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The photograph on the cover is of President Oscar J. Naumann.

Oscar J. Naumann
1909 - 1979
The Making of a President

by Ross W. Henzi

How does one pay tribute to someone working in the Lord's vineyard? Can one honor and praise such a person? As Christians, we acknowledge that all praise and adoration for work and deeds accomplished belongs first to the Lord, but why not recognize with respect, admiration, and praise someone who has accomplished much! Such a person is the late Pastor Oscar J. Naumann, a former president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). Instead of writing a biography of Pastor Naumann, this writer was interested in how he became president of the WELS. Why he and not someone else? What particular gifts did he have that singled him out from others? In essence, how did the Lord move to make Oscar J. Naumann the president of the WELS and what were the results? The writer submits that if in the process of writing this article, a few flakes of praise should fall on President Naumann—so be it!

Parents

Oscar Naumann was born to Justus Henry and Maria (nee Scherf) Naumann on June 24, 1909, in Woodlake, Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota. Justus had been born in Dresden, Germany, the son of a prominent book publisher. Justus came to America at the age of thirteen. He graduated from Fort Wayne Concordia College and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. After a year spent in Germany, Justus returned to America where he served as a missionary in Harold, Hughes County, South Dakota. His official title was that of *Reiseprediger* which might be called a circuit rider or traveling missionary. After five years of serving in the rugged plains of South Dakota, Justus Naumann accepted a call to Gibbon, Minnesota. Nine years later he accepted a call to Woodlake, Minnesota, where Oscar was born. During this time Justus served as the superintendent of missions for Minnesota and South Dakota, and in 1912, he was elected president of the Minnesota Synod. In 1915, the Minnesota Synod elected to make the presidency a full-time position so Justus gave up his parish and took on the responsibilities of his office and moved his family to St. Paul, Minnesota. Justus died of a heart attack on Monday morning February 5, 1917, after having walked to church for Sunday services through deep snow and a driving snowstorm. He was 51 years old.¹

Oscar's mother was born in Saxony, Germany, and came to America when she was 18 years old. She accompanied a brother who wanted to enter the seminary at Springfield. She stayed with an older brother who had already graduated from that seminary and was serving a congregation near Chicago. After several years, Maria was persuaded to join Pastor Dick Ehlen's family in Scotland, South Dakota, and helped provide assistance in the home to Mrs. Ehlen and her daughters.²

Justus and Maria met when Justus was persuaded by a fellow pastor to visit Scotland, South Dakota. In three days Justus and Maria were engaged, married six

weeks later. Their marriage was blessed with eight children, Oscar was the seventh in line. Maria Naumann passed away in 1975 at the age of 102.

While Oscar's early years were spent at Woodlake, the majority of his childhood was spent in St. Paul. He attended the preparatory department of Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. After high school, Oscar enrolled at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin, graduating in 1931. After college he entered the seminary in Thiensville, Wisconsin, graduating in 1934. His first call led him back to Northwestern College where he served as a tutor for two years. He then accepted a call to serve Arlington Avenue Lutheran Church in Toledo, Ohio. He faithfully served this congregation from 1936-1940, whereupon he received and accepted a call to serve as a professor at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota. It was said that he enjoyed these years immensely but he still considered the parish work his true calling. In 1946, Professor Naumann received a call to serve a large congregation in St. Paul, St. John's Lutheran Church. He remained at this congregation until 1959 when he accepted the call to serve our synod as its first full-time president.³

The information for this biographical sketch was gathered in part by scanning through copies of the *Northwestern Lutheran* and biographical information gathered from a notebook compiled by Oscar Naumann's son, Martin. This notebook, *In Memoriam*, is available in the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library. It was most beneficial in providing a wide view of President Naumann's life and work. The rest of this paper will try to narrow the focus a bit and try to visualize or rationalize how and why Oscar Naumann became president. Since nothing has ever been written on this subject, the only source of written information turned out to be articles from the *Northwestern Lutheran* and *Synodical Proceedings*. And yet this written material was not able to fully answer questions as to how the Lord moved to make Oscar Naumann president. Therefore, I turned to the people who knew him best. I interviewed men who worked with Oscar Naumann while he was a member of the Michigan District. I spoke with delegates of district and prominent synodical conventions. I interviewed men who worked under his administration at synod headquarters, his secretary, his family, and men whom President Naumann was said to have turned to for advice. I cannot claim that I spoke with every person possible, but I do feel that I have gained information from a strong cross section of those who lived and worked with and for President Oscar J. Naumann.

Historical Setting

When investigating the life and contributions of an individual it is best to put that person in his or her historical setting. When Oscar Naumann began his ministry our country was just emerging from the hardships imposed by the Great Depression. Our country would soon be involved in the second world war. These two events did play a significant role in the history of our church body. These were days when money was short.

The shortage of money was no more evident to anyone than the man whom Oscar Naumann succeeded as president, John Brenner. Pastor Brenner became president of the Wisconsin Synod, now Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), in 1933. He seemed to be the right man at the right time; our synod was in debt. And Pastor

Brenner possessed the necessary administrative skills to see us through such a period. So, if you wanted to characterize his administration, it would be his focus on getting our debt paid off. The fact that this was done during a depression era is a blessing from God and points to President Brenner's tight reign on the synod's purse strings.

It was also during President Naumann's administration that the Synodical Conference saw factions working within it that, if left unexposed, threatened the foundation upon which it was built: Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. President Brenner was not about to let scriptural truth take a back seat to anyone. E.E. Kowalke sums up President Brenner's position when he writes,

His outspokenness, called a "sharp tongue" by some of his opponents, was sometimes said to have aggravated the growing tension between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods; but it will be noted that he did not force the issue or tempt to press his conviction on people who had not had the opportunities which had come his way to see in what direction Missouri's policies were leading that synod. He knew what was bound to come and wanted to have it come as a result of conviction, not as an unwilling surrender to force.

There were people who neither liked nor admired Pastor Brenner. His direct manner irritated some people. But whether people liked him or not, they all respected him.⁴

The growing tension within the Synodical Conference, a conference formed in 1870 by the Wisconsin, Missouri, Slovak and small Norwegian synods, definitely must be taken into consideration when reviewing the historical setting of Oscar Naumann's ministry. You can not escape it. Nor could the pastors of his day. Each year the tension would grow stronger. The perceptive ones, such as President Brenner, were able to see through the differences of opinion and pinpoint the core of the problem. These few could also foresee the inevitable—a break up of the Synodical Conference. As the tension mounted, more and more pastors chose sides and the number of "seers" grew. Was Oscar Naumann one of them? Could he see the inevitable coming? I'm sure he did. But he was also one of the scores of pastors who did not want to see that split come until everything had been done to ease the tension and prevent it.

President of Minnesota District, 1948-1953

When Oscar Naumann arrived at St. John's Lutheran Church in St. Paul in 1946, he was already aware of the tensions within the Synodical Conference. In fact, the churches within the St. Croix Conference (Twin Cities) comprised one of the major hotbeds of Lutheran liberalism. There were congregations with severe Lodge problems. Many pastors devoted great amounts of time to careful and patient instruction within their ranks to rid themselves of this problem. We are to be most thankful that even this trying time the Lord allowed for his Word to be kept pure.

The man who was in charge of overseeing the doctrinal position of the Minnesota District was its president, Adolph Ackermann. President Ackermann was born in Germany. He came to America in his early teens. He attended Dr. Martin Luther

College (DMLC) in New Ulm, Minnesota. After two years of teaching he enrolled at Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1894 he returned to DMLC and became a member of the staff. He became the school's president in 1908 and held this position until 1918. After serving two small congregations in Minnesota, he received and accepted a call to serve Immanuel Church in Mankato, Minnesota. He served this congregation until his death in 1950.⁵

President Ackermann received much of the blame for the liberal unionistic tendencies found within his district. I do not wish to try and separate fact from fiction or stand in judgment of his ministry. Yet, it should be noted that unionistic tendencies within the Synodical Conference were not found just in Minnesota. They were everywhere. Then again, in his twelve years as president of the district, Adolph Ackermann did show signs of supporting the liberal theologians.

Now before we point our fingers at Pastor Ackermann, we must again refer back to the historical setting. Adolph Ackermann was a member of the Wisconsin Synod but had deep personal ties with those from the Missouri Synod, officially today: Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, LC-MS. Adolph Ackermann studied at Concordia, St. Louis and was taught by the same professors (i.e., Franz Pieper) as Missouri's men were. The problem came when these men drifted away from the truth of Scripture. Ackermann lived near and served with many of these same men. The temptation to follow their lead must have been great. No wonder there was tension.

We can not condone any swaying from God's inerrant Word. Nor can we excuse any compromising of confessional principals. By the grace of God, there were men who were willing to make a confessional stand. One of the men who did was Oscar Naumann.

The confrontation between those who saw no harm in unionistic tendencies and those who sought a confessional stance came to a head at the district convention June 21-25, 1948, at DMLC in New Ulm. The two opposing sides met to decide the future course of the Minnesota District, but without the knowledge of its two principal players, President Adolph Ackermann and Pastor Oscar Naumann. It seems that before the convention started, the two opposing sides engaged in a bit of political lobbying. Oscar Naumann had not arrived yet and did not until late that night. If he had, he surely would have put an end to the politicking. One pastor who knew him said that Pastor Naumann would have withdrawn his name from the ballot if he had known what was going on. So, without his knowledge, several pastors were making it known that a strong confessional stand was needed and Pastor Oscar Naumann was the man who could provide it. When Oscar Naumann did arrive late that night, he was told, in his dormitory room, that he should prepare himself to be elected. When that did occur, he should accept. There was no mention of what had happened earlier around the registration tables and grounds of Dr. Martin Luther College.

