

Pastor Bliess [Pruess] of Sheboygan

Pastor Goldammer of Manitowoc

Jacob Conrad of Granville [entered with a different hand]

The congregational statistical reports were handed in and read to the assembly:

Pastor Muehlhaeuser: 2 congregations, 30 baptisms, 12 confirmed, 150 communion guests, 1 Sunday School, \$4.00 for heathen missions

[A half page was left blank for the reports of the other congregations which however were not entered. The Muehlhaeuser report was entered in Muehlhaeuser's handwriting, and not by the secretary. Apparently Muehlhaeuser did not have the other reports available for entry.]

The delegates Mr. Nockemann and Mr. Bernt presented their credentials and were accepted by the synod.

By resolution, Pastors Dulitz and Klennegees [Kleinegees] were accepted as advisory members of the synod.

The president then gave his annual report and could not help but bring up the sorrowful experiences which the synod had to endure during the past year, especially the case of Pastor Meis and Mr. Oswald, who by unworthy conduct brought shame on the office of the preaching ministry and therefore had to be removed from the synod. Pastor Meis was charged by the synod with scandalous money dealings and was asked to give an account of this matter, but instead of appearing before the ministerium he in a disgraceful letter definitely would have nothing more to say about the matter.

Pastor Wrede closed the session with prayer.

Afternoon Session

Pastor Weinmann opened the session with prayer.

Upon proposal by the president the necessity of a missionary in Wisconsin was presented for discussion, and unanimously it was deemed necessary to put forth every effort to make this a reality; but since the means to support a missionary are certainly lacking at the present time, after a lengthy discussion of the matter it was resolved:

that each pastor, in addition to the work in his own congregations, feel duty bound to expand his service as much as possible into the territory around his home base in order to help out temporarily with the necessary program of a *Reiseprediger* (itinerant preacher) in Wisconsin;

and it was further resolved:

that the president be authorized to send a letter as soon as possible to the German Protestant Society in Barmen with the urgent request that they consider especially Wisconsin when they send out their next group of preachers.

The session was adjourned. Pastor Dulitz closed it with prayer.

Ministerial Session

In the evening from 6:00 to 7:00 the ministerium (ministers only) held a short conference in which especially the ordination of our two candidates was discussed.

It was moved and supported that licensed candidate Karl Blass be ordained so that in a colloquy he could show to the satisfaction of the ministerium that he has a knowledge of Lutheran doctrine.

It was moved and supported that, after he has passed his examination, licensed candidate Goldammer be ordained together with Mr. Blass.

It was moved and supported that Mr. Konrad [Conrad], who for almost a year has studied under Pastor Wrede in preparing himself for the preaching ministry, be licensed after he has successfully passed the examination. The session was adjourned. Pastor Klennegees [Kleinegees] closed the session with prayer.

[In Muehlhaeuser's handwriting] The accuracy of the convention report is certified by the president and the secretary,

John Muehlhaeuser, president

Christian Apache Warriors

Ruth Guenther Kessel

When we think of Apache warriors, we usually picture a wild band of half clad Indians armed with bows and arrows. I have a different picture to show you. Almost 300 Apache men served our country in World War II. On the Ft. Apache Indian Reservation in Arizona at that time, my parents, Pastor and Mrs. E.E. Guenther, faithfully corresponded with over 100 Lutheran Apache servicemen. By mail, they counseled, cheered and strengthened the faith of those young men so far from home. In addition to the letters, my parents sent Bibles, Christian reading material, Easter packages and Christmas gifts. As my father was extremely busy with his pastoral duties on the reservation, my mother took it upon herself to write a great many of the personal letters to the men, as well as sending the holiday packages and items that the men requested. The most requested reading material were copies of *The Apache Scout*.

My father had started the *Scout* in 1923, as an eight page news letter. The masthead of the first issue stated its purpose: it was to be published bi-monthly in the interest of the work among the Apaches of Arizona. Articles were published about the work of all the Lutheran mission stations. The orphanage, which my parents had been instrumental in establishing, had a special place in their hearts, and articles about it were frequent. Apache births, baptisms, illnesses, marriages and deaths were noted in the *Scout*. Articles of interest to Indians, and stories teaching Bible truths appeared in each issue. When World War II started my father added a soldiers' column, with names and addresses of Lutheran servicemen serving in every branch of the military. He invited the men to write articles about where they were and what they were doing. He listed promotions and transfers and updated their addresses as they moved from one war zone to another. He wrote of those who were wounded and those who died.

As Father did not always have time to write the men individual letters, he would occasionally write to all of them at once via the pages of the *Scout*. In those joint letters he would tell them about what was going on on their beloved reservation, and would tie into that news the Bible truths that they had been taught. The servicemen loved these letters and read them over and over.

An example of one of his letters was in the Easter issue of the *Scout* in 1943. It was titled, "A Letter From the Editor to Our White Mountain Apache Soldiers Everywhere." In the letter he told them what he had done that week, day by day.

Monday he wrote of the places he had been that day and the people that they knew and loved that he had spoken to. He ended by writing, "Philip and Howard and Henry and the rest of you, I wonder where you are tonight? I cannot speak with you, but I can remember you in my prayers."

On Tuesday he wrote how he had been awakened by a pack of coyotes howling and said that they reminded him of wolves. He went on to warn them of false prophets which might come to them in sheep's clothes but were really ravening wolves.

He wrote on Wednesday that he had seen some of their younger brothers riding donkeys, and worked that into the Bible story of Christ riding a donkey into Jerusalem.

Thursday he had seen some children miss the school bus and used the incident to draw the parallel that even as they would be considered AWOL if they missed a bus, to remember their Lord Jesus so that they would not be AWOL on Judgment Day.

On Good Friday he reminded them that it had been a soldier who brought the Good Friday story to its close with his wonderful confession that indeed Christ was the Son of God.

Saturday Dad had driven to Ft. Apache and happened to look up at their beloved Mt. Baldy, and he told them how it reminded him of Isaiah saying that even if the mountains would depart, His kindness would not depart. He suggested that for comfort they memorize the "Mountain Promise" Psalm 121.

"Today was Easter" he wrote on Sunday. He told them of the wonderful service that had taken place in their home church. He said that he had had 21 baptisms. He told them that as one little fellow was being baptized, he had smiled and reached up for Dad's hand. He used that as an example of the childlike faith that Christians should have.

He ended his letter by saying that he hoped by telling them of his week, that it might bring them in spirit back to their homeland as if they were on a short furlough. It was that kind of message from their missionary that made the *Scout* the favorite reading material of the men so far from their reservation.

The letters that they wrote back were wonderful testimonials to their bravery and their faith. Following are excerpts from some of the letters my parents received from the men during the war. The young Apaches writing these letters had spent almost their entire lives on the reservation, surrounded with the love of their friends, family and church. Then they were called, trained and sent overseas to fight. They did their job uncomplainingly and well. The following paragraphs from their letters give a glimpse into where they were and what they were doing. The common thread running through their letters was the joy of hearing from home, and the appreciation of the efforts in their behalf.

As to start my letter (from the South Pacific) I would like to thank you very much for the Christmas package I received from you. I thank you more than words can say in fact with all my heart. The boys gathered around me as I showed them the books and read several passages. I never felt so happy in all my life. R. M.

Thanks to you both for the nice Bible, Prayer Book, Stationaries etc., which I wanted, above all I'll never forget it . . . Thanks to Lord Jesus that I'm fine. I pray to him each night and each morning. J. D.

Today I received pkg. which you senting it to me, and I sure did surprising to receive it . . . Oh yes Mr Guenther last year you Senting a package to me I got it right on the front lines so I didn't have no chance to let you know about it that time . . . M. A.

It was very heartening to hear from you again . . . I felt pretty homesick when I read the paragraph describing that big cowboy camp just across from Cooley's ranch. I could see myself under the pine trees, little campfires, and a bunch of boys moving around and the twilight dusk. I'm getting homesick now! . . . E. M.

. . . I have just received the *Apache Scout* here. I sure did enjoyed reading what you had written in that edition. I have been over here in South Pacific on this island for eighteen months now but when I read the *Scout* it seem that I have been all over the reservation again. I know you are preaching to our people on the reservation and that you are praying for us that are serving in the Armed forces . . . please keep on praying for us . . . F. D.

... I was military guard for thirteen months ... I hope the rest of our boys get the *Apache Scout* like I do because it tells me many things from the Bible I never knew ... J. B.

... There are boys here from Cibicue, Cedar Creek, and East Fork and we all be long to Lutheran Church. So far I know everything is alright since we came over here, but sometimes we are lonesome about home. Please tell our folks not to worry about the boys over here but teach them the Word of God and not to worry. I pray to God every night to protect me from all trouble so I can come back home and listen to God's word in our church again. I wish you please send me some *Apache Scouts* to read ... E. N.

I was very glad today when I got the package from you. Was even more gladder to get the *Apache Scouts* and the Bible stories. I'm now somewhere in Germany and also I've seen plenty actions. Thanks to our Lord who has protected me through the dangerous life. He is with me so now I have nothing to be afraid of. I went through Schwienfurt, Nurnburg, and through Munich Germany ... I met one of the Apache boy, J. J. from Canyon Day ... It was a very happy day when we spoke to each other in our own language again ... R. K.

Greetings from a soldier. I thought of dropping you a few lines and while I was writing this message I was thinking of the Lutheran church at Whiteriver. Wondering if the church bell is calling Come! Come! right at this very moment I just could see the church bell swinging back and forth calling all Indians to come to church ... N. D.

We boys out here in the tropics are missing the good old white Christmas again. This will make two Christmas in the jungle for us ... We've been thru many danger spots during the past couple of years and seen plenty of Tojos planes but I know our Savior is right with us everywhere we go and spread His wings o'er us ... Thanks a million for the nice candies and books and *Apache Scouts* ... R. Z.

... I am in a beautiful town name Klatovy, Czechlovakia. Unfortunately I was laid up for wound in general hospital in Paris for a month and a half. All my mails has been going to Paris France for quite a while ... my duty here is guarding six thousand Nazi troops, mostly S. S. troops ... I'm here with my friend S. L. of lower Cibicue valley. We both fought most of the severe battles in France and Germany. Thanks a million for news from you ... J. B.

My friend Willie and I were like to have a new issue *The Apache Scout*, I wish you would send some to us, because we have nothing to read out here in the jungle. I arrive here in New Guinea from Australia ... I was in action on Admiralty. Boy! was it a tough day, that day I never thought that I would get through there safe. The Japs were firing at us on both side of the harbor where we make landing, I can see the bullets flying over our heads, it sound like some body hitting the drum, but our plane was protecting us ... On Sunday me and Willie we both promoted to K. P. and after we finish our job we went to Sunday services ... R. C.

I wish to express my thanks for Christmas gifts received from you a couple of days ago. Now I am going to tell you a few things about New Guinea. There are sufficient insects and birds of various description lived here in the jungle ... the natives come around here to trade with our men. The majority of them like to trade

Japanese invasion money for clothes ... They call these natives Fuzzy Wuzzies. I wonder why they call them that way? Maybe because their course hair stand straight up...I.D.

I went through the "Battle of Tarawa" which was considered the toughest battle of the Pacific. It takes more than Nips to keep a Indian down! especially a Apache! Thanks for the *Scout*. May the Lord be with you all ... E. M.

I will now write you a few lines again to thank you for the gift you sent me. But the candy was melted so it spoil writing paper and envelopes. Anyway I thank you very much for that ... I am sure tired of this battle because this is the longest battle I ever been into ... I got to fight them Japs till the war is won. On Christmas and New Year I spent most of the time in the fox hole, but I don't mind it. It is sure gets rough on us when its raining, because we sure get muddy. I want this war to get over right the way. So we can return to our home sweet home ... R. B.

Really Rev. Guenther, I appreciate the things your race of people did when they raised me. Also I'm glad I have found the right way to praise and give thanks to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I was wondering an worrying for a long time, where I would be now hadn't it been for the Lutheran church to adopt me. Wishing you the Blessing of God our Father and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. P.S. Don't forget to send *Scouts* by the countless thousands. Answer soon ... B. J.

I was really happy over the Christmas package you and Mrs. Guenther sent me. That *Apache Scout* paper was really good too, I read it over a couple of times before I went to bed and after I went to bed I was still thinking about that article "Home on the Range." And today I broke into the pinion nuts that you sent and had a handful and went walking around the camp eating them while thinking of home. I didn't believe myself eating pinions way out here in Marianas Islands. ... We had quite a battle here with the Japs, I was praying to the Lord in my fox hole ... L. H.

Please remember us in your prayers as we journey on a biblical mission--"psalms, 68-30" scatter thou the people that delight in war, and think of another passage "John, 16-13" greater love hath no man that this, that a man lay down his life for his friends, that is our opinion of you, and the Apache boys says goodbye and God bless ... C. B.