Adolph Ackermann arrived at DMLC fully expecting to be re-elected for another term as president. There was no reason to suggest otherwise. And so, in keeping with his presidential duties, he chaired the first two sessions of the convention. When the vote was announced and Oscar Naumann declared the new president, Ackermann was visibly shaken. He admonished the delegates for not re-electing him. He then left the chair and the convention. Oscar Naumann was called upon to chair the remaining sessions, which he did, with the exception of one.

One man who was at that convention admitted that what they did (making the election a political issue) was probably wrong but was a step that had to be taken to insure that God's Word would be kept in its truth and purity.

Oscar Naumann was not elected president of the Minnesota District purely on a whim. He was well known. When I say that he was well known does not mean to imply that the election was purely a popularity contest. His integrity and confessional stance were never in question. His father had served their district (then known as the Minnesota Synod) as president beginning in 1912, and was elected its first full-time president in 1915. He held that office until his death in 1917.⁶

Pastor Naumann was also well known for having served DMLC from 1940-1946 as a professor. He was well respected by those outside of the college as well as by his colleagues. And finally, Oscar Naumann was the pastor of a large congregation in St. Paul. If you add all of these factors up and couple them with his strong confessional stance in the face of unionism, his election is not surprising.

President Naumann dealt with many of the union problems throughout the district. Fellow pastors were encouraged to deal with the lodge problems within their own memberships. They were also encouraged to regain the confessional stand that may have been slipping in their own congregations and conferences.

These next few years after the 1948 convention in New Ulm were very busy. Pastor Naumann's congregation required a great deal of attention but that was something he looked forward to. He was very much the parish pastor. He enjoyed being with his people and sharing the Gospel Promise whenever possible. This aspect of his ministry would later prove hard for him to give up.

These were busy times. It soon got even busier. At the 1951 Synod Convention held in New Ulm, Pastor Naumann was elected the Second Vice-President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Joint Synod and Other States.⁷ True, the district presidents and synod vice-presidents did not have the same amount of work or authority as they do today, but there was still plenty of work to be done. Much of that work consisted of meetings held in Milwaukee. Pastor Naumann dutifully juggled the responsibilities of each office: parish pastor, district president, and synod vice-president. The Lord had chosen a man who had the capability to do a large amount of work. More and more we see the ground work being laid, the experience attained, the confessional stance never more confident, as the Lord moves and prepares his student for the days ahead.

Synod Convention August 5-12, 1953, Watertown

The tension among the members of the Synodical Conference had been growing year by year. The Wisconsin Synod had objected to the Missouri Synod's *Brief Statement* in 1938 as well as Missouri's fellowship talks with the American Lutheran Church. There were differences on prayer fellowship and other union tendencies.

The more the controversies grew, the more congregations and fellow pastors began to look to their leaders for advice and explanations. Many times questions or related problems could be solved through correspondence. Many other times greater involvement was needed by district and synod officials. The men who were either elected or appointed to office were glad to lend a hand whenever they were asked. But this also

placed added strain on the officials' already heavy workloads in their own parishes.

This scenario brings us to the Synod Convention held in Watertown from August 5-12, 1953. President Brenner presided over the convention, he was 79 years old. He was the pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Milwaukee. The duties required at his parish, his duties as president of the synod, his age, and the growing tension within the Synodical Conference as well as his own synod, led President Brenner to announce at the end of his presidential report that he would not seek reelection. He said,

With this report I desire to end my service as the president of the Synod, though this may appear to be an inopportune time to do this. I am sure that the Synod will be better served and will be more satisfied if the duties of my office would rest on younger and stronger shoulders.⁸

President Brenner's resignation added a great deal of pressure on the delegates in Watertown. President Brenner may not have been well liked by everyone. He may have lacked diplomacy and tact.⁹ But he was a strong president. He saw the problems that were coming and he refused to allow himself or his synod to be swept up in them. The delegates now had the task of electing a man who would follow Brenner's lead. They needed to elect a man who would strive to keep God's Word pure and a man who was a strong confessional Lutheran. If the delegates failed in picking the right man, much would be lost because much was at stake.

Thank goodness our calling process does not rest on man's ability to pick and choose, to analyze and deduce. If it was totally up to man, could we as a church body have fully foreseen the dangers that lie ahead? Who would have wanted to chance it? A special man was needed; a man with unique abilities and gifts. How comforting it is to know that the man who was chosen was the one the Lord wanted. He guided the delegates in their choices every step of the way.

It is agreed, a special man was needed. Who were the leading candidates? If you had taken a poll (done a little politicking of your own) during the last few years of President Brenner's administration, one name would definitely have been repeated, Sieghard E. Westendorf. Pastor Westendorf was born and raised in Saginaw, Michigan, where his father was a pastor. He graduated from Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Northwestern College, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Thiensville. He served congregations in Mequon and Milwaukee, Wisconsin before accepting a call to Zion Lutheran Church in Monroe, Michigan. He was a very gifted man whose abilities did not go unnoticed. He was elected the president of the Michigan District in 1950.¹⁰

As we all know a district president has many duties and serves on many boards and committees on behalf of the synod. One such committee that Pastor Westendorf served on was the Standing Committee on Church Union which later became known as the Commission on Doctrinal Matters. This committee had originally been appointed to study the Missouri Synod's 1938 resolutions accepting the *Brief Statement* and the American Lutheran Church's Declaration as a basis for future fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. In 1941 this committee was made a standing committee to analyze and report on doctrinal matters involving other church bodies. It became known as the Union Committee. This committee consisted of the seminary faculty and the Conference of Presidents.¹¹

When we remember our historical setting, the Union Committee would be discussing and planning our Synod's course of action against the growing concern of liberalism and unionism which had been plaguing our synod for a number of years. One of the most vocal members of that committee was Pastor Sieghard E. Westendorf. He urged the committee to reject attempts at unionism and to cling to God's Word and a strong confessional stand. Because of his strong confessional stance, Pastor Westendorf was thought by many to be the logical choice to replace President Brenner when he should step down. But Pastor Westendorf was removed from consideration when he suffered a stroke while attending the Synodical Conference Convention in St. Paul, Minnesota in August of 1952. He never recovered. He was called home to live with his Lord in 1955.¹²

Another man who deserved strong consideration for the office of the presidency was Pastor Irwin Habeck. Pastor Habeck had served as president of the Northern Wisconsin District from 1946-1950. He was also serving as first vice-president of the synod at the time of the convention.¹³ Many observers thought Pastor Habeck would be the logical choice to succeed President Brenner. He had all of the qualifications. He certainly was aware of our synod's state of affairs.

The other candidate whom many thought to be qualified for the vacant position, Pastor Oscar J. Naumann. It has already been shown that his qualifications were second to none. With Pastor Sieghard Westendorf out of the running, the presidency had narrowed to either Pastor Habeck or Pastor Naumann.

No one needs to be reminded that Oscar Naumann won the election; he was elected on the fourth ballot. But what is interesting is that Naumann was elected over the first vice-president, Pastor Habeck. Why? At first an investigation led back to the Standing Committee on Church Union. As district presidents, Pastors Westendorf, Habeck, and Naumann all served on the committee at the same time. Pastor Westendorf was known for his position against unionism, but resigned his position in 1952. Pastor Habeck had been president of the Northern Wisconsin District from 1946-1950. He resigned from this position when he accepted a call to a congregation in Milwaukee and transferred his membership to the Southeastern Wisconsin District. Yet, as a member of the synod's *Praesidium*, he remained an *ex officio* member of the committee. Pastor Naumann was then recognized as the chief spokesman among the district presidents on this committee. He was recognized for his strong confessional stand and was acknowledged as having experience dealing with the liberal unionistic tendencies in his own district of Minnesota. The other men on the Standing Committee on Church Union were not surprised that Pastor Naumann was elected president. They had supported him. In fact, Pastor Habeck was said to have supported Pastor Naumann's election.

The members of the Standing Committee on Church Union, fellow district presidents and members of the seminary faculty may not have been surprised Pastor Naumann was elected but what about delegates to that convention who were not aware of the committee's work? This question was posed to delegates and guests of that convention. Were they surprised Pastor Naumann was elected? The unanimous response was that they were not surprised. Pastor Naumann was a very well known man. He was able to draw support from three main districts—Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota, having served in each one.

When Oscar Naumann graduated from the seminary in 1934, he returned to

Northwestern College where he served as a tutor for two years. He was a member of the Western Wisconsin District. When Pastor Naumann received his first call into the parish ministry, he served Arlington Avenue Lutheran Church of Toledo, Ohio. Here he was a member of the Michigan District. And when Oscar Naumann returned to teach at DMLC and later accepted a call to St. John's Lutheran in St. Paul, Pastor Naumann was a member and later president of the Minnesota District. Pastor Naumann had made many friends and acquaintances along the way. He was said to have the full support of Presidents E.E. Kowalke (NWC) and Carl Schweppe (DMLC), having worked with both men. Was Pastor Naumann a dark horse candidate? Not by any means. He was a well known man upon which a great deal of responsibility had already been entrusted. He possessed the tact and diplomacy that seemed missing from the present administration and was thought to be genuinely evangelical, possibly more so than Pastor Habeck. This was not a popularity contest nor was there open campaigning for candidates. The delegates, after prayerful consideration, chose Pastor Oscar J. Naumann to succeed President Brenner and to lead our synod into the murky waters ahead. A vote was taken. A man was chosen. By the grace of God the Lord provided for us all, once again.

A short time after the election results were announced, Pastor Naumann was "evangelically kidnapped." A few close associates took Pastor Naumann for a car ride around the city of Watertown and gently urged him to accept the office of the presidency. This was not an easy decision. It would prove difficult for him again in 1959 when his position was made full-time. It was a difficult decision for Naumann because he was well aware of the demands that would be placed upon him. He wasn't sure if he could accept this momentous assignment and still carry out the duties required of his parish, which was his first love. It also must have been very stressful because a breakup of the Synodical Conference seemed to be unavoidable. He did not seek this position, the call sought the man. We thank the Lord for leading Pastor Naumann to accept.

Synod President, Parish Pastor, Husband, Father

When we hear of someone who carries the title of president in front of his name, stereotypical images come to mind. We might think of presidents of universities, corporations, foundations, and of course, our country. We envision these men and women as people who operate from a position of strength. They have formed a power structure which allows them to carry out what they believe needs to be done. We envision presidents as having large support staffs. They are financially well taken care of, and usually rule their domains with an iron fist. What a contrast this would make with the newly elected president of the Wisconsin Synod.

The 1953 convention in Watertown had elected Oscar Naumann. He would now return to his parish in St. Paul, Minnesota and attempt the delicate task of juggling two jobs at once.

The demands placed upon a parish pastor are no great secret. He is to serve his congregation to the best of his abilities, never losing sight of his primary job, preaching the Gospel. It is a demanding, time consuming job. At the same time, Pastor Naumann was the president of a church body which was about to enter uncharted waters.

The controversies and tensions within the Synodical Conference were once again coming to a boil. The main issue of difference concerned the doctrine of fellowship but

there were other controversies as well. These differences led many within our own synod to call for our withdrawal from the Synodical Conference. There were also many who urged patience while others really didn't see a problem at all. You can easily imagine the problems this created. A great deal of time and patience was needed to respond to the three different factions.

Time did play a large role for President Naumann; there wasn't enough of it. The synod headquarters were located in Milwaukee; he was in St. Paul. He didn't have the luxury of a separate office for the president. He didn't have a secretary. He organized and maintained his own office. He answered the correspondence himself. He was required to make the frequent trips to Milwaukee and other cities. He had to leave the duties of his parish behind and attend board meetings, conferences, and conventions. The fact that he was away a great deal called for an understanding and patient parish, wife, and family. He got all three.

St. John's congregation has been mentioned. The Naumann family has not. President Naumann was married to Dorothy Schwartz in 1936. Mrs. Naumann was originally from La Crosse, Wisconsin. She graduated from Dr. Martin Luther College in 1929 and taught at St. John's, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin and later at St. John's in St. Paul. When the family would later move on to Milwaukee, she taught for a year at Mt. Lebanon.¹⁴

Mrs. Naumann has been described as a perfect helpmeet. She understood and accepted the time demanded of her husband. When her husband informed her that he had to leave for yet another meeting, she would calmly ask, "Where are you off to this time?" She endured the time her husband was gone by getting involved with teaching and absorbing herself into her family. The Naumann family was blessed with seven children, one daughter and six sons: Myrna, Philip, Thomas, Martin, Peter, James, and Paul.

The demands placed upon Oscar Naumann did have its effect on the Naumann household. The family could expect President Naumann to be gone quite a bit but there were also times when their home was open to many a guest. Dorothy Naumann always seemed prepared for such events while the children were never quite sure what to expect.

The demands of such a job could easily place a great deal of strain upon a family but the Naumann household seemed to adapt. Yes, there were times when the family members could sense their father carried the weight of his office with him. When beset with a particular problem he would channel all of his energy and concentration into that one project. He was a serious man. The children knew when something really upset him because he threw himself into housework. By lending a hand with vacuuming and other daily chores, President Naumann was able to work out some of the tensions within him.

Although the demands placed upon President Naumann often took him away from his family, these times away helped to make the times together much more special. There were occasional fishing trips, a garden to be taken care of, and some simple wood working projects which drew the family together.

Presidency: A Full-Time Job

The demands placed upon President Naumann and his family did not go unnoticed. A committee was appointed at the 1957 Synod Convention to ascertain whether the

position of president should be made into a full-time job. This committee was to bring its suggestions to the 1959 Synod Convention at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, August 5-12, in Saginaw, Michigan.

The Committee on Full-Time President of the Synod cites that they did recognize the workload the presidency placed upon both the pastor and his congregation. They admitted that there was a problem. They roughly estimated the president spent two months away from home each year plus approximately thirty hours of desk work was required each month. The president was expected to prepare for and conduct meetings of the General Synodical Committee, Church Union Committee, Conference of Presidents, and the biennial conventions of the synod. All of this, not to mention the mental and emotional stress the president was faced with, trying to do two jobs at once.

The committee also pointed out some advantages to having a full-time president. He would be able to do all of the above with greater efficiency. But when the committee came forward with their recommendation, they did not feel a full-time president was needed at this time. They were concerned that removing a pastor from his congregation for full-time work would cause the man to "lose touch with the day to day work in Christ's Church." They also thought a full-time president would concentrate too much power in one man and would hamper the synod from electing whomever it chose for the office.¹⁵

This resolution might have been expected to pass except that memorials from the Committee on Constitutional Matters, Floor Committee #22, and one from the Pastor/Teacher Conference of the Michigan District (Benton Harbor, 6/16-18/1959), all called for a full-time president. The Synod Convention adopted the resolution for a full-time president.¹⁶

The upcoming events would soon prove the convention's foresight correct. The demands that would soon be placed upon President Naumann would only get more time consuming. President Naumann accepted the outcome of the vote, albeit with hesitation. It wasn't the stepping into murky waters and the move to Milwaukee that bothered him. His new position would mean resigning from full-time parish work. This was a tremendous struggle for him. Those who knew him, from family to co-workers to acquaintances, all remembered what a difficult time he had with this decision. Yet, by the grace of God, the Lord moved into position the man he wanted to lead the Wisconsin Synod through the trying times ahead. He chose a man who would not allow anyone to take the Gospel from him nor allow anyone to keep him from sharing it with others.

The Naumann family moved to the city of Milwaukee and resided at 4933 N. 67th St. They became members at Mt. Lebanon Lutheran Church.¹⁷ He was now in place.

Problems in the Synodical Conference

Up to this point references have been made to the ongoing problems within the Synodical Conference. The disagreements over church fellowship, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod's growing interest with the American Lutheran Church, the question of Scouting, etc. have all been well documented. But what is not so well known are the struggles occurring within the Wisconsin Synod itself. There were factions within our synod who by 1959 had already been clamoring for us to split with the Missouri Synod.

In contrast, there were those who did not want a break, at least not until every attempt was made at reconciliation.

The faction which urged for a split maintained that the synod had no business remaining in fellowship with those who did not believe and practice as it did. They were tired of what they saw as the synod's indecisiveness in dealing with Missouri. This group should not be judged too harshly or considered to be totally without an evangelical spirit. The problems they did have do not fit our purposes here. Suffice it to say that they were ones ready to put their foot down and call for action. Their shouts reached a climax when Professor Reim, the seminary president, resigned his position.

Those who were not as quick to call for a split were made up of those who did not want to break until in their estimation everything had been done to solve the differences. This group clung just as strongly to scriptural principles and doctrine as the others. They would not compromise these principles for the sake of keeping the Synodical Conference together. But it must be understood that these ties to the past go very deep. Some of our pastors had been taught by LC-MS men. Many of our people had relatives who were members of the LC-MS. There were legitimate questions whether this very small synod could make it on its own should a split occur. These were times that called for a very special man.

President Naumann proved himself to be such a man. As president he of course chaired many conferences and conventions where heated debates occurred. Such adversity could easily have brought a man down. President Naumann on the other hand, was at his best. During such conferences and conventions, he was known for the pastoral attitude he displayed. It was so much a part of his life. He had been a parish pastor, now he was a synod's pastor. If he felt something needed to be said during a particular debate, he would often leave the chair and address the convention, not as their highest ranking official, but as a pastor. When the discussions began to depart from Scripture, he was the one who often (with Bible in hand) led them back. He also had the uncanny ability to say the right thing at the right time.

President Naumann was not a scholar in the strict sense of the word. When doctrinal issues became matter of debate, he often would lean on Professor Carl Lawrenz from the seminary. This is not to imply that President Naumann was an intellectual lightweight. He knew his Bible and was quite comfortable in referring to it. He preferred to interpret Scripture in a simple way, "If that's what the Bible says, then that is what it means, and that is what we're going to do."

President Naumann provided patient leadership during these trying years. He did not want to see our synod break from Missouri until everything had been done to prevent a split. He was willing to wait. He was willing to meet with representatives from the other church bodies. He was willing to speak with anyone within our own synod who might be having difficulties understanding the doctrinal issues involved in the controversy. He was willing to go to great lengths to accommodate someone else's position. But he was not willing to compromise the truth of Scripture. He wasn't willing to play the role of a vacillating politician; someone willing to say anything or go along with anything in order to win your support. Although those outside our circles might have considered him an "unsophisticated farmer" because he didn't play the prescribed role, he had the respect of everyone none the same. Here was a man who would not go along with the changing times. He refused to soften his beliefs to benefit someone else.

Here was a man who either agreed or disagreed with you on the basis of one thing, the same thing he kept referring to over and over—Scripture.

The Split

In 1961, after a great deal of prayerful consideration and consultation with those whose advice he respected (Lawrenz, synod vice presidents, etc.), President Naumann knew the time had come. The Wisconsin Synod could no longer remain in fellowship with those who did not believe, confess, and practice the same things it did. This wasn't an easy decision to come to. The Synodical Conference had been around for a long time. The Missouri Synod had established itself as the haven for true orthodox confessional Lutherans for over 100 years. Wisconsin ties with Missouri went back to the beginning but now the gulf had grown too wide. It was time for the Wisconsin Synod to make a stand.