Dad published parts of the men's letters in the *Scout*, and occasionally entire letters. Few were as long as the one that appeared in the September 1944 edition. It ran to five pages. It was from an Apache stationed somewhere in France. He said he was taking a horseback ride in his mind back to the reservation. Along the way he mentioned all the mountains, valleys, rivers, flowers, springs and trees he saw in his mind ... It is as beautiful a piece of writing as I have ever read. He translated it in his mind, he said, from Apache into English for the *Scout*. He ended it by saying,

if any one wish me to take another trip, write the *Scout* requesting to where we should go next. Because in these terrible days we have the *Apache Scout* come and bring us the Gospel and the warm news from the Reservations. Thank God for our Missionariés who make it possible for the *Apache Scout* to reach us even up to the front lines.

Very few of the letters were too personal to quote from. There was an occasional plea for Dad to speak to a wayward wife, or to pray for a soldier with a drinking problem. However, most were brave, stoic and cheerful. The Apache Lutheran men acquitted themselves with honor in the war, and their correspondence reflected that. I could share countless other letters with you from those Apache warriors, but their messages would be essentially the same. The men were doing their job, they were eager to get home, they were happy to hear from their missionaries, and were grateful for the reassurance that their Lord and Savior was watching over them.



Jimmy Declay, today. Photo from a slide by Bennett Cosay.

Ruth Guenther Kessel is a free lance writer who resides in Sedona, Arizona with her husband. She was born and raised on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation as one of nine children of Pastor and Mrs. E.E. Guenther. Pastor Guenther was an early missionary among the Apaches. Mrs. Kessel writes articles about life on the reservation and also writes about the Apache people.

The Little Brown Church in the Vale

Thomas J. Smith

There's a church in the valley by the wildwood,
 No lovelier spot in the dale;
 No place is so dear to my childhood
 As the little brown church in the vale,
 Oh, come to the church in the wildwood,
 Oh, come to the church in the vale.

Wm. S. Pitts

The little brown church pictured in William Pitts' *Church in the Wildwood* could very well be a description of Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Brownsville, Minnesota. The little brown church in which Emanuel congregation worshiped for some 30 years still stands in Brownsville. The Minnesota State Historical Society now holds title to the property and maintains the building as one of its historic sites. It is also listed in the National Registry of Historic Sites.

For many of the 906 inhabitants of this sleepy town along the Mississippi, the church has relatively little meaning. Older residents might recall a few incidental facts about it: the Episcopal Church originally constructed the building; the Lutherans bought it from the Episcopal diocese in the mid-1940's; the Lutheran congregation never numbered more than a dozen families. However, for the handful of former members of Emanuel congregation, the little brown church means much more. It was their place of worship for three decades — from the 1940's until the congregation disbanded in 1963. It was the Lord's house—where they gathered to hear his Word, where their children were brought into the Kingdom of God by Holy Baptism, where they received the Lord's true body and his true blood. Moreover, it was a symbol to the community—a symbol that God's Word cannot be compromised, that faithfulness to the Word is required of the child of God.

Today, the little brown church stands as a silent witness to the Truth. Hymns of praise once carried on warm summer breezes are no longer heard from the tiny church. The message of sin and grace, of Christ crucified, is no longer proclaimed from the cracked and splintered pulpit. Emanuel congregation has been gone almost thirty years. Yet, the gospel of Jesus Christ, so central to the 101 year history of Emanuel congregation, has not been without effect. Beginning with Emanuel congregation in Brownsville, the Lord allowed his Gospel to spread; he blessed its growth. Today six Wisconsin Synod congregations in this corner of southeastern Minnesota can trace their roots to this first Evangelical Lutheran church. This is all the more amazing in light of the many obstacles thrown in the way to impede the gospel's spread. Despite schism, controversy and confrontation, God's Word not only survived but succeeded in gaining an ever increasing number of souls. The history of Emanuel congregation is vivid proof of the Lord's promise: "My word will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

As a river town, Brownsville itself has a rich and somewhat notorious history. Job and Charles Brown first came to the area known as Wild Cat Bluff in November 1848. The brothers recognized the site had great potential: located on the river with easy access for steamboat traffic, rich farmland just to the west, and an available supply of lumber. The two opened a sawmill. Charles laid out the plans for a town, the first settlement in Houston County. Soon their dreams became reality. Brownsville became the gateway to Houston County. Newly arrived immigrants disembarked at the steamboat landing and moved

westward to establish homesteads in the coulees and on the ridges. Brownsville prospered: "By 1870 the village had grown to a population of 1500. There were about 40 stores, four churches, a printing office, a bank, various establishments and warehouses, a theater and other accessories to a thriving town."¹

Problems accompanied the town's rapid rise in population. A former member of Emanuel, Mrs. Harvey Kuecker, whose family resided for a long time in Brownsville, recounted some of the stories told her by her mother:

The river traffic brought a lot of riffraff into town. Invariably, a fight would break out down at the landing and someone would get killed. They would take the body, toss it into the river, and let it float downstream—without as much as a proper burial. This didn't happen only once; it was a common occurrence.²

This ruff-and-tumble river town became the object of attention for a Wisconsin Synod mission.

It was the Rev. Gottlieb Fachtmann who, in the early 1860's, responded to the spiritual needs of the Lutheran immigrants. At the time Fachtmann was pastor of the newly-organized (1859) First Lutheran Church of La Crosse, Wisconsin. He had served for several years as a traveling missionary for the Wisconsin Synod, first on an unofficial basis, then in an official but unsalaried capacity (1858 Synod convention). The *Wanderlust* in Fachtmann's blood kept him on the move. Even while shepherding the flock at La Crosse, he made numerous trips through the surrounding countryside to gather Lutherans together. "The Minnesota side of the river, too, engaged the untiring missionary's attention . . ."³ On occasion, Fachtmann would board a paddlewheeler and head downstream to Brownsville. There he conducted services for the Lutherans who had settled in and near this fast-growing town.

Fachtmann's efforts generated interest in establishing a Lutheran church right in Brownsville. Within a short time, the Holy Spirit caused to be born the first Evangelical Lutheran church in southeastern Minnesota. Rev. E.G. Hertler, the last shepherd of the Brownsville flock, writes of the event:

On February 26, 1862, at the outbreak of the Civil War, a meeting was held for the purpose of organizing a congregation and calling a pastor to serve them. The following members were elected as members of the Board: John Bader, president; Julius Hanke, secretary; Jacob Eckhoff, treasurer. The secretary was authorized to correspond with the officials of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin in the matter of calling a pastor.⁴

Whether Fachtmann himself was present at this organizational meeting is not clear. (He did not remain in the area long – leaving First Lutheran, La Crosse, in May of 1862 to assume the pastorate of Trinity congregation, St. Paul.) Nevertheless, Fachtmann's influence can be seen in the directive given the secretary of the congregation to contact the Wisconsin Synod. Fachtmann was a Wisconsin Synod man; it follows that another Wisconsin Synod man would be called to serve as their resident pastor.

On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, 1862, the members met to hear the initial sermon of their first resident pastor, Rev. Ludwig Ebert. Ebert, a graduate of the *Pilgermission* of St. Chrischona, had arrived that year from Germany in the company of Johannes Muehlhaeuser.⁵ Together with three other candidates, Ebert appeared before the Central Con-

ference of the Wisconsin Synod, meeting in Watertown in early December. He was examined, assigned, ordained, and by the end of the month at this post in Brownsville.

The following year (1863) the congregation erected its first house of worship—a frame building, 20' by 40', at a cost of \$600. Ebert returned to Watertown in May for the synod convention. The statistical report from that year indicates the congregation numbered 60 communicants and, apparently, was a young congregation—Ebert having performed 20 baptisms in the short time he had been there. Five pastors from that general area (including Ebert) asked for permission to form their own conference, the "Mississippi Conference," and Synod approved their request.

However, Ebert and Emanuel congregation did not remain in the Wisconsin Synod. In the summer of 1864 Ebert did attend a synodical convention but not the Wisconsin Synod's convention in Watertown. The Minnesota Synod, meeting at Trinity, St. Paul, received both Pastor Ebert and his congregation into membership in its body.

The work in southeastern Minnesota expanded under Ebert to include Lutherans living in the areas of Crooked Creek and Portland Prairie (Eitzen). Ebert's pastorate ended in 1866, when he left the state and the synod to serve a Wisconsin Synod congregation at Ridgeville in Monroe County.

Rev. Frederick Reitz succeeded Ebert and ministered to God's people in Brownsville from 1866 to 1871. The *Pilgermission* had sent Reitz directly to the Minnesota Synod in 1863. Reitz's first charge had been a congregation in Frank Hill, Winona County. Pastor Reitz continued the work already begun and "extended the field to Union, Hokah, and as far westward as Mount Prairie, where he found a group of Lutheran families."⁶

Ministering to the Lutherans in these scattered locales must have been taxing work. The problems which arose within the home congregation certainly did not help the situation. Hertler recounts the unsettling history of this period:

Pastor Reitz . . . found it necessary to resign from his post because of ill health, largely due to grieving over stubborn wrangling and quarreling among the members and also shameful conduct not becoming true Christians. In his address to the congregation on January 2, 1871, he stated his position clearly enough for all present to understand, if they would. Said he: "In retrospect at the beginning of a New Year we must confess that we have received many proofs of God's unspeakable love for us and, therefore, have reasons to unite in praise with the Psalmist in the 103 Psalm: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits.'

"Dear Brethren: The Lord has been exceptionally good to us. We have not earned the blessings he has bestowed upon us, neither have we deserved them. Consider our many sins of unfaithfulness—individually as well as the congregation as a whole. We shall, therefore, raise our hearts and hands unto the Lord in sincere repentance and plead for forgiveness, that he may not withdraw his mercy from us—and we be lost in eternity. By the grace of God and the visitation of President Sieker the position of some of our members has been revealed. For years our congregation has been suffering grievously because of these wranglings and we hope that the instigators will now see the errors of their ways and put an end to these evils."⁷

Hertler concludes: "Without question, 'these evils' were well known to the membership."⁸

Exactly what "these evils" were is not, however, precisely known today. From the comments about "the position of some of our members" being revealed "by visitation of President Sieker," it seems as if Reitz is referring to the lodge dispute. The Masons had arrived in Brownsville five years after the establishment of the congregation (about 1867) and were conducting a very vigorous membership campaign. Some of the church members had been taken in by the Mason's persuasive arguments and were lobbying for a pro-lodge position in the congregation. Personality, as much as theology, played a role in this dispute which eventually would split the congregation within six years. It may be that at this time lines were already being drawn in the battle and that this, then, was the cause of Reitz's appeal. In any event, no change for the better was noticeable. Two months later, on February 27, 1871, Reitz submitted his resignation and, subsequently, accepted a call to serve a Lutheran congregation in Findlay, Ohio.

June 2, 1871 saw the Rev. John Jahn installed as the third resident pastor at Brownsville. Jahn had previously served at Loretto, Crow River and Watertown, Minnesota and was – from all indications – a member of the Minnesota Synod in good standing. For a time at least, Jahn served faithfully. The *Parochial Berichte* [Parish Reports] do not indicate a substantial change in statistics during the early years of his pastorate. Jahn was absent from the synod conventions of 1875 and 1876, and he filed no report in 1876. Yet Jahn became a cause of division within his own congregation and certain of his actions could only have precipitated the split brewing within the congregation.

Piecing together the scraps of information which are available, this is the picture which emerges during the crucial years of 1876/1877: The wrangling and squabbling which had occurred earlier again surfaced. This time the breach proved to be irreparable. The congregation was hopelessly divided into two factions. While this turmoil was growing and when it all finally came to a head, Pastor Jahn was channeling his efforts not into church work, but into farming. This occupation appeared to be more profitable than the ministry, so Jahn was spending his time in this field of labor. Somehow, he did not find his agrarian interests at all in conflict with his call to serve the Lord and his people. Such an attitude was reprehensible enough in itself, but Jahn's next move was even more contemptible. Seeing both parties hopelessly at odds, Jahn resigned as pastor. He then turned right around and offered himself as a candidate to be called by one of the factions! This intensified the bitter feelings. The situation called for action on the synodical level. That action came when newly-elected President Kuhn suspended Jahn and the entire matter was brought up before the 1877 synod convention which was meeting at Salem congregation in Greenwood.