When the Wisconsin Synod broke from Missouri in 1961, Missouri barely felt the effect. Many within the LC-MS thought we would slowly fizzle out as a church body or come running back to them with our tails between our legs. Those opinions did have a bit of credibility to them. Our relationship with the LC-MS was like a little boy struggling to hang on to the shirttails of an older brother. We depended on Missouri. Whenever the LC-MS announced a policy of some sort, the Wisconsin Synod yapped at her heels and begged to be included. Times had changed. By withdrawing from the Synodical Conference and renouncing fellowship with the LC-MS, WELS could no longer include itself in Missouri's policies. It was now on its own.

A point could be made that a sign of leadership is getting others to follow one along a path they normally wouldn't take. True leadership involves bringing them safely to their destination. President Naumann had kept the synod together during this trying period. He had also led the synod to cut away the safety netting underneath when it finally broke with the LC-MS. But the true test of his leadership lay in the months and years ahead. Could he keep this church body from collapse?

The picture painted for President Naumann wasn't a particular rosy one. The Wisconsin Synod at this time had churches in sixteen states, based primarily in the Midwest. If one of our members decided to move away, we no longer had the luxury of just transferring them to a "sister" congregation. What about foreign missions? In 1961 we had mission fields in Zambia, Japan, Germany and among the Arizona Apaches.¹⁸ Could we meet these needs head on?

Expansion

When future generations review the history of the Wisconsin synod, the event which may well be recognized as providing the largest impact on it as a church body, will be the break with the Missouri Synod in 1961. As a result, President Naumann's name will always be remembered because this event occurred during his presidency and it was his office that led the way. But President Naumann will also be remembered for the leading role he playing in the synod's expansion.

As was mentioned before, because Wisconsin had churches in only sixteen states, because it virtually depended on Missouri to accept its transferring members, and

because its foreign mission work relied upon Missouri's strength and resources, a break would naturally place a burden on the church body. As a result, it needed to reorganize and shift its priorities.

The Naumann administration began the expansion process by focusing its attention in three vital areas: foreign missions, home missions, and the improvement of worker training facilities. All three divisions fit together like the pieces of a puzzle, each as important as the other.

The synod's expansion in the mission fields was slow-going in the 30's, 40's, and 50's. President Brenner received some criticism for not advocating mission work during his tenure in office. While this claim is not totally without merit, it does not give justice to the whole picture. We must take into consideration the historical perspective. It wasn't so much that President Brenner refused to expand as it was a role he was forced to play. He was the one who struggled to rid the debt the synod had incurred during the depression era. Yet, the concern for mission expansion was growing. The synod convention of 1947 authorized the search for foreign mission expansion. In 1949, mission expansion into Japan was authorized.¹⁹ Africa was added two years later. Surely President Brenner must be recognized for this.

When President Naumann took office, the debt was gone and a tidy little surplus was in deposit ready to be put to use. Our synod had commissioned men to Japan and Africa. President Naumann made sure these men and their families were not forgotten. In the May 20th, 1962 edition of the *Northwestern Lutheran*, President Naumann wrote two articles which told of his personal visit (along with Professor Carl Lawrenz) to churches in Australia and how they deserved our prayers.²⁰ In the following article, President Naumann described the work Wisconsin's missionaries were conducting in N. Rhodesia (present Zambia). He and Professor Lawrenz were bound and determined to let the synod's membership know that prayers and financial support were needed so that the Gospel message could be proclaimed to those who had never heard it.²¹ This was a vital ministry and it has been blessed.

He continued his personal interest, accompanying two members of the World Board to Japan and Hong Kong in 1960 and 1964 to help in strengthening the work in Japan and to give his advice in responding to the plea to open work in Hong Kong.²²

The ground work laid under the Naumann administration has seen the synod expand into other countries. Today its mission fields reach out to those already mentioned as well as to Malawi, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Columbia, Puerto Rico, Cameroon, and Brazil. The Lord has indeed blessed the synod's efforts.

President Naumann was genuinely interested in foreign mission expansion. His enthusiasm played a major role in its development. But President Naumann's enthusiasm didn't stop there. He was equally enthused to expand home missions. Transient population had placed a rush order on the development and expansion of its home mission program. As early as 1960, the effects of not having enough churches (or any for that matter) in parts of our country was being recognized. President Naumann called upon the members of the synod and especially those in outlying regions to bear with the problem until it could adequately meet their needs.²³

The development of its home mission program started out slowly, but by the grace of God, it soon blossomed. The synod began to focus its attention on starting mission

congregations in metropolitan areas. This tactic soon caught on. Home mission expansion took place in sixteen states; soon the cry called out, "In all the states by '78." The goal was reached.

The final piece to the puzzle was the improvement of worker training facilities. If WELS wanted to expand into other countries and the home front, pastors would be needed. Its schools would need teachers. And so the call went out. President Naumann reminded the congregations of the shortages and said, "It would be well for each congregation to ask: 'Have we encouraged or assisted any of our gifted young people to study for full-time work in the church? Have we assisted or could we assist a worthy student from another congregation?'"²⁴

President Naumann cited the fact that, "Our schools, especially Dr. Martin Luther College and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, are compelled to deny admittance to prospective students, because the buildings and facilities are already filled well beyond capacity."²⁵ This was a call for workers as well as a call for much needed building expansion. By 1975 the transformation of the Northwestern College campus in a 20 year span was complete. Only one building from another generation was still standing. In the late 60's, DMLC's transformation was completed.²⁶ The pieces were all working together.

President Naumann must be looked at as being responsible for putting all of those pieces together. His administration facilitated this expansion. His office allowed it to happen. For that he must be recognized. But President Naumann never suggested that he deserved the credit. He was fully aware of those around him who played significant roles. Because he often felt the weight of his office, President Naumann would often turn to others for advice. He leaned heavily on Professors Carl Lawrenz and Oscar Siegler in doctrinal matters. He was at ease with delegating responsibility to his vice-presidents. He trusted those who worked under him.

Trust was a major component in President Naumann's makeup. He trusted that everyone had the same goals which he had. He wanted to serve the Lord. In fact, he was known as a man who "knew no guile."

Working hand in hand with President Naumann's sense of trust was his devout loyalty to those who worked for him. When asked to comment on that, one man said, "He simply let us do our job."

During the early stages of the synod's break with Missouri, its future existence depended on those who were called to lead. Qualified men were called into such areas of service. They were men who realized that they were about to lead into uncharted waters. These were men who served as divisional heads: foreign and home missions, publications and synodical schools. They were also district presidents, vice-presidents, and committees appointed by the president.

The decisions these men made, their new ideas and concepts were not always readily received by the synod's members. Yet they held the trust of President Naumann. He would let it be known in no uncertain terms that he not only trusted these men but also agreed with them. This was a significant factor because it gave these fellow leaders room to move and try many different things. This one factor brought undying loyalty to President Naumann.

As the years progressed and President Naumann continued to be re-elected, the pieces to the puzzle solidified. The synod, once thought to be close to disbanding, was

now growing. Foreign missions were showing great progress as more and more souls were won for Christ. Home missions grew as well. Enrollment in synodical schools continued to climb and new buildings began to dot the campuses. As our country continued to reap financial benefits, congregational giving reflected the upswing. Through all of this, President Naumann remained as humble as ever, never losing sight or grip of his role in it all. He never lost his pastoral attitude. He continued to accept preaching engagements across the country whenever his already busy schedule would allow. He always answered his phone as "Pastor Naumann" and not "President Naumann." He was indeed a man who knew no guile.

As the years progressed, President Naumann's busy schedule finally began to catch up with him. The loss of his wife, Dorothy, and his mother in 1975, also took a great deal out of him. Heart problems, which were diagnosed during his school days, were getting worse. He was hospitalized for a time in 1978. His health was such a concern that in his last presidential newsletter he wrote,

It is only right and proper to inform you—and all our members through you—that a new day will be dawning for our beloved Synod this summer. I feel I should inform you that I am asking the convention to elect someone else as their president this summer. My health is such that I could be stopped from functioning properly at any time, and I wouldn't want the Synod to suffer in any way or to be hindered or delayed in carrying out its God-given work by an unexpected inability of its executive officer to function. I want to assure every one of you that it has been a genuine joy, but a wholly undeserved privilege to work with you and our Synod's congregations these many years. I thank my God and Savior for that great privilege daily!²⁷

Before this newsletter reached its people, President Naumann suffered a major stroke on Saturday, June 16, 1979. He was called home to live with his Lord Monday night, June 18. He was faithful to the end.

No one can argue Oscar J. Naumann's effect on our synod. He was a man who would not compromise the truth of Scripture nor would he allow anyone to keep us from sharing that simple truth with others. He patiently and humbly guided our synod through a tremendously difficult period and saw a small church body spread its wings. No, President Naumann does not deserve all the credit; numerous individuals supplied their time and talents as well. Yet, it was his office that guided and allowed these great things to happen. The Lord had a reason for making Oscar J. Naumann our president. "The results are manifest."²⁸

ENDNOTES

1. "From the Life of Pastor Justus N. Naumann," prepared by: Mrs. Maria E. Naumann and Oscar J. Naumann, upon the request of Pastor Richard P. Albrecht for the 75th Anniversary of St. John's Lutheran Church of Wolsey, South Dakota, June 12, 1960, p. 1.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
3. *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Wednesday, June 20, 1979.
4. *Northwestern Lutheran*, Volume 49, November 4, 1962, p. 346.
5. *Northwestern Lutheran*, Volume 37, 1950, p. 237.
6. *Northwestern Lutheran*, February 21, 1917, p. 31.
7. *Proceedings of the 31st Convention*, Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, August 8-15, 1951.
8. *Proceedings of the 32nd Convention*, Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin, August 5, 1953, p. 11.
9. *Northwestern Lutheran*, Volume 49, November 4, 1962, p. 346.
10. *Northwestern Lutheran*, Volume 43, January 22, 1956, p. 29.
11. Gawrisch, Wilbert, *Commission on Inter-Church Relations—Part I—History and Organizational Form*, April 10, 1989, p. 1.
12. *Op. Cite.*, p. 29.
13. *Northwestern Lutheran*, Volume 71, August 1, 1984.
14. *Northwestern Lutheran*, Volume 62, July, 1975.
15. *Proceedings*, 1959, p. 24-28.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 35-37.
17. Taken from the biographical sketch printed on the service folder celebrating Pastor Naumann's 40th anniversary in the ministry. Mt. Lebanon Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, April 27, 1975.
18. Schaefer, James, *Some Reflections on the 125th Anniversary of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, Essay to the Metro-North Pastoral Conference, May 19, 1975, p. 7.
19. *Proceedings*, 1947, 1949.
20. *Northwestern Lutheran*, May 20, 1962, p. 153-155.
21. *Northwestern Lutheran*, June 3, 1962, p. 165-172.
22. Excerpt from personal letter from Pastor Edgar Hoenecke (Executive Secretary to the Board for World Missions) to Martin Naumann, April 25, 1980.
23. *Northwestern Lutheran*, April, 1960, p. 1-3.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
26. Schaefer, p. 27.
27. *President's Newsletter*, June, 1979.
28. *Northwestern Lutheran*, August 5, 1979, p. 251.

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- Schaefer, James, *Some Reflections on the 125th Anniversary of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, Essay to the Metro-North Pastoral Conference, May 19, 1975.
- Synodical Reports, Minnesota District, 1948.
- Numerous *Northwestern Lutheran* and newspaper articles; excerpts from personal letters, as found on endnote page as well as many others recorded in *In Memoriam*.

INTERVIEWS

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Rev. Norman Berg | former Executive Secretary of the Board for Home Missions |
| Myrna Borgwardt | daughter of Oscar J. Naumann |
| Rev. William Fischer | father was associate pastor with Rev. A. Ackermann |
| Rev. Wilbert Gawrisch | professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, chairman of CICR |
| Rev. Karl Gurgel | former member of St. Croix Conference |
| Rev. Winfred Koelpin | delegate to the 1953 Synodical Convention |
| Prof. Carl Lawrenz | former professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary |
| Rev. Carl Mischke | former first vice-president of WELS |
| Rev. Winfred Nommenson | delegate to the 1953 Synodical Convention |
| Rev. James Schaefer | former Director of Public Relations for the WELS |
| Ruth Stern | first full-time secretary to President Naumann |
| Robert J. Voss | former Executive Secretary of the Board for Worker Training |

What Makes a Great Church Builder – Look at E. Benjamin Schlueter for a Good Example!

by Ross W. Ulrich

We might say that today we are in the age of computers. Businesses cannot operate properly without them, and many homes are equipped with this almost seemingly necessary instrument. One man will be remembered in history for bringing the computer into the home—Steven Jobs, the founder of the Apple Computer Corporation. At 26 years of age he not only designed the Apple series of computers for home and office use, but also organized and founded his own company to produce these mechanical brains. Many people stood and stand in awe of Steven Jobs because of the intellect and ability which he possessed for such accomplishments. What are his gifts? How did he do it? Could someone else have done the same thing or is he unique? These are interesting questions to pose about a man who was so successful at what he did.

This article will seek to answer such questions about another man in a different field. The man is the late E. Benjamin Schlueter. Ben Schlueter's field of expertise was in building churches. Schlueter built two edifices, one during the depression, as well as building up the Holy Christian church here on earth through his untiring work. Upon closer examination of his life, we'll look to find the answers of those questions previously mentioned in reference to Steven Jobs. What were Schlueter's gifts? How did Schlueter organize the building of two churches? Could someone else have done what Ben Schlueter did or was he unique? What made E. Benjamin Schlueter a great church builder?

Edward Benjamin Schlueter was born August 28, 1880, at Watertown, Wisconsin, the third son of Mr. John H. Schlueter and his wife, Emilie, nee Kresensky. His father was a member of the Board of Trustees of Northwestern College for many years. After completing his elementary training in the Christian day school of St. Mark's he enrolled in the preparatory department of Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin. In the fall of 1896, he entered the collegiate department of this institution, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts with the class of 1900. It was here at Northwestern that Schlueter was trained in German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. This language training not only broadened and challenged Schlueter's keen intellect but it also enabled him to read Luther in his original tongue, study the confessions and writings of church fathers, and also work in the Bible in its original texts.

The same year of 1900 saw Schlueter take up the study of theology at the Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, which at the time was located at Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. He graduated in 1903. During his seminary days, he was influenced by the sainted Dr. Adolph Hoenecke, the then Director of the seminary, and Schlueter decided to dedicate his life to the holy ministry.

With that thorough and sound training in the Scriptures completed, God ordained that Schlueter's first call take him to the rural setting of Green Lake County, Wisconsin. Schlueter assumed his call of pastor over the parish of Kingston, Wisconsin.

He was ordained by Dr. Augustus F. Ernst, who was the president of Northwestern College for many years. This small parish would be the place where Ben Schlueter would break into his work. It was a perfect setting from our Lord for Schlueter to hone and polish his rough edges so that he could more effectively serve the Lord in the future. But only a year passed before our God added more responsibility to this young pastor's call in the form of another parish. Salemville, a village a few miles south of Kingston, also came under the young pastor's care.

Preaching two times in two different churches on a Sunday is not unheard of today in Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) circles. But one has to remember that Pastor Schlueter didn't have a car. Transportation in those days consisted of a horse and buggy or sleigh, depending on the season. With two churches being at least 20 miles apart, that makes for a long day, especially in the winter while plowing through snow drifts or in the spring while trudging through muddy ruts called roads. Still, Pastor Schlueter was close to his members, never showing off his education and intelligence. He preached sermons that could be easily understood by farmers, children, and small town merchants alike. He was well liked and respected by his parishioners as their pastor and as a man. As a down to earth person, Schlueter was friendly and personable with a good sense of humor. The people could feel his genuine and sincere concern for both their spiritual and physical well-being.

In 1909, God called Pastor Schlueter to serve at St. John's in Markesan, Wisconsin. In July of that year he assumed his new call to a larger church. And later that same year the Lord saw fit to increase Pastor Schlueter's responsibilities again. A Lutheran congregation in Marquette, Wisconsin called Ben Schlueter to serve them.

Markesan was a great responsibility. And yet Pastor Schlueter effectively served St. John's of Markesan and St. Paul's of Marquette. Mrs. Schlueter remembers her husband hitching up the horse to its buggy on Sunday afternoons to make the 20 mile (one way) trip to Marquette to preach. She said he enjoyed preaching wherever and whenever he could. Again, 20 miles doesn't seem like much of a trip to us today, but Mrs. Schlueter remembers all of Sunday being taken up by either preaching or travelling to or from preaching.

E. Benjamin Schlueter had quite a dynamic character. Lil Manthey of Markesan can remember Pastor Schlueter increasing the size of the church by bringing many families into membership. She said, "many prominent people in Markesan began coming to church and soon joined." Pastor Schlueter wasn't only concerned with the prominent people though, he evangelized to whomever would listen to him. Mrs. Manthey's remarks must be understood from the standpoint that even around the early 1900's, many of the German immigrants were still struggling on paying off their debts. Most were farmers with very little money. And being German, they naturally would give serious consideration to attending a Lutheran church. The second most numerous ethnic group was English settlers. They had preceded the Germans by about 30 years. They had originally settled the area of Markesan in the early 1850's. Many of them were merchants and craftsmen. By the early 1900's they had established themselves and many were quite prosperous. And being English, they were not immediately attracted to a Lutheran church. Now Lil Manthey's statement makes sense to us. Pastor Schlueter's concern wasn't to fill the coffers of the church treasury with "yankee" money, but rather he was concerned about serving the spiritual needs of everyone in the surrounding area

of his church. It didn't matter if they were German or English ("yankee"), rich or poor.

Ben Schlueter was also somewhat of an innovator. Pastor Julius Bergholz, who preceeded Schlueter, started a choir and attained a used pipe organ. But it wasn't until Schlueter came that the choir really began to grow. The Lutheran church is a singing church and Ben Schlueter promoted this idea and encouraged members at St. John's to actively participate in all phases of church activity, especially those which were musical.

In those days, the church was quite a social center. Pastor Schlueter encouraged a great deal of youth involvement by putting on plays and talent shows for fellowship gatherings in the congregations. The fact that many of the members were also neighbors who threshed together, made hay together, and visited together did a great deal to strengthen the ties between members of the congregation. These people knew each other intimately. They counted on each other. They needed each other. And they trusted Pastor Schlueter and looked to him for guidance.

In 1907, before Pastor Schlueter came to St. John's, the congregation celebrated its 25th anniversary with 92 families. They had been worshipping in a wooden structure measuring 34' x 32' x 50'. By 1915 the congregation had outgrown this edifice. Many favored building a new church, but others, fearful of the great cost, were opposed to such a plan. Finally, after much discussion and encouragement by Pastor Schlueter, it was voted to build a new church, provided all the money was on hand either in cash or by pledge at the end of the year. Can you imagine that? How would you like to try and get a church building project started and have it negated if all the money for your project hasn't been given or promised, black on white?

Again we see the persuasive nature of E.B. Schlueter at work. He, along with Dr. Henry Eckert and Oscar Laper, contacted the members of St. John's. They got \$26,000.00 and were about \$1,000 short of their goal. You would think that being so close to their goal they would have gone ahead with the project. However, it wasn't until the Ladies Aid assumed the final \$1,000, that it was reported to the congregation that all obligations had been met and it was ok to build.