Kuhn announced Jahn's suspension in his *Jahresbericht* [Annual Report] with this denunciation:

This individual is an unprincipled person, a man who publicly disgraces the ministry, who not only gives preference to his own gain ahead of the honor of Christ and the welfare of his congregation, but who remains impenitent in his condition, so that I find it incompatible with the nature of our Synod to consider him a member any longer. The honorable Synod now has the duty to examine this situation and render its decision in the matter.⁹

At the convention a special committee was appointed to review the facts in the case and render a decision. The committee felt that the matter could best be handled in a public session, which then took place. Quoting from the synodical proceedings:

After the Synod officials gave a full report on the course of events in the case and on their mode of procedure in the same, and after a deposition of the other party, which contained an accusation and protest against the conduct of the officials, had been read, the Synod had the necessary understanding of the argument. It was resolved to accept the four points of the committee and send them in writing to both parties as the decision of the Synod.¹⁰

The four points of the review committee stated (in essence):

1. that a hearing would be held at a time and place agreeable to both factions.
2. that pastor Jahn would submit his resignation both from the congregation and that faction of the congregation which had called him.
3. that the two factions would reconcile, call another pastor, and acknowledge the Synod's action as correct.
4. that Pastor Schmidt (a neighboring pastor) would oversee that calling process.¹¹

The Synod also formally expelled Jahn from its membership on the following grounds:

1. Because he excessively and without need, purely out of greed and for the sake of profit, occupied himself with farming and cattle raising and shielded himself behind various counter-charges (e.g. struggle for livelihood, illness, etc.).
2. because he abused his office in a most shameful way for the sake of this unnecessary occupation.
3. because he (in response) to loving admonition gave notice to the congregation in a frivolous way and thereby showed that he either did not know the doctrine of the call, or if he did know it, he acted in a disgraceful way toward it.
4. because he—after he had resigned from his office both verbally and in writing—permitted himself to be set up as a candidate with another (party) and accepted the vote of a faction of the congregation.

Since Mr. Jahn now remains impenitent in the sins of office which he committed, this expulsion is justified before God and Church. The faction of the congregation which still adheres to him is admonished to let him go so he does not make himself a part of further sin in this; and Mr. Hanke* is requested to work with his party in this that it might take place.¹²

*The Mr. Hanke (mentioned above) is identified as a representative of one of the factions of the congregation. He was the only one from Brownsville present at the synod convention. (A Mr. Julius Hanke had been elected the congregation's first secretary in '62.)

Of the synod's resolutions and recommendations only one is known to have been carried out. Pastor Jahn left the Brownsville area to settle in another part of Houston County – Winnebago Township. It is doubtful that the meeting which was intended to reconcile the two parties ever took place. Pastor Philip Schmidt, the neighboring pastor who was to oversee the calling of another man, himself accepted a call and left the area later in 1877. For the

Brownsville congregation this action, or more precisely, lack of action was critical. The membership remained divided.

The cause of the division can be traced to a number of things. As mentioned earlier, to a large extent personality conflicts were involved. Certainly Jahn's negligence contributed to the schism. Yet, the lodge issue seems to have been the major factor. Hertler writes:

It is evident that the chief cause of the split was to be found in paragraph 33 of the Constitution of the congregation. This paragraph deals with the Lodge question. Repeatedly this matter had been discussed in congregational meetings only to be voted down to the dissatisfaction of the lovers of the un-Christian Lodges.

However, when it came to a showdown and the brazen members of lodgism began making threats, a number of the others weakened for fear of losing their rights to the church property and consented to the hiring of a non-Lutheran leader. Thus they aided in swelling the number of the majority group.

The members of the minority group that remained loyal to the truths of God's Word according to Lutheran principles were frozen out. All rights to the church property were taken from them, nor could they receive any support through recourse to the courts.¹³

Mr. Harvey Kuecker, the last treasurer of Emanuel congregation, recalled hearing about the final meeting between the two groups. In this meeting the few who held fast to the Lutheran position opposing lodge membership were driven out at knife-point.¹⁴ From that time on, the pro-lodge majority held the church building and property.

This majority group took the name "Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church." *The History of Houston County* (published 1882) has a brief article about the church under the heading *Evangelical Lutheran Zion's Church*. It mentions Pastor Ebert as the first resident pastor and then continues:

Rev. Frederick Reitz came in 1866, and remained until 1871, when John Jahn, now of Winnebago, took charge, and was here for six years when Rev. F. Koysetka assumed the pastorate. In 1880, Rev. Eugene Walter was called to the work, and he still continues at his post.¹⁵

Neither of the last two pastors named, Koysetke or Walter, belonged to a synod of the Synodical Conference.

The various additions and deletions made to the name of Zion congregation tell a good part of its history. In 1889 the congregation dropped the "Lutheran" from its name and joined the Minnesota District of the Evangelical Synod of North America. The congregation continued to grow and so enlarged the church building in 1904. The Evangelical Synod added "Reformed" in 1938, so the church became Evangelical and Reformed. When this body merged with the Congregational Church in 1957, the name again changed, this time to "Zion United Church of Christ." In 1975, the church went independent and is now known simply as "Zion Evangelical Church." The 116 year old sanctuary became too small for the congregation and was replaced in 1980 by a modern church and fellowship hall.

How many members remained faithful to the Lutheran position is not known. No individual statistics are available for Emanuel congregation until 1920, because the congregation was being served by neighboring pastors in a tri-parish or even quad-parish

arrangement. However, the Minnesota District *Proceedings* do list Emanuel congregation as having 28 souls, 22 communicants, and six voters in 1920. From 1877 until the congregation's dissolution in 1963, these neighboring pastors served the little group at various times:

J. Koehler of Immanuel, South Ridge [rural Hokah]	1877-1886
C. Gutknecht of Zion, Eitzen	1879-1883
P. Hinderer of Immanuel, South Ridge	1886-1890
R. Heidmann of St. Peter, Union [no longer extant]	1888-1895
J. Siegler of St. John, Caledonia	1895-1899
R. Fehlau of Immanuel, South Ridge	1899-1901
F. Weichmann of Immanuel, South Ridge	1901-1916
E.G. Hertler of Immanuel, South Ridge	1916-1974

Though small in numbers, the members of the congregation did not become discouraged. They continued to worship the Lord. For many years they met in the so-called "Brown Church." Mr. Charles Brown had been something of a philanthropist in his day and had erected this church at his own expense in 1864, freely offering its use to all Protestant denominations. After this church burned down, Emanuel congregation gathered in the homes of its members. When the Episcopalian congregation in town folded, the members rented the church they had built. In 1946, Emanuel purchased the property from the Episcopal Diocese of Minnesota for \$100. This "little brown church" served as Emanuel's house of worship for the rest of its existence.

The "decline and fall" of the congregation came gradually. In part, the congregation's demise was connected with the town's decline. When the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific laid its track along the west bank of the Mississippi, the railroad destroyed the steamboat landing. This new mode of transportation made the old obsolete and carried people and freight right past Brownsville. Any Lutherans who did happen to move into town were directed to Zion Evangelical Church. Here, statistics tell the rest of the story. In 1922 Emanuel numbered 26 communicants, 35 souls and six voters. In 1932 the number of communicants dropped to 18; in 1942: 18 communicants; in 1952: 15 communicants; and in 1962: 11 communicants. The final statistical report (1963) listed a total of 10 communicants, 12 souls and three voting members. The 1957 and 1959 *Statistical Reports* of the Wisconsin Synod indicate that only 16 services were conducted in each of these years.

In the background, too, was the fact that Emanuel had to rely on a sometimes complex multi-parish arrangement. This proved to be a significant factor in the later years, when Pastor Hertler found himself shepherding four congregations: Immanuel, South Ridge; Zion, Hokah; First Lutheran, LaCrescent; and Emanuel, Brownsville. Already in 1947, when the Hokah and South Ridge congregations were celebrating their 75th anniversaries and Emanuel its 85th anniversary, Pastor Hertler commented on the situation:

It is evident that other arrangements will have to be made in time. No pastor can serve four congregations indefinitely, as congregations should be served, unless he has the whole-hearted understanding and considerate cooperation of the membership. It is a physical impossibility. Our aim has been to unite Hokah, Union and Brownsville to be served by one pastor without becoming a burden on Synod. South Ridge and LaCrescent could then be served by one pastor. But so far our plans have not matured. We trust the Lord will show us the way out of our dilemma in due time.¹⁶

The Lord's answer to the dilemma did come – fifteen years later. The Lord showed a "way out." However, his answer, the "way out," was probably not the solution which the handful of members had expected back in 1947. Yet it can be said that it was the Lord's will and part of his plan for Emanuel congregation.

1962, Emanuel's centennial year, arrived without fanfare. No major celebrations were planned. No notice appeared in the *Northwestern Lutheran*. There was no official announcement of the anniversary at the district convention. The milestone of 100 years marked the end of the road for Emanuel congregation. It wasn't simply coincidence that the congregation decided to disband following their centennial year. Emanuel's members certainly wanted to continue worshipping as long as possible. While Pastor Hertler might well have persuaded the members to close sooner, this anniversary was a goal which he wanted the congregation to reach. With his shepherd's heart, he recognized that this occasion was special for the little flock. Undoubtedly, Pastor Hertler also viewed Emanuel's closing with mixed feelings. He had ministered to these people for 47 years. But when the final "Amen" was sung in the last service, it was not sung with a note of failure, or even necessarily sadness. Rather, pastor and people left the little brown church after that service with a sense of triumph. For they realized something which the world in general cannot appreciate—God's Word is never proclaimed in vain; the gospel can never be suppressed; the Word of the Lord always accomplishes his purpose.

Emanuel congregation passed quietly from the scene. Synod and district reports do not record the dissolution of the congregation. The 1963 *Statistical Report* makes mention of it. An asterisk follows the entry of 12 souls, 10 communicants and three voters and the note at the bottom of the page reads: "congregation disbanded, figure not included in total of communicants."¹⁷

The 12 members joined other WELS churches in the area. Pastor Hertler continued to serve the tri-parish of South Ridge, Hokah and LaCrescent. It is here, in the growth of the other Wisconsin Synod congregations, that Emanuel's contribution can clearly be seen. Beginning in Brownsville, the gospel gained a firm foothold in southeastern Minnesota. It was tried and tested in those early years. But Satan's intrigues proved futile. The Spirit of the Lord continued to breathe His blessings on the Word. The church spread and grew, resulting in the founding of seven other Wisconsin Synod congregations:

- St. Peter's Ev. Lutheran Church, Town Union [now disbanded]organized 1870
- Zion Ev. Lutheran Church, Eitzenorganized 1871
- Zion Ev. Lutheran Church, Hokahorganized 1872
- Immanuel Ev. Lutheran Church, South Ridgeorganized 1872
- St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church, Nodineorganized 1878
- St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church, Caledoniaorganized 1895
- First Ev. Lutheran Church, LaCrescentorganized 1942

From February 26, 1862 to the present day, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in southeastern Minnesota has been served by more than 40 pastors. As of this date, almost 130 years later, the area is being served by six pastors in charge of six congregations. The number of baptized members as of 1990 in the care of these six pastors totals 2320, of which 1706 are communicant members of the six churches.

On Sunday morning the members of these six churches come together to worship the Lord. The little brown church in Brownsville, however, stands empty each Sunday morning. To judge the history of Emanuel congregation on the basis of an empty building is to judge

unfairly. Emanuel played a vital and significant role in the establishment and growth of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in this corner of the world. When the purpose which the Lord had intended for this congregation had been fulfilled, Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church came to a quiet, dignified end. It left behind six congregations—each as dedicated and firmly committed to the gospel as it had been. And, in the quiet town of Brownsville, Minnesota, it left behind a memorial, a silent witness to the Truth of the gospel, the little brown church in the vale.

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ENDNOTES

- 1History of Houston County, quoted in *The Diamond Jubilee*, p.7.
- 2Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Kuecker, 3/19/83.
- 3Koehler, *History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 60.
- 4Hertler, *The Diamond Jubilee*, p. 6.
- 5Koehler, p. 127.
- 6Hertler, p. 6.
- 7Hertler, p. 6.
- 8Hertler, p. 6.
- 9Minnesota Synod *Proceedings* 1877, pp. 9-10.
- 10Minnesota Synod *Proceedings* 1877, p. 55.
- 11Minnesota Synod *Proceedings* 1877, p. 55.
- 12Minnesota Synod *Proceedings* 1877, p. 55.
- 13Hertler, p. 7.
- 14Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Kuecker, 3/19/83.
- 15Neill, *History of Houston County*, p. 340.
- 16Hertler, p. 11.
- 17Statistical Report of the WELS for 1963, p. 22.

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Mission Zeal of the Infant Wisconsin Synod, 1850-1893

Eric Hartzell

Complimentary remarks concerning the early mission work of the Wisconsin Synod are few and far between. Perhaps there is some justification for this. There were, to be sure, no fancy, flashy mission happenings within the Synod in its early years. The Apache Missions in 1893 mark the beginning of self-supported, self-undertaken mission work on a foreign scale. (Even this undertaking hardly fell into the "fancy, flashy" mission category). Perhaps it is because our eyes search for the sensational that we fail to see what really was present. There definitely was real mission work and mission awareness present in the adolescent Wisconsin Synod. It didn't make it big in the history books, but it was very much a part of the Synod's history, nevertheless. The mission story of the early Wisconsin Synod is an interesting story. It tells us that although our forefathers in faith may not have been fancy or flashy, they really did feel and live the Lord's command to spread the Gospel in all the world.

Before beginning a discussion of the Wisconsin Synod's mission work from its beginning in 1850 until the Apache Mission in 1893, one fact should be established. The Wisconsin Synod was itself a mission at its start. Its pastors came from German missionary societies, notably those at Langenberg and Barmen. The majority of any financial support came from Germany. It is understandable then that the overriding concern in the early Wisconsin Synod was the training of its own pastors and teachers. That was a costly, time-consuming, manpower-consuming aspiration, but all knew from the start that only if this was accomplished could the Wisconsin Synod ever really prosper and succeed in the work of spreading the Gospel. (If we keep in mind the Synod's early status as a mission, we will not be so quick to point out its every fault and lack with regard to its own mission work.)

Even though this desire to establish a synodical independence siphoned off a great deal of the already meager resources, mission work was done both at home and abroad from the very start. Although the various evidences of mission concern will be dealt with in greater length, they are summarized in the following manifestation of mission work: the work of the *Reisepredigt*, the support of the Immigrant Mission in Castle Garden, New York and others like it; large contributions sent to Theodore Harms in Hermannsburg; concern shown for work among the Jews; aid and contribution for the Missouri Synod's work among the Negroes of the South; the reports of many mission festivals among the home congregations; and the abundance of mission related articles found in the *Gemeindeblatt*.

Pastor G. Fachtmann is an excellent example of a missionary. He arrived from Germany in the summer of 1857 and was assigned the Richfield and Town Polk congregations in Washington County.¹ He was not content to just serve these congregations, however. Kochler mentions it was characteristic in the early development of the Synod, "that the congregations at new locations were not gathered by ministers but that the people themselves banded together in order to procure preachers and teachers."² Fachtmann became aware of these pastorless groups. In October of 1857 he hiked from Milwaukee to Sheboygan via Port Washington. He continued on to Calumet, Chilton, and Fond du Lac. From Fond du Lac he proceeded up the Wolf and Rat Rivers to Menasha, Neenah, Hortonville, and Berlin. The following year, in 1858, he concentrated in the Beaver Dam, Horicon, Columbus area but continued also to visit his former circuit of congregations. In 1859 he was called by the

vacant La Crosse congregation. Using this as a home base, he proceeded to establish an extensive preaching circuit both on the Minnesota and Wisconsin sides. His ambition and drive eventually carried him to St. Paul and to the presidency of the Minnesota Synod. Fachtmann was an independent missionary going wherever he saw an opening to preach. His work had not been initiated by the Synod, although they did endorse it and authorize its continuance in 1858. Pastor Frachtmann proved without any doubt that he was wonderfully suited to be our Synod's traveling missionary, and he was adopted as such. It was at this same time that Streissguth was planning a trip to Germany to solicit further help from the mission societies for this work of *Reisepredigt*.³ Not all members within the Synod, however, were satisfied with this arrangement. Pastor Ph. Koehler wrote from Manitowoc on July 24, 1859,

I do not believe that a missionary employed by a unionistic society can work in agreement with a Lutheran synod. And then I hold that the missionary-at-large certainly must be in the employ of our Synod. Otherwise harm to our Lutheran Synod might easily grow out of it . . .⁴

Session 7 of the Synodical *Proceedings* of 1860 marks the inception of our own *Reisepredigt*. It was resolved that the president and the senior of the Synod set the matter of the *Reisepredigt* into motion. Although the *Reisepredigt* was now officially our own work, the mission societies of Langenberg and Berlin each promised \$100.00 a year support for this work. In addition, they supplied our first *Reiseprediger*. He was Pastor Edward Mohldehnke, a man already ordained and ready for work. In 1861 he set up home base in the town of Germany near Fort Atkinson. From there he served Whitewater, Waupun (both the city and the prison), Almond, Stevens Point, Wausau, Stettin, Berlin, Green Bay, Kewaunee, Carlton, Forrestville, Sandy Bay, Algoma, Portage City, Lewistown, Caledonia, and the vacant Synod congregations of Theresa, Lomira, Fond du Lac, Forrest, and Eldorado.

In 1865 Vice-President W. Streissguth stated that the work of our *Reiseprediger* had to be temporarily curtailed. *Reiseprediger* Mohldehnke had become Professor Mohldehnke at our seminary at Watertown. It was more pressing that he serve there. The work was really not picked up again in earnest for 15 years. During those 15 years the refrain rings out time and again in the *Proceedings* that we had no man we could spare from our already overworked pastorate. There was some shuffling done to try to cover the work. President W. Streissguth in 1867 relieved Pastor G. Thiele of his duties in Ripon to function as our *Reiseprediger*. In President Streissguth's words,

I don't know of another field within our activity in which the work is so pressing, the fruits so rewarding, and the success so obvious as this of the *Reisepredigt*. The more an organization pursues and professes to have pure teaching, the more zealously she should strive to keep her companions in the faith in the correct faith, and the more inexcusable and incomprehensible is her neglecting of such a lofty demand of love and Samaritan service to her companions in the faith.⁵

Pastor Thiele's service lasted just a short while, and he was called to fill a vacancy in Racine. There just were no men. Students were already pegged before they graduated. In 1872 students Bergholz, Althof, and Hodtwalker were eyed up by the authorities to fill the gap in the Peshtigo area—if they passed their exams! It is understandable why the *Reisepredigt* had to wait. We were not able to supply pastors to churches we already had.

However regrettable it may have been, it would have been folly to search out yet more pastorless groups of Christians.

During this period of relative inactivity in the *Reisepredigt* there was an interesting interlude. A Pastor C. Dreves from Hannover offered his services to our Synod as *Reiseprediger*. We were interested in Indian work already at this time. That interest had been aroused in part by a Pastor Matter from the Iowa Synod who related his Synod's experience with the Indians. That work had been forced to a stop by the bitter feelings the Indians had toward all white people because of the exploitation and avarice of a few. Dreves' assignment was to traverse the span of the Pacific Railroad and learn as much about Indians as he could to help us later in our hopeful endeavor. As a sideline he would offer his services as pastor to any German Lutherans he found along the way. Bad news followed the next year. President Bading's terse statement was, "The Indian mission and *Reisepredigt* was short lived."⁶ Dreves had gone west to California. He concentrated on the Germans there. He reported war conditions and a hopeless situation for mission work among the Indians. (Wounded Knee was not until 1890, this was 1877!) The work among the Californians was not supported. The feeling was that the work in California at this time would be spreading our resources too thin. We weren't coming close to meeting all of our obligations at home.

In 1879 Pastor E. Mayerhoff was put in charge of the *Reisepredigt*. Under his able leadership the effort began once more to prosper. A Pastor Hillemann was asked to go to the Dakotas, but the effort was given up because of prohibitive traveling costs. Watertown, S.D. was momentarily turned over to our counterparts in the Minnesota Synod. This policy of our Synod to stay close to home and establish a firm base is expressed clearly by President Joh. Bading in 1883. He maintained,

The pressing opportunity the Lord has given us is known. Every year thousands upon thousands of our people and brothers in faith spread out over the parts of this land in a mighty stream. Most settle down far from Lutheran congregations. Filled with their preoccupation for physical advancement, they neglect their spiritual needs. We have a holy and important mission and work to fulfill among these people which we will not be able to finish in our whole lives. The more zealously we strive to fulfill this mission, the more we will be working in the spirit of Luther and the more we will be following the admonition of the Apostle, 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them which are of the household of faith.'⁷

The work of *Reisepredigt* continued to grow during the 80's. In late 1883 Pastor P. Monhardt took up the post of *Reiseprediger*. In the 1884 Synodical *Proceedings* he was able to record that in about six months time, he had served each one of his 17 stations in the upper peninsula of Michigan at least once a month, some twice. He had traveled 3,012 miles by train, 508 miles by coach and wagon, 175 miles on foot, 102 miles on boat. He had baptized 24 children, confirmed 10, married seven couples, and had one burial.⁸ In his 1885 report, Pastor Monhardt gave his opinion of the Synod's traveling mission work. "It is very spread out, but if we had the strength to do the work, new areas could be taken on. We should exert ourselves so that the sects and the false brethren do not beat us to the work." He adds, "This expansion of our work must happen without neglecting our present obligation."⁹ Strictly speaking the *Reisepredigt* was not foreign mission work. (This fact was recognized by the Synod in 1877 when the motion to take the funds for the *Reisepredigt* from *Heidenmission* was voted down. The people were not to be misled when they gave money they thought was

going to a foreign field.) Yet in the 1860's, a trip to Minnesota or Michigan offered more terrors than any foreign mission field today with the exception of places in South America. Virgin forest still covered the land. The best roads were corduroy, and there were few of them. Huge swarms of mosquitoes had never seen a white man before and happily welcomed the change of provender. President Bading recalled one of his trips. He tells of wading across streams chest deep to find a way to get his horse across safely. As late as 1886 in the Escanaba area of upper Michigan, our *Reiseprediger* met with conditions which sound like Mark Twain's description of gold-rush California. There was a potpourri of races present—Swedes, Danes, Norwegians, Irish, English, Indians (equipped with bows and arrows), Indian-French halfbreeds. The report in the Synodical *Proceedings* also mentions the *Bier* and *Schnapshallen* and the kind of life revolving around such places in mining camps. These areas in which we worked as an early Synod were not foreign in our sense of the word, but they were just as challenging and hard to reach and serve as our foreign fields today.

The work of *Reidespredigt* was strenuous, taxing work. It was mission work. The men who carried it out were missionaries who faced monumental hardship to preach the Gospel. They left us some modest reports of their activities. Pastor Monhardt tells how easy it was to lose the way in Michigan forests and have to proceed for miles over a tangled mass of fallen trees. In summer, travel was often undertaken on foot with only a blazing sun and a backpack for company. In winter, travel was by horse and sleigh. On the trip from Escanaba to Fayette it was common for travelers to have to be carried into the halfway house because they were so cold. The 60 miles to Manistique were often covered in temperatures of -40 degrees. The roads were wilderness roads through uninhabited country punctuated only occasionally by lone Indian wigwams. The sleigh drivers were always armed because of the wolves. A woodchopper was reduced to scattered bones just a quarter of a mile from his camp, and a parishioner spent the night in a tree surrounded by 20 wolves. Railroad travel was hard too. Trains derailed because of the snow. One time everyone was forced to climb on the engine and complete the journey on it. Everyone made it to the station safely with the exception of some who had been forced to sit on the cowcatcher. They had frozen ears, but that was understandable. It was -44 degrees!!¹⁰ Pastor Johannes Ziebell in 1888 wrote the hair raising report of his trip on the ice to Fayette to visit a dying man. The ice on Lake Michigan was 5" thick and because it was so much closer he went that way as travelers did in winter. The ice was clear. He could see the water under the horses hoofs. He came to cracks in the ice over which he would make his horse jump. As the sleigh passed over, the ice would crack and crash into the water behind him. (He mentioned the presence of goose bumps. We understand.) On his return trip the next morning, he got lost and had to return the 14 miles back to Fayette. A snowstorm came that night and covered up the cracks and consequently made any hopes of a safe return on the ice out of the question. In order to get back to Escanaba to preach, he had to make an 81 mile trip over snow terrain. He left at 9:00 am and arrived in Escanaba at 11:45 pm. At 7:00 the next morning he was on his way in a blinding snowstorm to preach at Ford River. It was eight miles there and eight miles back again.¹¹ Such was the life of our *Reiseprediger*. Who would dare to throw stones at their missionary zeal?!

A second expression of mission awareness in our Synod was the support of the Immigrant Mission in Castle Garden, New York. Initially there were many immigrant missions. In the very first year of the *Gemeindeblatt* (Oct. 1, 1865) mention is made of a contribution to the Immigrant Mission in New York. In 1867 Pastor Ebert laid the matter of the Immigrant Mission upon the hearts of those in attendance at the mission festival of Sheboygan, Mosel, and Centerville. In this same year President Streissguth appealed to the Synod to support the Immigrant Mission of Pennsylvania and New York.