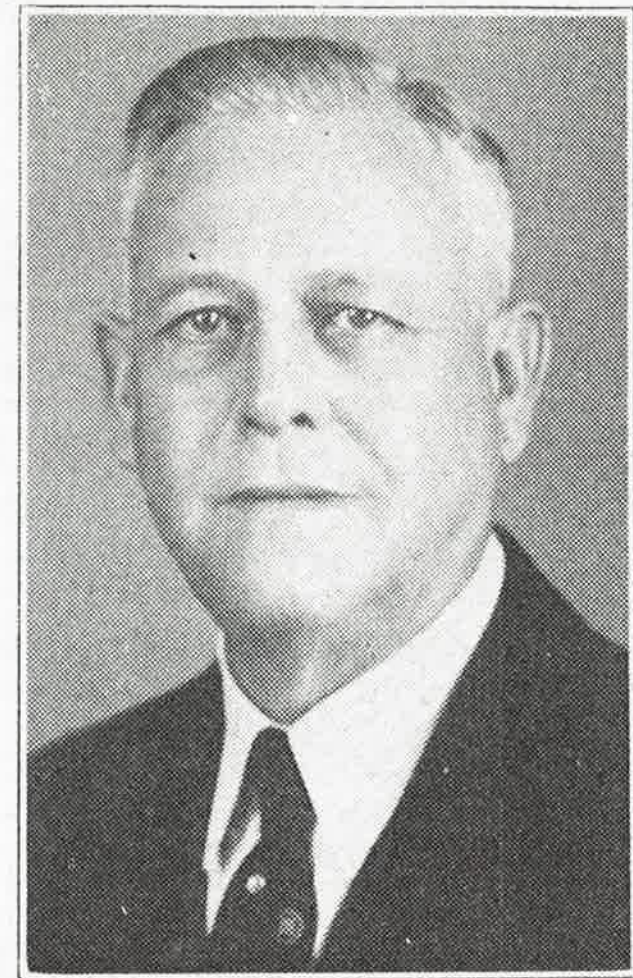
With that accomplished, the actual construction began in 1916. The old church was moved off its foundation and services were conducted in it until the new church was completed. On November 27, 1916, the new structure was dedicated for use in the worship of the Triune God.

Elgard Link of Markesan remembered this event. He recalled the church had three services that day—two in the morning and one at 7:30 p.m. He said the services were packed in the morning and he and his family attended one. His mother remarked then that she wanted to attend again in the evening. He knew it would be difficult because they farmed and would have to do chores. Nevertheless, his mother's mind was made up.

So after chores he and his mother raced for church arriving just about 7:30 p.m. He recalls it was rather warm yet for a November evening—mid 50's or so. The church was packed, with people standing in the narthex and all the way down the front steps. He got the idea to scale a tree near a window so that he could look in the window and watch Ben Schlueter preach. His mother made her way among those gathered on the steps so she could listen. Both his mother and he agreed on the fine sermon they heard preached. Without a public address system, they heard Pastor Schlueter's sermon even though

neither one was actually in the church building proper. That kind of account puts to shame stories we hear today of people not being able to hear a sermon even though the pastor is aided by a public address system.

The brick structure was a beautiful Gothic design with lots of rich wood used in the interior. The windows complemented the rest of the interior and the region of Markesan itself by portraying ancient Jerusalem and agricultural scenes in subdued colors. The church is not flashy but rich in simple beauty, giving all its glory to God. The total cost for everything—the building, including steam heat, pews, pulpit, altar and stained glass windows was \$27,000.00.



Pastor E. Benjamin Schlueter

During this time Pastor Schlueter was certainly a busy man attending to the pastoral care of two churches as well as a building project and its details. And yet there was a gap in his life. Already at 35 years of age, Ben Schlueter had not worried about finding a wife. God would provide him an excellent helpmate even as God had provided Ben with so many other great blessings. He met Helene Boerner while she was teaching home economics at Markesan High School. Miss Boerner was originally from Cedarburg, Wisconsin. On July 28, 1916, E. Benjamin Schlueter and Helene Boerner became man and wife. About 1½ months later, three brothers of Helene came to live with them in Markesan.

Newlyweds know how difficult it is to establish a family and get to know each other. However, when Helene's parents died, these three brothers were left without a home when the brother they were staying with was transferred to Texas. The ages of the boys at that time were 17, 16, and 10. Ben Schlueter graciously opened his home up to them and there they stayed. The two oldest boys stayed until they finished high school in Markesan. The youngest stayed with them through his high school years and the first two years of college. This point expresses a sign of character in Ben. How many people today, after only a couple of months of marriage, would provide a home for two teenage boys and their younger brother until they were able to provide for themselves? Helene stated that the boys enjoyed their home life with them and Ben enjoyed having them around. Ben looked upon this responsibility of raising his wife's brothers as a joy and not a burden.

After building up Markesan's rolls by preaching Law and Gospel and guiding a building project, our Lord decided he would send Ben in another direction for his service. On May 15, 1921, the then pastor of Grace Lutheran Church of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, Christoph Dowidat, asked for a release from his call at the age of 78. In 1921, Grace extended a call to Pastor Schlueter, which he accepted. Soon after his arrival, the congregation decided to hold services in both German and English each Sunday instead of just in German. Also, construction of a new parsonage was agreed upon and completed the following July at a cost of \$13,000.00.

Pastor Schlueter could see the wisdom of having regular English services as was indicated by the rapid growth of membership which followed. There was a steady influx of members joining Grace. From 1923-1927 approximately 210 communicant members were received by transfer and application while only seven transferred out! During that same period, 107 were confirmed and 58 died, leaving a net gain for five years of about 250 members.

With such continued increase in membership, it was obvious that the old church building was becoming too small. Forty-five years had passed since their structure had been erected. In 1927 the congregation resolved to erect a new house of God by establishing a building fund. A committee of five was appointed with the power to enlarge itself sufficiently in order to carry out its program. The original members were F.S. Menzel, chairman; Walter Nimmer, treasurer; Pastor Schlueter, Henry Hagene and Harvey Galow. The building fund grew but not quickly enough to enable the congregation to begin construction before the financial depression of the 1930's. Because of the depression, it seemed as though all plans of erecting a new church would have to be put on the back burner until the depression was over.

The need for the new edifice remained. In the October meeting of 1930, a request

was approved to ask architects to submit plans for the new church. The following April a temporary committee was appointed to obtain these plans. Pastor Schlueter was delighted to see his fellow believers exhibit faith in their Lord to provide for this genuine need. On July 3, 1932 a permanent building committee was authorized to select an architect to prepare plans for a new church, the cost of which was not to exceed \$65,000.00. At this time the building fund had \$40,935.42.

The plans were submitted by architect Hugo Haeuser, calling for a stone Gothic structure which would seat about 550 people. Ground breaking took place on Palm Sunday, 1933. The church was dedicated on the third Sunday in December, 1933 to the glory of God and the preaching of his saving Word.

The design of the building was described by Pastor Schlueter in these words:

In the erection of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, the thought uppermost in the minds of its builders was to erect a building that should have a churchly feeling both as to the exterior and interior and express the purpose to which it is dedicated—(that it is) A House of God, A Tabernacle of the Most High.

A modified form of the historic Gothic clere-story design was therefore chosen as best adapted for the expression of that purpose. Built of Lannon stone, laid in a random ashlar bond and ornamental with Valder's limestone, a natural beauty has been achieved which at once impresses with its mass as well as its rugged solidity.

This rugged firmness in the massive walls and strong projecting buttresses is especially emphasized in the front entrance and tower. It represents an adequate expression of the Battle Hymn of the Reformation—*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, and fittingly symbolizes the words of the 46th Psalm, "God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble."

The entire mass of the building is a silent sermon in stone, setting forth the Glory of God as it is in Christ Jesus.

Kay Schlueter Marvin remembers well the struggles that encompassed her father during this difficult financial period while the planning stages of the church were happening. "... the building committee went ahead with their plans encouraged by Dad's urging. E. Benjamin Schlueter was a very persuasive individual." The Schlueter home was not unlike that of the great reformer, Martin Luther. Kay stated, "I remember well how much of the building plans were decided at our dining table. Mother never knew during those years how often or how many individuals would be at her dinner table at noon for this purpose."

Times were hard and money was scarce during the church's building. Nevertheless, people gave what they had, be it money, time or talent. A testimony of the stewardship of Grace's people is proclaimed by Kay: "During the building of this church, wherever possible, unemployed members, artisans, workmen and laborers of our church were used. These people were grateful and Grace church benefited thereby." The carvings in Grace were done by the same man who did the carvings at Oberammergau in Germany.

Now the building had been completed, but the debt remained. On the tenth anniversary of the new building, in 1943, their debt had been erased. This in itself was

a remarkable achievement during those depression-possessed years. It was God who blessed this congregation's hard work and faithfulness under the guidance and direction of Pastor Schlueter. As busy as Pastor Schlueter was during those years with caring for his parishioners and his involvement with the building project, he was also given other duties in the promotion of the church and her Gospel at large.

The Northern Wisconsin District of our Synod had elected him their district president from 1924 to 1936. He was elected First Vice President of our Synod in 1930 and served in this capacity until 1944. His abilities as a sound theologian, preacher, organizer, and administrator were recognized even beyond our circles as the Synodical Conference elected him their First Vice President in 1930. He served the Synodical Conference in this capacity until 1944 when he was elected President of the Synodical Conference. Pastor Schlueter was the only Wisconsin Synod pastor to serve the Synodical Conference in this manner. With all of these responsibilities, Ben Schlueter faithfully carried them out.

One might wonder if any area of his ministry suffered as a result of his manifold duties. Attesting to this as objectively as possible, my sources state that none of them did. All of my sources proclaim that he was an amazing man who found time for everything and everybody. H.A. Otto of Oshkosh said, "He was a remarkable man. He was pastor 168 hours a week. It seemed that the parsonage doors were never locked and you were welcome at all hours if you had a problem or something to discuss with him. I remember Mrs. Schlueter telling in the 1940's that there was never a Sunday that he didn't preach a sermon even when he was supposed to be on vacation."

Indeed, the mark of a strong and capable pastor is that he be a good preacher. Anyone who remembers Pastor Schlueter always comments about him being a great preacher. In looking over his sermons, I enjoyed reading them for their content and penetrating, colorful style.

His sermons over a period of time announced the whole counsel of God's Word. He preached about the importance of Christian education and said, ". . . the kingdom of God doesn't come through organization, but through the simple straight forward preaching of the Word." This quote is in reference to Luther's work on the catechism which lay out God's Word for our youth. He preached about the changing role of women in our society, pointing out the disadvantages of a working mother. He said many are losing their abilities and willingness to perform household functions. Women are not serving their families as best they can in some cases and take the easy way out. "The best wedding gift you can present a newly married couple is a silver-handled can opener." Ben Schlueter worked his texts through and preached doctrinally sound sermons, never shying away from issues with "touchy" applications.

He was a sought-after guest preacher on many occasions in many places. He preached for Reformation services of the Synodical Conference in the 1930's at Soldier's Field in Chicago. His wife commented that he often stayed up late in preparation of his sermons, accomplishing his most productive work.

What about his concern for his family and parishioners? During one stretch in the depression, the former church council chairman at Grace, H.A. Otto, stated, "he willingly took a reduction in salary with two teachers and the custodian. The next year when restoration of these cuts were considered, he insisted that the school principal with a family be favored in the amount to be restored rather than that he receive an

equal amount."

His family speaks nothing but high praise of him. He had a son, Edward, and two daughters, Catherine (Kay), and Helen (Petey). He didn't pressure any to pursue a full-time career in the church although he did provide them with sound Christian educations. Both daughters went on to college, Kay at Valparaiso and Petey at Bethany in Mankato. He stretched his time to cover his family and found some time for himself. He enjoyed Men's Club, playing horseshoes and softball.

E. Benjamin Schlueter finished his service for God and man in March of 1952. He was 71 years old. His wife received numerous cards of condolence from people expressing their bereavement and comfort. S.C. Ylvisaker of Mankato wrote, "We did not envy him the burden he was made to carry, both as pastor in the home congregation and as president in the larger group . . . Let us now rather think of Him who rose again for our justification and Who now has called another dear friend and brother, your dear father and husband, home to the Kingdom of Glory and of eternal rest and joy."

When you consider all that he accomplished in the parishes he served, all the work involved with two major building projects, and all the work he did for our synod and the Synodical Conference, you, like myself, stand in amazement. At the beginning of this paper I asked a series of questions concerning E. Benjamin Schlueter. What were his gifts? He was intelligent, sincere, dedicated, faithful, concerned with people's problems, humorous, down-to-earth and personable. How did he do what he did? He walked faithfully with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave him all that he had and was. He applied himself to his work. Could someone else have done the same things he did or was he unique? I think he was unique! God made him that way even as he makes all of us unique with our own gifts. And if it sounds like I think no one else could have done what he did, that's alright, because that is my opinion. I have laid forth before the reader of this paper facts about Ben Schlueter. Now I interject an opinion that he was unique. There are few messengers of the Gospel like him that have walked this earth.

But I would not be doing justice to his memory if I didn't say that he owed it all to his God. He would confirm this thought if he were here today. And I suppose if anyone would read this paper and derive any lasting benefit, they would have to learn from Ben Schlueter by his example. He was a man who served Jesus faithfully, with all the gifts that God bestowed on him. Let that be our example of being a great church builder, building up Christ's body of believers and raising houses of worship for him, even as Ben did. All glory, praise, and honor be to God who gave us E. Benjamin Schlueter, his loyal servant.

Reminiscences

by John F. Gawrisch¹

*Edited by the Rev. Wilbert R. Gawrisch, Prof. em. Wisconsin
Lutheran Seminary, who also supplied the endnotes.*

I. Emigration of the Fred Gawrisch family to the United States in the year 1904

It was in the summer of the year 1902 when my father decided to visit his widowed mother, who lived on a farm in the United States near Red Wing, Minnesota, where she was the housekeeper for her son-in-law, whose wife, Father's only sister, was killed in a horse and buggy run-away while going to Goodhue, not far from Red Wing, to do some family shopping. I don't know exactly when Father's mother came to America, most likely because she had a daughter here. I don't know whether the daughter married in Germany or whether she married here in America. The son-in-law's name was Simanski. Since, besides his mother, Father was the only surviving member of the family, it was quite understandable that family ties should draw him toward America, where Grandmother also had a brother living on a farm near Zumbrota, Minnesota. His name was Fred Amenda.

Father went to the U.S. by way of Hamburg and New York, which was the most common way for travel to the U.S. at that time. He arrived in Goodhue County at a time when the farmers were reaping their fall crops. He worked with them by joining their colorful threshing crews of those days. This work in the open country was a big change for him after having spent 14 years in the underground coal mines of the Ruhr Valley in Westphalia, Germany.

During the winter months Father lived with his mother in Red Wing, Minnesota, where he found work in the pottery. This was quite appealing to him—so different from digging coal in those dirty mines. Apparently he never had the opportunity for a formal education. He did, however, acquire the recognition of becoming a hospital or medical attendant while in the military service of the Prussian army in Danzig, East Prussia.

Although he was spending happy days with his mother, he was, nevertheless, away from his wife and four children: one boy, John, nine years old;² Minna, seven years of age;³ Emma, five; and Marie, three. Naturally, Dad was thinking of bringing his family to America. He sent mother a ticket to leave Germany and to come to the United States. But she was afraid to travel with three children. In the meantime the two youngest girls, Emma and Marie, had died from diphtheria within a week. Henry was born on March 4, 1903.⁴ No doubt, she also dreaded to leave two sisters and their families in Erle, Westphalia. Mother just could not make up her mind to leave Germany.

At Christmas time in 1903 relatives were celebrating Christmas Eve at Tante Lucka's. Both of Mother's sisters were living in the same apartment building on Mittelstrasse. We were there in Erle also. We lived only a few blocks away on Angelstrasse. A telegram from Hamburg interrupted our celebration. It informed us that Father had just arrived in Germany and was on his way to Erle. There was no railroad station in Erle, so Uncle August and I went to Gelsenkirchen to meet him. Was this ever

a Christmas present and a happy reunion!

Ever since coming back to Erle Father was seriously pondering the question whether to remain in Germany (coal mines) or whether to emigrate to America with his small family and start a new way of life in the Red Wing Pottery. In early February he decided to do the latter. He tried to persuade his two brothers-in-law to do the same, but they could not make up their minds to leave Germany. They preferred to stay in the coal mines. Fifty years later they came to visit their children in Milwaukee. Also the mother of Adolf (one of my cousins) made the trip. Then they regretted that they had not listened to my Dad. They traveled back and forth by air in about ten hours. Quite different from our traveling in 1904!

Some time in the middle of a rainy early February morning we left our home on Angelstrasse. At Bismark, not far from Erle, a train took us westward toward Belgium. Our destination was Antwerp. At the border our baggage was inspected by the customs officials. A ship at Antwerp was to take us across the North Sea to Grimsby, England. This was to be only an overnight trip of a few hours. The North Sea is always known as a rough body of water. The waves are choppy. It was so now, especially in winter. The ship was quite small, and the sea lived up to its reputation. Everybody on board, even the seamen, became seasick. Dad took me on the deck of the ship, where I saw how the wind and the sea were tossing the ballast weights from side to side. Those were heavy pillars which were to make the ship ride more smoothly. Did that ever leave the impression of a sea voyage upon me! One was almost about to cry out as the disciples did on the Sea of Galilee, "*Herr, hilf us, wir verderben!*" We arrived in Grimsby during the early morning hours, where we spent the day in an English home or hotel. A fireplace was trying its best to keep us warm. We realized that it was winter, because we were very cold walking to this place.

During the forenoon of the next day we boarded a train which was to take us all the way across England to the Atlantic seaport of Liverpool. This was an all day trip, and it took us through the industrial part of England—coal mines and steel industries, much like that of the Ruhr region of Westphalia. We did not spend too much time in Liverpool. We boarded our large ocean steamer, the Lake Erie, which was going to take us across the Atlantic. This ship was to be our home for the next two weeks. We traveled through much fog and many storms. En route in the Atlantic the ship's navigators were constantly on the alert watching for icebergs. The fog horn was blowing continuously. We were much in that part of the ocean where these huge masses of ice would come floating southward "from Greenland's icy mountains." This is where the cold waters from the north meet the warm ocean current coming from the southwest. That causes the many fogs. Once you get through this Gulf Stream the ships are in less danger.

Evidences of seasickness were all around us. Ropes were stretched here and there and everywhere. When one felt a growling pain in the stomach area, one would run for these convenient devices until relieved. It was rather difficult for the stewards to keep up with the cleanliness of the ship, and naturally health hazards were prevalent everywhere. There were many Jews on the ship, and they were not very clean traveling companions. Quite a large contingent of these people intended to settle in the Quebec area of Canada. That is the reason our ship was traveling such a far northern route across the Atlantic. The diet of these people included raw herring, not salted, and

olives. I don't want to leave the impression that we survived on this Jewish diet only. We had our regular meals, and they were good. These Jewish snacks, however, were just enough to spoil one's appetite.