It was in the early 1870's that the Synodical Conference took over the work of the Immigrant Mission. Our funds then supported this venture. In April 15, 1872 the *Gemeindeblatt* ran the following article, "*Unsere Emigranten Mission*." The article stressed the Immigrant Mission to be our mission, not only because it worked for us but because it worked according to our spirit. The work of the Immigrant Mission was to aid the poor, the defenseless, the ignorant, and the naive who suffered at the hands of frauds and quacks on the docks of New York. The Immigrant Mission helped the immigrants physically, but it also pointed to their more pressing need, their spiritual care. It helped reestablish confessional Lutherans from the old country with confessional Lutheran congregations in the new. The names of solid Lutheran pastors and congregations were given to the departing emigrants. The Immigrant Mission was also a valuable aid in directing pastors from Germany to their new wilderness churches. Many of our early pastors came by this route. It was a sophisticated operation having connections in points of departure in Germany. A man by the name of Zieger, who had himself gone through the Immigrant Mission in Castle Garden, was sent back to Bremen to provide both physical and spiritual guidance for the departing. 144 Russians from Odessa were happy to be directed by him to services in Bremen.¹² The Immigrant Mission was also a strong mission arm. In 1885, at about the time the flow of immigrants was slowing down, the report was that during the year 2,600 Synod calendars had been distributed, 5,000 tracts, about 6,000 of the *Lutheran Kinderblatt*, plus a large number of Canadian Lutheran magazines, *Lutheran Volksblatt* and *Lutheran Anzeiger*.¹³

Real foreign mission work in the strict sense of the word was carried on by others whom we supported. There is an acknowledgement in the May 1, 1866 *Gemeindeblatt* of a small gift to Hermannsburg. At this same time we were closely tied to the mission societies of Langenberg and Berlin. That relationship, however, was dissolved by unionism in 1868. Our hope for future pastors and for a foreign mission operation to support lay in Theodore Harms at Hermannsburg. We promised him our foreign mission money; he promised us pastors. In 1869 he reported having received \$300.00 from our Synod, in 1870 it was \$466.00, and in 1872 \$564.00. In this way our mission money was channeled into the work in India, Australia, South Africa. He received our mission money every year from 1869-1875. In 1876 this contribution was cut off to support our own man Dreves on his Indian mission venture. As was said before, this effort never materialized. After the mission project of Dreves was given up, this part of the Synod's contributions was kept within the Synod. A committee was set up to look for some foreign mission work we could support. The foreign mission fund was borrowed from to help support our educational facilities. During the last part of the 1880's some of this money also went for the support of students J. Plocher and G. Adascheck and later P. Mayerhoff who were studying to be missionaries at Northwestern.

There was yet a third way in which a feeling for missions was manifested. In March 15, 1873 in the *Gemeindeblatt* a Pastor J.F.N. Wolf in Jackson City, Michigan points up a mission concern of early Lutherans which we seem to have neglected today. In his article, "A Word Concerning the Jewish Mission," he stressed the need for work among the Jews of the world as well as among the Gentiles. In this article he related cases of Jews who had been converted to Christianity. He also maintained Jews had to be approached differently with the Gospel than other prospects. The approach had to be one that strove to get behind the barrier they had erected against Christianity from their childhood. The *Gemeindeblatt* reveals an interest in the Jews by now and then including an article which related something about the Jewish situation in the world. Evidently the writers and readers of the *Gemeindeblatt* were interested in knowing something about the Jews. The following information, for instance, is given in the March 1, 1868 *Gemeindeblatt*. There were supposedly 20,000

converted Jews on the European mainland, more than 3,000 in England. Of those in England, 100 were officials in the church. Mention was also made of 28 converted Jewish professors on the faculty of the University of Berlin. The May 15, 1885 edition has a short report on the Lutheran Jewish Mission in New York. The August 15, 1886 issue contains an estimate of Jewish population in various countries throughout the world. The total number of Jews in the world was estimated at 6,300,000. There was more than just a casual interest in the Jews. The *Juden* Mission became an object of Synod support from 1873 on through the 1893 date. Acknowledgement of contributions can be seen in both the *Gemeindeblatt* and the Synodical *Proceedings*.

It was in 1878 that the Synodical Conference met in Fort Wayne and decided to begin work among the Negroes in the South. The work actually began by the Missouri Synod in that same year. Our Synodical *Proceedings* record a contribution in that first year of \$100.00. In 1886 the sum came to \$229.05. We contributed regularly through the 1893 date. By 1886 there were three established congregations in the Negro missions—New Orleans, Little Rock, and Meherrin, VA. In 1886 the report to the Synodical Conference, which was included in our *Proceedings*, was that if the church in New Orleans had access to the same funds that the sects did, they could drive the sectarian churches from New Orleans in short order. Success was especially great among the youth. Schools had more applications than they could handle. There were 215 souls in the Negro missions, 112 communicants, 30 had been baptized that year. There were in addition 363 children in the parochial schools and 305 in the Sunday schools.¹⁴

Perhaps the very best indication that mission work was a real interest and concern of our forefathers is brought out in the mission festival. The custom of mission festivals was brought over from Germany. "B" in his article in the *Gemeindeblatt*, "Our Mission Festivals," says, "Mission festivals are celebrated among us not because God commands them but because we are driven to it by our love to the heathen and our thankfulness to God."¹⁵ Even in the very early history of our Synod, a number of mission festivals were celebrated. Maybe this isn't as strange in view of the fact that a number of our early pastors had been missionaries in foreign countries before coming here. Pastor B. Ungrodt in Jefferson spent 12 years in South Africa. The mission work was dear to his heart. He was a favorite speaker at mission festivals even after his health made it necessary for him to give up the ministry. Pastor A. Liefeld had also come here from South Africa in 1866. The town of Morrison called a Pastor C. Roeck from India. In 1885 at the mission festival of St. Paul's in Forrest, Wisconsin, Pastor Martin Denniger preached on his personal mission experiences. Pastor Denniger had been a missionary in Borneo until the work there was wiped out by a blood bath. From there he had gone to Nias on the coast of Sumatra.¹⁶ It was natural for these men to have informed their people of the work being carried on in other parts of the world.

Mission festivals were big occasions in these early rural congregations. A good example of one of these occurrences would be the gathering in Oshkosh on the 8th Sunday after Trinity, 1874. The congregations from Fond du Lac, Nikime, Ripon, and Neenah, along with Trinity of the Missouri Synod, celebrated their mission festival in the woods of an American farmer by the name of Smith. Pastor C. Strassen from Watertown preached on Acts 4:1-20. He pointed out that the statement, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," holds true today. After the offering and the singing of some hymns by the congregation, Pastor Neumann preached on the withered fig tree—Mark 11:13-23. Dinner followed, and when it was over, the people sang again before the next sermon. Pastor T. Gensicke preached on the good Samaritan. His thoughts were that Christians must have an open eye for the spiritual needs of the heathen and the backsliden Christian; Christians must have a

sympathetic heart which can't bear to pass up the need; and Christians must have an open hand to give that God's Kingdom may be built. Pastor Hoops from Nikime closed the day on Matt. 9:35-38's description of the ripe field of missions. He quoted the statistics that at that time there were 600 million heathen and only 200 million Christians in the world. How necessary for us to speak! The total collection for the day was \$211.40.¹⁷ This is not the only instance of a mission festival. The yellowed pages of the *Gemeindeblatt* contain many, many such reports. (The October 1, 1886 number of the *Gemeindeblatt* alone records 14 mission festivals!)

The basic reason for mission festivals in our early history was the same as our reason for mission festivals today. It is true that then there was the added social attraction of a get-together which has lost some of its attraction today, but the basic appeal and message was the same. The sermon themes and parts sound surprisingly contemporary. At the 1867 Sheboygan, Mosel, and Centerville mission festival, Pastor Kluge showed from Romans 10:11-17 the correct way to carry on mission work, the means, and the goal. Pastor B. Ungrodt's closing remarks, based on Isaiah 35, pointed toward heathen mission work, especially among the Namaquas and Bushmen of Africa. On the 9th Sunday after Trinity, 1870, at Farmington, Pastor Ungrodt preached on the South African missions where he had been. Pastor Gensicke preached on Acts 4:12. His theme—"There is salvation in none other." The parts were 1) Do you believe that?, 2) What does your faith accomplish for mission? The August 1, 1872 *Gemeindeblatt* records Pastor Schneider's appeal for the suffering needy Blacks in Africa (*soweit dieselber bekannt sind*), especially in light of their recent slavery.

The report of the mission festival usually contained the amount of the contribution given. The following quotes from Koehler provide us with some idea of the setting in which these contributions were given.

The first Germans faced hard work in establishing their homesteads and clearing them of the encumbrances, physical and financial. Cash money was a rare article . . . During the whole time of the immigration tide from Germany, up to the 90's, the German farmers in America were mortgaged to the hilt during the arduous years of clearing their land, and after that they slaved again as long to clear the acquired property of the mortgage."¹⁸

With that in mind some of the mission festival contributions take on added significance. The following are some of the contributions listed in the *Gemeindeblatt*: Oct. 1, 1865, Fort Madison, Lee County Iowa Mission Festival—\$65.00 total; Aug. 1, 1870, congregations of Sheboygan, Centerville, Town Hermann, and Mosel at Sheboygan—\$77.17 total; Aug. 15, 1870, Jefferson, Helenville, and Farmington at Farmington—\$115.07 total; Oct. 15, 1885, St. John's Ridgeville—\$58.00 total; Sept. 1, 1886, St. Paul's, Forrest—\$33.60 total (Pastor E. Mayerhoff writes that the \$33.60 was \$10.00 less than the previous year due to extensive hail and drought in the area.); Sept. 15, 1886, Cedarburg, Granville at Kirchhayn—\$122.00 total.

From the very first the *Gemeindeblatt* carried articles of mission interest. There were of course the reports on mission work affiliated in some way to our Synod. There were also, however, reports and articles on mission work carried on by others. These articles spanned a wide range of interest in the field of missions. In all likelihood our forefathers were better informed on the general progress and history of Christian mission work in the world than we are. A sketchy listing of some of the articles will perhaps make the point. In the Jan. 15, 1867 *Gemeindeblatt* the work of the London Mission Society among the Papuas of Australia

was described. Jan. 1, 1868 brought an article, "Eighteen Years in Eastern India." It was the story of a missionary who had worked there. May 15, 1868 ran an article describing Abyssynia and mission attempts there. The yearly mission reports of Hermannsburg, Leipzig, and other mission societies were regularly printed. The Dec. 1, 1869 issue tells of hopes in the Hermannsburg Mission to do work among the Chinese in California. Aug. 15, 1869 describes work among the Cherokees, Choctaws, Dakotas, Omahas, and Creeks in this country. Nov. 1, 1872 brings the story of Franz Heinrich Kleinschmidt, a missionary in South Africa. Four issues in 1873 were devoted to the Lutheran mission in India. In the 1880's *Heiden und Heidenchristen* [heathen and Christians among the heathen] became a regular feature of the *Gemeindeblatt*. A whole host of mission fields were reported on at length in this series of articles—Madagascar, New Zealand, India, Greenland, the Sandwich Islands, Tahiti, and China to name some.

The chance to speak with the fathers of the Wisconsin Synod about mission work has passed. Their voices have ceased forever, but some of their words and thoughts still remain. They did not leave us extensive witness to their feelings nor complete answers to our questions. Were our pastors concerned about mission work? Certainly some of the evidence given so far proves they were, at least some of them. Professor A.F. Ernst preached on I Peter 2:9 at a mission festival in Burlington in 1871. His thoughts on that day were that even if we are not missionaries or preachers, we have the obligation to carry out mission work. We do that by supporting those who can go with God's Word in our places. Professor Ernst's admonition was to give! Give that these people have no justifiable grounds to accuse us of being stingy in our support of the great work of the Lord. Perhaps this feeling of Professor Ernst is reflected in his happy report on Jan. 1, 1872 in the *Gemeindeblatt*. "A student at Northwestern, a Norwegian, who has already completed several years of theological training, wants to dedicate himself to be a missionary to the heathen world, probably to the island of Madagascar." Were our forefathers concerned about mission work? In July 1, 1884 "B" in "*Unsere Missionsfeste*" claims that the many instances of mission festivals were proof that mission awareness had not died out. He proceeded with words which sound so familiar even to an attender of mission festivals today:

The one who has found the true God is happy even in the greatest misfortune, but there are so many millions of people who don't know God. Are we going to calmly look on as these people all come to eternal grief while we have the means to save them laid into our hands by God and the command we should bring it to them? Are we going to excuse ourselves and say we can't take part in foreign mission work because we have too much to do in our own country? Is this excuse going to hold water before God? Pray God that He increases our faith and love and also that He opens doors for us through which we can penetrate into the broad dark world of the heathen with our mission work.

Our forefathers were not afraid to ask themselves and their constituents penetrating, searching questions concerning their mission efforts. They were not unaware of failings nor were they above self-criticism. Pastor T. Gensicke aired some very pointed and maybe painful questions. In Nov. 15, 1871 he wrote an article entitled, "Why is there so little interest for the expansion of God's Kingdom?" He puts his finger on the eternal reason for nonchalance in this matter when he says that people aren't concerned about mission work because they really haven't tasted and seen for themselves how wonderful the Lord is. In the following year, Jan. 15, 1872, this same man wrote, "Why should we help expand God's

Kingdom?" He answered his own question in three basic ways: one, there is the crying need both to save people from the sects and enthusiasts in this country and to save the heathen from the prince of darkness in other countries; two, we help spread God's Kingdom because the Lord Himself commanded us to do it. In Sept. 15, 1874 in the article "*Innere Mission*" [Home Missions] the statement is made: "If you aren't involved in missions as you should be, then you don't fully appreciate the happiness and blessedness you yourself possess in the Word and Sacrament. You haven't, therefore, seen the need of your brother and sister and taken it to heart. Gather eternal riches in the forms of men's souls!" Pastor Gensicke asks the question of the readers of the *Gemeindeblatt*, "Can we then ever be allowed to say, 'What responsibility do we have to those unknown people who live so far away?'" This same sort of questioning is carried on in July 15, 1887 by the article entitled "Is the command of our Lord, 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every living creature,' also given to us, or is this command completely fulfilled and thus negated?" The author refutes the saying that was evidently floating around at that time, "What would result only in drops in a foreign country, produces bucketsful at home." God wants each one of us to do His work until every soul in the whole world has heard the Gospel. That was this writer's conviction.

These few quotes dispel any feeling that all our early pastors were content and satisfied with our mission work as a Synod. They realized that not enough was being done. They yearned to be doing more. Their words certainly show that. That brings us once more to the question, "Why was there so little mission work done in the early Wisconsin Synod?" It has been our object to show that there was mission work done in those early years. It has also been attempted to find valid, justifiable reasons why dedicated, mission-minded men did not accomplish more.

As stated at the beginning, the establishment of pastor and teacher training facilities was of over-riding concern and importance to the early Wisconsin Synod. Who can say what kind of mission program would have been in existence if there had not been this terrible drain on the synodical system. The fact remains that however much the early pastors wished to do mission work and however much we would have liked to see them do mission work, they were working under severe limitations. Some of the limitations have been discussed already. In closing, the following information is given to the as yet unconvinced critic. In the 1880 Synodical *Proceedings* on page 70, this little bit of information is written: "In outstanding debts and notes on our institutions we owe a total of \$18,825.00. In addition we have borrowed \$837.91 from the mission treasure. The total debt is \$19,662.91.

The salary of a *Reiseprediger* in 1886 was \$300.00 a year. The ratio of \$300.00 to the average pastor's salary today would give a sum of about half a million dollars as the debt owed in terms of money today. In order for this to be a truly comparable figure, the half a million dollars must be multiplied by the number of times larger the Wisconsin Synod is today than it was in 1880. If these figures will be allowed to stand, then the Wisconsin Synod of 1880 was laboring under a load of millions of dollars in our money. In view of just that fact alone, who would dare or care to ask why there was not more flashy mission endeavor?

This paper was written as a senior history project in 1976 at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin. Pastor Eric Hartzell serves the Apache Indians at our Eastfork Lutheran Church, Whiteriver, Arizona.

ENDNOTES

- 1John Philipp Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod* (St. Cloud, Minnesota: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970), p. 53.
- 2*Ibid.*, p. 64.
- 3*Ibid.*, p. 63
- 4*Ibid.*
- 5*Synodal Bericht*, 1862, p. 9.
- 6*Ibid.*, 1877, p. 12.
- 7*Ibid.*, 1883, pp. 13-14.
- 8*Ibid.*, 1884, p. 54.
- 9*Gemeindeblatt*, "Bericht ueber unsre Reisemission" (March 1, 1885), pp. 101-102.
- 10*Ibid.*
- 11*Ibid.*, "Aus dem Gebiete der Reisedigt in Obermichigan" (February 1, 1888), pp. 85-86.
- 12*Ibid.*, May 15, 1874), p. 7.
- 13*Ibid.*, "Unsere Emigrantenmission Im Jahre 1884" (February 15, 1884), p. 92.
- 14*Ibid.*, "Bericht ueber die Negermission" (July 1, 1886), pp. 165-167.
- 15*Ibid.*, "Unsre Missionfeste" (July 1, 1884), pp. 167-168.
- 16*Ibid.*, "Missionfest" (September 15, 1885), p. 16.
- 17*Ibid.*, "Missionfest in Oshkosh" (August 15, 1874), pp. 6-7.
- 18Koehler, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

Eduard Moldehnke's Reisebericht

Translated by Arnold O. Lehmann

The history of the Reisedigt program in the early years of the Wisconsin Synod was published in the spring 1988 edition of this Journal. The Reisedigt (itinerant preacher) actually served as a traveling vacancy preacher, serving both organized and unorganized Lutheran congregations because of the lack of pastors in the synod.

The first Reisedigt, the Rev. Gottlieb Fachtmann, went on a mission journey in 1857 on his own while he was the called pastor of the congregations in Town Polk and Richfield, both some 25 miles northwest of Milwaukee. In the next two years he made several such journeys but was never called or asked by the Wisconsin Synod to make these, even though he gave frequent reports to the synod by means of written reports or letters. The 1859 synod convention asked the German missionary societies for help in establishing the post of Reisedigt. In early 1860 the synod received a notice that one of the societies would support the program with \$100 a year for five years, and that a second would soon follow suit. Since Fachtmann moved to La Crosse and since the German Societies objected to Fachtmann's being a Reisedigt both sides of the ocean began looking for a suitable candidate. In 1861 the societies sent over as candidate Eduard Moldehnke, an erudite young pastor. After arriving sometime in August and settling in Watertown he embarked on his first journey that September. However, as he notes in the last paragraph of his report, he was ordered by the German societies which sponsored his work to find a permanent place for the winter months, so he accepted a call to Town Oakland, near Fort Atkinson, WI and served the local congregation as well as a small group in Fort Atkinson itself.

About six weeks after he completed his first journey and had settled in Town Oakland he sent in the following report, most likely to the synod's president, Pastor Joh. Bading.

Oakland Township, Fort Atkinson, Jefferson Co. Wis.
December 2, 1861

JOURNEY REPORT

On September 17, 1861 I traveled from Watertown to Waupun. After searching for several hours I finally found a religious family – cabinetmaker Charles Hermann – from whom I received a friendly welcome after I mentioned the name Muehlhaeuser. He had stayed with them three years earlier. A Reform pastor comes to Waupun every three weeks, but he is not well received by the Lutheran families. They say that he is quite long-winded. Including the farmers in the vicinity a congregation of 25 families could easily be organized in Waupun. Some strongly desire a Lutheran pastor while others could care less. My host wishes that a simple church could be built. About three years ago a meeting was held for this purpose, but because of disunity the church construction was not realized. A former Methodist preacher, then a craftsman, a toper, a Lutheran preacher, and now a Dutch Reform preacher in Aldo, whose name is Schreck, was the pastor of the congregation at that time.

On the 18th I went to Berlin. I was informed by a German lady that most of the small number of Germans there were Catholic; a few were Methodist and two or three Lutheran,

the latter now apostate. I heard the same thing at the hotel which I found after considerable searching.

And so on September 19th I went with the stagecoach to Town Almond, a distance of about 40 miles. About 16 German families live there, not far from the post office. I received a cordial welcome from Mr. Millius, and then went to the various farmers, inviting them to come to the service. That evening I preached in a schoolhouse. I had the people promise me that they would conduct Sunday School and reading services. They were willing to do everything in order to get a preacher. They especially desired religious instruction for their children, something which the people in all the places that I visited requested. The people in Almond are prosperous and will no doubt soon start to give annual contributions for the construction of a new church. They indeed listened to my explanatory remarks with great attention.

On September 20th I went on foot to look up another four families who live in the prairie about five miles out. They are somewhat inclined toward Methodism. Because of the heavy rainfall I found them at home and so I preached to them that afternoon in a private home with the result that they asked me to speak to them again on my return trip. I then went in the rain through a desolate area to Plover where I was unable to locate the only German living there. Because the weather was so bad, I stayed there overnight in a hotel.

Early on September 21st I went the five miles to Stevens Point. I received a cordial welcome from the one everyone calls Grandma Steinke. I then went through the spread-out village to invite the people to the service. I was able to secure a schoolhouse for \$1.00 for my Saturday and Sunday services. Between 25 and 30 persons came to the services. I had three councilmen – Kuhl, Anschutz and Kaht – elected. Their election was to be certified only after all of the Germans who were working out of town could express their views in another meeting. It was then resolved either to rent or to build a place for holding services. Contact was made immediately with an owner for the purchase of the lot. I urged reading services and Sunday School. One of the councilmen declared himself prepared for the latter. Earlier, when he had arrived in Ohio and did not know the area, a child led him to his destination. He then made a vow to teach Sunday School. Since he did this in Ohio, he would like to do the same in Stevens Point. About 20 families will join forces there. Several of the men were not at home at the time.

On September 28th I took the stagecoach to Wausau, a distance of 36 miles. It is a village surrounded by blackened tree stumps, lying in a beautiful area along the Wisconsin River and is actually the last village in that direction. I stayed with Mr. Paff and preached to about 30 people that evening. Earlier in the day I had a meeting with a Missourian, Hoffmann, who would like to settle there, but is being rejected by the people. He has a congregation in the woods about ten miles out of Wausau, but hurries on horseback to about 30 stations. Because of a lack of physical strength he accomplishes little of importance. He was very rude to me even though he is only about 21 years old. Naturally I repudiated his attacks, but I am afraid too mildly. His superior, Strieter, who lives in Princeton, became entangled in a terrible dispute on the street with the local Methodist preacher, so much so that each protected himself with his cane. Finally both dignified men spat each other in the face. Because of his domineering manner Hoffmann has caused offense in all the places where he has preached. Even many in his own congregation want to get rid of him. Therefore he preached in Wausau in a private home and when Mr. Paff asked him, how come he preached there without permission, he said that he was a preacher and thus had the right to preach anywhere, etc.

On September 24th I and a young man went 11 miles into the wild forest – Town Stettin. About 50 families, mostly Pommeranians, live there but are widely scattered. That evening

I preached in the only schoolhouse in that area. The people are very anxious to have their own preacher. Previously they were quite poor, but today are prosperous. The land is very good. My host, Hermann Marquardt, lives on a six acre piece which he cleared the past year. I spoke with a man who together with his wife cleared an area of 20 acres without the aid of oxen. There is a large virgin forest nearby – sugar maple, elm, pine, hemlock. New German settlers arrive here every year.

On the 25th I returned to Wausau in the rain because I had promised them that I would celebrate Thanksgiving Day with them. That week I instructed two girls, ages 18 and 15. The older one is soon to be married but wants to be confirmed before that. On the 26th I delivered the Thanksgiving Day sermon. On the 27th several farmers from Town Stettin – 16 miles from Wausau – whom I met by chance asked me to conduct services for them because at that time they were not busy. I was willing to do so because I saw how they treasured the word of God, and I promised to preach to them on October 1st. Also other people in Town Stettin – seven miles from Wausau – asked me to visit them. Here there is a teacher, Mr. Theodor Wegner – who is doing all he can to have a preacher from our synod called there.

On Sunday, September 29th, I conducted a confessional service in Wausau, delivered a sermon, confirmed the two girls, communed 18 persons, and baptized a child. Then I went seven miles on a miserable road to Town Berlin where a large group was waiting in a schoolhouse. The people, mostly Pommeranians, made a favorable impression on me. Those who were leaning toward Methodism wanted to return to our church if a Lutheran preacher would come. A blacksmith, Schaefer, also worked there and I ran into his followers everywhere, but the people would leave him as soon as a Lutheran preacher would come.

I stayed overnight with a farmer, Joh. Bartel, and slept in the same bed with him – a horrible experience. After a sleepless night I left there on September 30th with Wegner who accompanied me for five miles and introduced me to those who lived on that road. The entire trip of nine miles to Town Berlin was made on indescribably bad roads. I arrived at Mr. Zastrow's place where I encountered very frightening experiences. In that neck of the woods live several Old-Lutherans, difficult and pious, if both can exist together. After several consultations the people gave me permission to preach, but on a text they would not give me until that evening. After being treated in such an unfriendly manner, I simply sat there until evening, but did instruct the children.

That evening for a text they handed me a blank piece of paper. I based my sermon on that, namely that a person is nothing in his own thoughts, etc., without God. I then was tormented with many insidious questions, after which I was directed to a miserable room for my night's rest. On the following morning, October 1st, more irksome arguments about confessions, etc.—I gladly left that place in the rain on the worst roads possible and went three miles farther to people who had invited me earlier. I preached there at noon and hurried back the 16 miles to the city in the rain.

In Wausau 26 families are ready to organize a congregation but want a preacher first. If we consider the entire area, about 300 German families live there. Late that evening I baptized two children and then on October 2, in cold weather and not yet completely dried out, I went in an open wagon to Stevens Point. On the way I stopped in Knowlton, baptized a child and promised the two or three German families there that I would conduct services for them at some other time. I preached that evening in Stevens Point and I heard from a man from Berlin through personal mail that I was expected there. I promised to preach there if the stage coach did not arrive too late. That night I stayed with the wonderful Grandfather Steinke. Early the next morning, October 3rd, I baptized a child at 6:30 am and traveled to

Town Almond. I visited the four families who lived alone in the prairie and was well received. That afternoon I preached to them and was invited to stay overnight. But I continued on in the rain to the other 16 families and preached to them that evening in a private home. Afterwards I sang along with the people and found that they for the most part liked the Methodist melodies better than the Lutheran—which was also the case with the other four families living in the prairie. To my joy I learned that they approved of reading services. Sunday School was to begin as soon as the books arrived.

On October 4th I went from Almond to Berlin. However the roads were so bad because of the rain that we did not arrive there until 11:00 pm. Hence I could not preach there, but gave the hotel manager instructions to tell master-smith Fischer, who was described to me as being very religious, of my intention to preach there at another time. Also the hotel manager – I encountered a better one this time than the first time – was very much interested in a German service. He also took less for my lodging and food.

On Saturday, the 5th, I went to Waupun, where I had promised to conduct services on Sunday, the 6th. That is why I had to hurry so earlier. On Saturday afternoon I went with my host, Hermann, to Atwater, a settlement seven miles distant from Waupun, to invite the people there to come to church. About seven families live there. Sunday morning I preached in Waupun, and in the afternoon to 25 inmates at the prison – of these at least half were Catholic.

On October 7th I went on foot from Waupun to Fox Lake, and from there I rode to Portage City. About 100 German families live there but most of them are Catholic. Of the rest many are unbelievers. Only 25 families came to the service. To that number about 20 families came from Lewiston, which is nearby. At this place a farmer, unlucky in a love affair, sold his farm and gave the funds for the construction of a new church. In Portage City I was given a big welcome. Pastor Rohrlock of the Iowa Synod had lost his welcome there. Only two families still wanted him. The rest of the group left him. He made the confirmands swear that they renounce dancing, etc., and he had incorrectly pronounced the excommunication of some of the people. This congregation of 13 families does not belong to the Iowa Synod. They want a preacher from our synod, so I advised them to apply to our synod for one. I preached there on October 8th, but then went back to Watertown to recuperate from the cares of the journey.

On October 13 I returned to Portage and preached there both morning and afternoon. On the 14th I went to Kilbourn City, arriving there at 6:00 pm. I made my presence known to the people and conducted a service at 7:30 pm. All of the Evangelicals of the village came. They had a desire to hear God's word. No Lutheran preacher had been there as yet, but a Catholic priest comes quite frequently. About 20 men from there and from the countryside could be gathered together, but not very many women. One finds many mixed marriages there.

On October 15 I returned to Watertown in order to prepare for my move to Town Oakland near Fort Atkinson. The honorable mission societies of Berlin and Langenberg had instructed me to take a permanent place for the winter. However I do question the expediency of this mode of procedure. Also, I do not believe that my congregations here and in Fort Atkinson would be happy with my absence during the better part of the year. May God direct every thing according to his will and show me the best way by which I can be useful in my calling. My first trip was carried out rather hastily, but I wanted to learn the lay of the land first. Now I have insight into the conditions and necessities here, and I hope with God's help to be able to make journeys in the spring in a happy frame of mind. But I have already experienced so much that I realize that meeting with people in a hit or miss manner would

result in little good. I must, even if it cannot always take place, visit the various stations at designated times so that the people will not become discouraged. Too often the longing for a sermon on God's word drives them to the Methodists.

I would be most appreciative if the brothers of the synod would give me suggestions about possible stations, etc. This would make my work somewhat easier. Because of the great expanse of territory which I must cover, I would with such information avoid much unnecessary waste of time. I can see that a single *Reiseprediger* is not enough for such a large territory. Nevertheless I beseech God to stand beside me so that I can at least accomplish as much as my strength allows.

Eduard Moldehnke

AN OUTLINE OF THE DATES AND STATIONS VISITED

September

- 17 Waupun
- 18 Berlin village
- 19 Town Almond
- 20 Town Almond – another area, and Plover
- 21 Stevens Point
- 22 Stevens Point
- 23 Wausau
- 24 Town Stettin
- 25 Wausau
- 26 Wausau
- 27 Town Stettin – two stations
- 28 (probably returned to Wausau)
- 29 Wausau and Township Berlin
- 30 Township Berlin – another station

October

- 1 Town Berlin – another station
- 2 Wausau and Stevens Point
- 3 Town Almond – two stations
- 4 Berlin village
- 5 Waupun and Atwater
- 6 Waupun and prison
- 7 Fox Lake and Portage City
- 8 Portage City and Watertown
- 9-12 Recuperation period in Watertown
- 13 Portage City
- 14 Kilbourn City (today Wisconsin Dells)
- 15 Watertown – completion of journey

Four World Mission Vignettes

Edgar Hoenecke

"I demand that you do your duty to our East German state"

Opa August Lerle
Berlin, 1958

Pastor Alfred Maas and I were attending a pastoral conference of our German refugee church at a hotel in West Berlin. The pastors from our Refugee Mission in West Germany were meeting with some men from East Germany.

President August Lerle of the mission in East Germany was also expected for the meeting. In fact, he had been asked to deliver a paper on the Christian Easter miracle, its historical reliability and its marvelous effect on the Church of all ages.

The pastors in West Germany had word not only of his plan to attend but also of the fact that he had carried out his assignment and would deliver the essay on the morning of our meeting.

The conference was opened with a brief devotion. But Opa Lerle, as everyone called him, had not put in his appearance. The brethren made certain allowances for him because they knew that he was troubled with failing eyesight and might have failed to observe his firm rule of being on time for his appointments.

One of the pastors, Armin Schlender, had visited Opa Lerle in East Germany and had heard from a fellow pastor that the people in East Germany were greatly concerned about their dear Opa Lerle's welfare. They said that he still insisted on riding his bicycle to make his calls and that he had narrowly escaped injury when he collided with the cart of some vender whom he did not see in time.

We had carried on with other business for over an hour and had almost given up on having Opa Lerle and his paper. His son, Dr. Ernst Lerle, still insisted that his father would show up and thought that he might have been detained at the check-point between East and West Germany. It was known that he sometimes allowed himself remarks about the super-rigid, time-consuming search and seizure practices of the border guards which were less than flattering.

His son was proven correct. When Opa Lerle finally showed up he had a most amusing story to tell. And he told it with a mischievous chuckle of satisfaction at having used the very zeal of the border guard to witness.

He related in detail what had happened to detain him. When he approached the check-point he was searched and interrogated in the usual manner. Then his briefcase was taken and emptied on the guard's counter. As soon as the guard saw his German Bible and Greek New Testament, a few letters and his conference paper on the resurrection, written in Opa Lerle's barely legible handwriting, he gave it a cursory glance and said that he could proceed through the turnstile to West Berlin.

Opa Lerle told us that he was about to proceed, when he heard the guard shout after him, "See that you don't make any propaganda against the state at your conference!"

This infuriated Opa Lerle. He stepped back from the turnstile and set his briefcase back on the guard's counter. Then he said, "How do you know what I will say at the meeting?"

You haven't even checked my written document to see whether it contains seditious material. You didn't read what I had written."

Then the guard made another remark which only added to Opa Lerle's irritation. He said, "Oh, that is not necessary in your case, old man. I'm sure it's just more of your stupid religion. You may go."

"Now," Opa Lerle told us with a twinkle showing even through his smoked glasses, "I determined that I would hoist this arrogant atheist on his own petard. (*werde ihn in seiner eigenen Falle fangen*)" I said to him: "As a citizen of East Germany I now demand that you do your duty and make sure that I am not carrying anything subversive to our government. I insist that you take the time to read what I have written and will present at the meeting in West Berlin."

The guard had not bargained for this and tried to placate this citizen without taking time to read the document he carried. But Opa Lerle took the paper and held it out to the guard while he sat down on the bench. He was not sure that the men had read everything, but Opa Lerle was satisfied that his more thorough perusal of the paper had served its purpose and the man had at least been given the witness of the Lord's resurrection.

"That," Opa Lerle then declared, "explains my late arrival and I ask the conference to excuse my tardiness. I am sure that it is just as important for me to witness of our Lord's resurrection to this infidel as to do so here where we are all happy believers in Christ."

Chairman Pastor Gustav Malischewski laughingly granted Opa Lerle the conference's pardon for his late arrival and expressed the hope that Opa Lerle's witness would under the Spirit's working bring the communist guard to faith.

Then old Opa Lerle, the doughty president of the faithful Lutherans in the dispersion, inspired us with his powerful paper on the Lord's triumphant resurrection.

"I am also called a fisherman"

John and Jack Singh
Fiji Islands, 1970

There was a lay-over of five hours on my flight to Djakarta at Nandi on the Fiji Islands. I wondered what one could possibly do on a remote Pacific Island to while away so many hours.

The sign – "Island Tour – Five Dollars" – and the young man who introduced himself as John Singh answered my question. His sales pitch was far from a promise of anything very exciting, but it was something better to do than to sit in a terminal for five hours.

The scenery along the shore was beautiful and I made a few pencil sketches of charming lagoons, framed in swaying coconut palms. Another stop at the so-called museum proved to be a tourist trap. I was in no situation to be loaded down with souvenirs so early on my tour of our Southeast Asian missions.

Invariably John Singh stopped at beaches where he saw small fishing boats just off shore. He would yell to his acquaintances in some native tongue and then tell me in English that this was a good day for fishing.

After several exchanges of this kind I asked him whether my tour had spoiled his own plans for the day. He admitted that he and his father had planned to try their luck fishing, if he had not found a fare.

Quite rashly, perhaps because of my boredom, I said, "Perhaps we have time to do both; I would like to go out with you, if we have time before my onward flight."

That was all John needed. He explained that his home was very near to where we were and his father was all set to go. Within minutes we stopped at a little cottage near the beach and a swarthy man of about fifty came out whom John introduced as his father, Jack Singh.

He told us that he had the poles, tackle and bait all ready so we could start without delay. He led the way down to a reed-choked channel where he kept his little wooden boat. When I got my first view of this craft I realized that I had been far too rash in agreeing to go fishing with the two Singhs. The boat was half-filled with water, lying in the reeds! Jack Singh sensed my reluctance and reassured me, "It's only rain water and we'll bail it out very quickly." It was too late for me to back out of the expedition and, trusting his explanation, I got into the craft. I was told to take the bow seat which was fairly dry.

The father took the oars and we moved out into the channel heading for the barrier reef, where the fishing was declared to be best. As we proceeded John proceeded also to bail out water. It was clear that this was no longer rain water, but water which entered through the leaky seams of the old tub.

I made no comment other than to take off my good shoes and socks and to roll up my trousers to my knees, assuming by then that this was a normal feature of their vessel. We kept on our course away from terra firma and my misgivings gave way to anticipation of my first venture into tropical fishing.

Father and son finally agreed that they had found a promising spot about a stone's throw from the barrier reef and the cement anchor was thrown out, secured and fishing could begin. For a while we were kept busy taking little fish off our hooks which were very colorful, but at home would have been thrown back to grow up. But here they were all "keepers" which were tossed into the wire basket overside. It was almost like fishing in a pet shop aquarium when I looked at the shiny varicolored creatures swimming in the basket.

When even nibbles became sporadic Jack Singh began to ask me questions about America and about my business out in the Pacific islands. I explained that I was working for my church and that I was enroute to Java to look into mission possibilities. It required some explanation of the teachings of our church, the effort through missionaries to share the promise of salvation through God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus' request that His followers go into all the world with His saving Good News.

I summed this up by quoting Jesus' Commission and saying, "So, in a sense, I am also called a fisherman." Mr. Singh became very interested and when we at last came to our anchorage, he insisted that I come to his home to meet his wife for a spot of tea and some biscuits. After the tea and a picture of his whole family lined up in front of his cottage, it was time for John and me to return to the Nandi terminal.

I yearned to spend more time with these good people to tell them more about our and their Savior, but the best I could do was to give Mr. Singh a pamphlet copy of the Gospel of Mark which I carried in my bulky camera case. We parted as friends.

On the ride back to the terminal I wondered how we could manage to include these remote outposts of souls in our missionary outreach. I resolved that we must redouble our efforts to carry out our Savior's Great Commission:

*Can we whose souls are lighted with wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted the lamp of life deny?
Salvation, oh, salvation, the joyful sound proclaim
'til earth's remotest nation has learned the Savior's name!*

"We would like one of those books!"

Martin Luther School
Lumano, Zambia, 1960

Fanny and Max were faithful church-goers. Fanny was a graceful, brown Doberman pinscher and Max a feisty-looking, very gentle English bulldog. We found them on the Lumano, now Mwembembi, compound when we arrived for our five month stay in 1960. They always fell into step behind Meta and me on our way to Sunday services or daily evening chapel. Then they lay down behind my chair during the service.

They seldom caused any disturbances and the boys and girls took them for granted. If for some unknown canine reason Fanny growled her disapproval of Max, such as for snoring, one of the boys grabbed them by their collars and quietly ushered them out of the school room. This never caused more than a momentary flicker of notice in the large double room where we held our services.

The 130 children of the Martin Luther Boarding School and their four teachers always attended the evening chapel. On Sunday mornings the villagers would come also. They took their places in the back rows of benches and the students, some in their upper teens, would make place by moving down toward the front. Before all were seated this shifting was repeated several times until the youngest pupils sat in two or three rows on the floor directly in front of Mr. Robert Mulundika, the headmaster, and myself.

Mr. Mulundika was an excellent disciplinarian. There was never even the slightest noise of a whisper in those services! We marveled at the perfect order and attentiveness whenever these children assembled and thought of the schools at home.

The other teachers were also very much in charge, Mr. Mwamba, the botany and English teacher, Mr. Chanda, the bright young man who appears as the father in the film, *Healing in His Wings*, and the two others whom we met. The latter also conducted the Saturday evening "concert" or "debate" sessions which we always attended because of the insight it gave us into the lives and thinking of our Sala people.

The curriculum and evening chapel also featured Bible reading, although only a few of the children owned their own Bible. One evening on our way to chapel we were stopped near our fenced garden by two boys about nine years old. One of them said to us very shyly, pointing to the Bible I carried, "We would like one of those books." I said, "Are you sure you could read it?" He replied, "Yes, Bwana, we can read." I opened the Bible at Mark 10 and he read it well.

Then I said, "But this is a very special book; it is God's Book, as I have told you, and many people have died to have it come down to us from many years ago. If I give you a Bible, would you be willing to do something to show your appreciation for it?" "Oh, yes, Bwana," he answered, "what can we do?" Since we were at the garden fence and Simon had gone home before he could finish the weeding, I said, "Would you chop the weeds in the garden? I will bring you two Bibles when I go to Lusaka next week."

Every day after school those two boys were in the garden, chopping and hoeing weeds. By the time we went on our weekly trip for supplies, the garden was clean. They had kept their word. And we kept ours. We bought two Bibles at Rev. Temple's Christian Book Store and gave them to the very happy boys.

But we had set something in motion beyond our personal means to solve. All of the students now wanted their own Bible! Had I made a mistake? What could I do?

As with so many problems in those days, I simply wrote to President Naumann, gently suggesting that perhaps a "Books for Missions" fund could solve the problem. President

Oscar Naumann never left me in the lurch. By return mail he sent me a check to cover the purchase of 120 Bibles and the assurance that the fund would be announced in the church papers. This fund is still alive!

I got some flak about violating the indigenous church policy but also some very solid support when the picture of Mr. Mulundika and me distributing the Bibles was published. And what a spiritual pleasure it was for the headmaster and me when each student read the lessons in school and the text at the church and chapel services from their own Bible!

What about the students' appreciation of the gift? Under Mr. Mwamba's and Mr. Chanda's supervision the students fell to with a will and landscaped and planted the entire Lumano school campus, sometimes digging three-foot deep holes to plant larger trees! And the spiritual gain — who would even try to measure it?

"Jesus loves me; this I know"

Nyandong, Cameroon, 1970

The messenger whom Pastor Bruno Njume had sent to ask Chief Bakossi to arrange for an interview about opening Lutheran services in his district came back with the news that the chief would expect us at his Nyandong village on the following Tuesday. There was no telephone service to this remote village deep in the heart of Cameroon so the messenger had to make the trip on foot.

That was our plan. But Bobbie Burns was right when he wrote, "The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley." When we went to the garage on Tuesday morning to pick up our hired all-terrain vehicle we were told that it would take another day to check and repair the Land Rover for the rough ride into the interior.

We considered notifying the chief of the one day delay, but Pastor Njume assured us, he could explain the matter to the chief on Wednesday without the expense of another messenger. We set out bright and early on Wednesday morning, eight of us. This included the driver, his helper, Pastor Njume and two of his members, Professor Ernst Wendland, Pastor Theodore Sauer and myself. It was a full load.

After a few miles on gravel we turned off abruptly into a narrow bush trail. Our progress became more and more deliberate as the driver shifted into creeper gear to avoid and go over windfalls and tangled undergrowth. The trail ended at a rain-swollen stream which was usually forded. Our driver suggested that most of us would dismount and wade through the stream. He would try to keep to the hard-packed tracks of the fording. I was asked to stay in the cab, while the other pastors were carried across on the strong backs of Pastor Njume and one of his men. It was an interesting crossing. We resumed our journey, crossing two more streams, swaying and bumping along until we hove in sight of Nyandong, a village of several hundred people.

The racket made by our machine alerted the villagers of our arrival and scores of people lined up along our trail as we made our entry between rows of thatched huts. But Chief Bakossi was not among them.

The chief stayed in his hut, not even letting the apologies of Pastor Njume induce him to do the honors to his foreign guests. Instead, the tribe's official "greeter," in a grass skirt and grotesque headgear was delegated to escort us to the audience chamber, an open hut set in a fenced enclosure. He told Pastor Njume that the chief needed time to deliberate on the matter.

In the meantime we were set under the thatched hut on four straight chairs, facing the chief's chair. Even in the shade it was very hot. We were served bottles of warm *squash*, as

soda water is called, which failed to cool our bodies and spirits over the long wait. The fact that we could see the chief's hut from our chairs did little to add to our comfort and composure as we waited for his honor to emerge from his door.

While we waited the area beyond the enclosure filled with villagers and their families. There were perhaps a hundred milling about and making room next to the fence for their children to get a better view of the strangers. They stared at us and we stared back at them, keeping our conversations in low key while we waited.

Finally my impatience got the better of me and I got up from my chair and walked over to where about 30 children were standing in a group. I said to them, "You do not understand me, but I want you to remember why we are here. The best I can do today is to teach you a little song which our children love to sing about their Savior Jesus. Someday these words will come back to you and you will understand."

And I began to sing, inviting the children with miens and gestures to join me:

Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong; they are weak but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me,
The Bible tells me so.

I had to sing the first two lines several times with many gesticulations before anyone joined me in singing. But gradually they took courage and made the new sounds in the strange language with their beautiful clear voices. African people have a natural gift for harmonizing and our singing became even louder and more acceptable by the time that we had mastered the whole stanza. We were having great fun!

Then it occurred to me to ask, "Does someone here know English?" It was a very long chance, I knew. Then to my utter amazement a man spoke up, "I had English, and I will tell them."

Perhaps the chief had also heard our singing and wondered what he might be missing. In any case, I now saw him emerge from his hut out of the corner of my eye and come toward our hut. He was accompanied by his *kapassos*, attendants, and held in his right hand the scepter of office, a fly-switch made of tail hairs of some animal.

I reached my chair just before Chief Bakossi settled down in his and signaled the beginning of the proceedings. We could not make out the words, but we saw from Pastor Njume's nods and demeanor that things were going well and permission was granted to begin Lutheran services.

The whole thing apparently became formally binding when the chief handed his fly-switch to his "greeter" to give to me as a memento of the agreement. I brought it back to our chief, President Oscar Naumann, the great friend of missions, at one of our meetings and he returned it to me for safekeeping.

Now began a farewell ritual under the direction of the "greeter." This was a weird dance of the "greeter" with many contortions and gyrations of his lithe body directly in front of us. It ended with the ritual sharing of food which reminded me of our English word "companion," literally those who share bread with one another as a sign of friendship.

The man took a handful of cocoa seeds, rubbed them in his sweaty palms, threw them broadcast on the dirt floor where the chickens had scrounged for insects just before, then picked them all up and gave each one of us about six to eat. I munched on two, thinking of the chickens and of the Lord's assurance that He would keep us from harm as we ate what our hearers set before us.

Then it was all over. The chief took his formal leave and we climbed into our Rover for the arduous return, mission accomplished. The Lutherans could begin work in the district of Chief Bakossi.

Indeed, thus God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform, also with the Gospel of Christ, which, He said, would not fail in accomplishing what He pleased.

Edgar H. Hoenecke is a retired pastor living in San Diego, California. For 25 years he headed the WELS World Mission Program.

The President's Report

Since this *Journal's* inception in the spring of 1983, the editor has been James P. Schaefer, with valued help from Assistant Editors Beverly Brushaber and Dorothy J. Sonntag. With this issue Arnold O. Lehmann becomes the new editor. He will be assisted by Edward C. Fredrich II, Armin Schuetze and Naomi Plocher. The former top team did a splendid job of turning each issue into a well-planned and easily readable production, and deserve the applause of all of us. We're sure the experienced and capable hands of the new team will continue the tradition.

As already noted in the fall newsletter, Roland Cap Ehlke has also stepped down as president after serving in that capacity since the Institute's beginning in 1981. Mindful that he was serving the Lord of history, he saw the Institute through its infancy and helped shape it into what it is today. Gratitude toward Cap for his labors should come easily from all Institute members. His successor, equally mindful of the One he serves and the importance of the Institute's work, asks to be in your thoughts and prayers continually.

With the change in editor and president comes a time for reflection. How do we as members view the Institute? Is it the way we want it to be? Is it doing the right things, or are we off the beam? What is our position in relation to the Synod as a governing body, on the one hand, and our relation to Synod congregations and members on the other? Are we carrying out the vision of our Institute's founders? Should we leave room for change? How can we be better, and where will the resources come from to do the job? Think on these matters. I'd like to poll each member personally, but that seems impossible. So consider yourself polled and send me your thoughts. I'll be watching for them.

Our Institute's seal challenges us to "remember the former time." We in our Synod have a lot to remember. And while a secular historian might see only event following event, the result of human planning and human impulses, the Christian historian with the insight provided by faith sees the hand of God working through flesh and blood to bring about his purposes, just as once in a supreme way he worked through his Son to bring about our salvation. It's thrilling to realize that God is in charge of our former time and the present as well, shaping our Synod's history and letting us be a part of the action. Let's never lose this perspective.

James G. Kiecker

From the Editor

A variety of circumstances played a role in the delay of the publication of the 1991 issues of the WELS Historical Institute *Journal*. 1991, the tenth anniversary of our Institute, saw a complete turnover of the officers of the board as well as the appointment of a new editor for the *Journal*. We are indeed sorry about the late appearance of the *Journal* and we hope that the Institute members will understand.

The new editor and editorial staff are now committed to publishing two issues of the *Journal*—in April and October. In addition, two *Newsletters*—in January and July—will be published which will contain news and information about the Institute, the museum and the archives. Except for reports from the president and the editor, the *Journal* will consist only of articles of historical interest.

The next items would normally appear in the *Newsletter*, but since the first issue will not appear until January 1991, they will be included here.

Regarding membership in the Institute. The term of membership is from January 1 to December 31, regardless of when the dues or fees are sent in. Members will receive all published materials of the year for which they have paid their dues. The expiration date of membership is shown on your mailing label.

Correspondence concerning membership and membership fees should be sent to:

WELS Historical Institute
2929 North Mayfair Road
Milwaukee, WI 53222

Correspondence about the *Journal*, or any suggested articles of historical interest about our synod, its churches, or its members should be sent to the editor's address:

Dr. Arnold O. Lehmann
N7353 County Road Y
Watertown, WI 53094
(414) 699-2118

Finally, we thank you for your patience, and we hope that there will be increased participation in the work and purpose of our Institute by all members. Details will appear in the next *Newsletter*.

Great appreciation and many thanks to Mrs. Bonnie Kuerth, computer operator, and Mr. James Wendt, printer, both at Northwestern College, for their help in the publishing of this *Journal*.

Arnold O. Lehmann



The seal of the WELS Historical Institute depicts Salem Lutheran Landmark Church, built in 1863 on the site of the "birthplace of the Wisconsin Synod." (Salem now serves as the museum of the Wisconsin Synod.) In 1850 the Wisconsin Synod was born; in 1981 the WELS Historical Institute officially came into being. The German inscription is a reminder of the Synod's German roots. The words mean "Remember the former time." The cross reminds us of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all history.