I remember that at one time we were being served lamb stew. In our family this has always been a very delectable dish with cabbage. We also got cups of coffee. When the steward wanted to retrieve the coffee cups, he went from door to door and asked for them. "Cups; cups," he would say. That word "cups" was understood by Mother as "*Kapst*," which to us in German meant cabbage. In her own mind she combined lamb stew and cabbage. At last, she thought, she was going to get a real German dish. Was she ever disappointed when that did not materialize! Misunderstanding! After this whenever we had lamb and cabbage at our house, we were always reminded of this incident, which took place, believe it or not, on the Atlantic Ocean.

We came into the United States, one might say, by way of a back door. It wasn't via New York. There was a rumor, and still is, that Ellis Island, the main gateway for entrance into the United States, was not a very good place for immigrants to experience. One had to go through a very strict routine where people were detained in so many places, sitting and waiting for this and for that, something like going through the mill at a medical clinic (Rochester!).

Our ship steamed into the Bay of Fundy. To the east was the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, and to the west was the Canadian province of New Brunswick. We landed at St. John in New Brunswick. Here we boarded a train, the Canadian Pacific, which took us through the southern tip of New Brunswick and the northern tip of the state of Maine, then into Canada once more on our way to Montreal on the St. Lawrence River. There we sat up in the railroad station practically all night, waiting for another train to take us to Sault Ste. Marie, which is right on the border of Canada and the state of Michigan. It was an awful long, long train ride. I spent most of my time in the baggage compartment above and over the seats occupied by my parents. I wondered at the long stretches of burned out forests, the result of large forest fires in this part of the world. Besides viewing the countryside as we moved westward, I studied the calendar, learning to count to 31 in English. I learned the names of the months and the days of the week. I also learned to know the clock or watch so that I could tell the time of the day. All this was done with the help of my coach, Dad, to whom I owe this credit. No wonder he could say that I was learning English rapidly. I had maps so that I could pinpoint the exact spot where we were traveling. On this train my Father treated and introduced us to the banana, which we had never seen nor tasted before. Here I also experienced the beginning of my English conversation with the man on the train who sold us sandwiches and fruit. "What is your name?" the man would ask. I turned to my English coach and said, "*Vat hat er gesagt?*" "*Er will wissen, wie du heiszt.*" I thought I was able to answer this question, so I said to the man, "I am Johann; der is my fodder, and hier is my mudder, my brudder, and my sister." Quite an accomplishment! At least I thought so.

As we were rolling through the many small towns, I could see that the snow was very deep. It was a real Canadian winter. People whom we saw at the railroad stations were wearing colorful stocking caps, which we never saw before, or others were gliding along on skis, which we never saw in our part of Germany. As we rolled on westward toward our new home, we finally arrived at Sault Ste. Marie. Here we crossed the border

of the United States into the northern part of the states of Michigan and Wisconsin. What a thrill! I think that perhaps on our way to St. Paul, Minnesota, we even went through that small lumbering town of Rhinelander, Wisconsin. Trains from all directions would meet at the Union Depot in St. Paul. We were now only 40 miles from Red Wing, Minnesota, where our parental grandmother, relatives, and friends met us. This was the fourth of March, brother Henry's first birthday and the day when Theodore Roosevelt was inaugurated as President of the United States.

II. Dr. Martin Luther College

Although I had almost four years in a German school in Erle, I started in Red Wing, Minnesota, public school in Third Grade, at about Easter time, before the long summer vacation. The language barrier set me back one year.

In the year 1906 St. John's Congregation in Red Wing felt the need to implement the religious indoctrination of its church members, particularly of its youth, by establishing a parochial school. There was no school building; neither was there space available in the immediate vicinity to add to the church building itself, as was often done, or to build a separate structure. It was decided to make the necessary arrangement for school in the basement of the church building. It had the general misnomer of being called a German School. At that time the German language was used to instruct us in religion, the Word of God; otherwise the subjects were taught in English. Ours was primarily a Christian Lutheran school, where a Christian atmosphere prevailed throughout all teaching.

It was my privilege to be one of the first to enroll. About 35 pupils attended; only the first seven grades were represented. Our first and only teacher was Mr. Alex Jaeger, a 1906 graduate of D.M.L.C. He was good. He was also a classmate of Mr. Huldreich Klatt,⁵ with whom I had much to do when I later entered upon a teaching career. Mr. Jaeger had a very good reputation as a teacher, and he was also considered an excellent choir director and church organist. While in Red Wing, he got a call to Jerusalem in Milwaukee. From there he was later called to Milwaukee Lutheran High School to teach with Sampe, Voss, and Meyer. You see, he was considered an outstanding teacher in the synod already at that time. While there, he became ill and suffered a sudden death on the street like [Mr. Emil] Trettin. It was illness, not an accident. When he was a teacher at Jerusalem, I was a teacher a few blocks from him at Bethesda.

During the first year of this school, a boy by the name of Henry Jebram acquired the recommendation of Rev. John Baumann to enroll at New Ulm in 1907 after his confirmation to begin his study for the ministry. D.M.L.C. was primarily a Teachers' College, but at the same time it also prepared students in pre-theological courses, particularly in church history, Latin, and Greek. I was confirmed the following year in 1908. I, too, seemed to have been singled out to prepare for the teaching ministry in our parochial school system. At the time of my confirmation Pastor Rev. J.R. Baumann presented me with a book into which he wrote: "*Wegen ausserordentlichen Fleisches.*" Rev. Baumann spoke to my father about further education at New Ulm. This was an undecided problem throughout that summer. Result? In September I enrolled in the public school. Some time in October we had a Mission Festival in our church. After attending that service my father's mind was made up definitely that I go to D.M.L.C.,

even though I would be a month late in enrolling there.

Upon contacting Rev. Baumann in this matter, we found out that Prof. John Meyer from New Ulm was preaching in nearby Zumbrota. Arrangements were soon established that he and I meet in the early morning at the railroad station. Meanwhile, my trunk was packed, and on that same evening my father and I traveled to Zumbrota to spend the night there with relatives. I was on my way to New Ulm to become a teacher in a parochial school. As was arranged, I became acquainted with Prof. J. Meyer on Monday morning at the railroad station. I was now in his charge. This marked the beginning of a life-long friendship.

At noon on that Monday we arrived in Mankato, Minnesota, 30 miles away from New Ulm. A man at the station was ringing a small handbell, calling train passengers for lunch, since the train was making a 30 minute stop. People were flocking into the station for a sandwich and a cup of coffee. Prof. Meyer wondered what I would do about lunch. I made no move to leave the train, so he finally opened a lunch box, which the pastor's wife in Zumbrota (Mrs. Rev. Metzger) had packed for him. Forever after he mentioned that I as a 14 year old boy had a huge appetite and that I ate more than half of his lunch. After this lunch period it was only another hour when the train arrived in New Ulm. Prof. Meyer and I walked up the Center Street hill to the college. Coming into the Faculty Room, I became acquainted with Prof. Bliefernicht. Both of these men immediately got busy and arranged my study schedule and assigned me to a study room as well as to my bedroom. Since I had missed a whole month of Latin, Prof. Meyer asked Carl Schwappe, an upper class member, to be my tutor until I had caught up with the regular class. Prof. Meyer became my Latin teacher and Prof. Bliefernicht my German and history teacher.

I was assigned to what was then known as the Sexta Class. Some of my classmates that first year were Arthur Fuerstenau, who was the oldest and to whom everybody looked up as the admonishing father; Henry Nitz; William Lindloff; Oscar Albrecht; and Ernst Vogelpohl. Still others with whom I became intimate friends during the following Quinta class were Richard Janke,⁶ who later in life became my brother-in-law through marriage to my wife's sister. Then there was Roy Vollmers, who attended the St. John's parochial school with me in Red Wing. He came to D.M.L.C. to prepare for the ministry. Jack Haar and Alfred Schwappe were also ministerial students. Alfred Schwappe later in life switched into the study of law. After graduation from the Law School at Minnesota University he became dean of the Law School at the University of Washington in Seattle. Emil Backer and Waldemar ("Nigger") Retzlaff were specialists in music. Backer got to be head of the D.M.L.C. music department after the death of his teacher, Prof. Fritz Reuter. Retzlaff and Bill Muesing became prominent New Ulm business men; the former was in the hardware business and the latter owned and operated a pharmacy. When Carl Pape, a year ahead of me in New Ulm, and I taught school in La Crosse, Wisconsin, he selected me to serve as best man at his wedding. Fred Meyer, also a member of the class ahead of me, later as teacher became the Executive Secretary of the synod's parochial school system. There again I served as best man at his wedding. Otto Boerneke, who too was in the class ahead of me, got to be my brother-in-law. He, too, married one of my wife's sisters.

During my early teaching career I used to call on many of my schoolmates in or near New Ulm. But in later years, I used to tell my wife that if I wanted to call on my

friends, I would have to go to the New Ulm Cemetery. Many of them had already gone to their eternal reward and were resting in peace. Others were still around.

In general, those boys who intended to become parochial school teachers spent five years as classmates until graduation; those who were planning to be ministers were in the same class through Quarta and Tertia. The ministerial students then left D.M.L.C. Some went to a Theological Seminary at Springfield, Illinois, while others continued their studies for two or even three more years at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin. Upon graduation from there they spent three more years at the Theological Seminary in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. We who were going into teaching spent our fifth year at D.M.L.C. before graduation. We were then assigned to various schools throughout the Wisconsin Synod. In my case, I graduated in 1913 and was sent to teach in the First Lutheran School at La Crosse, Wisconsin.

During these years from 1908 to 1913 there were hardly 20 girls attending D.M.L.C. Some of them planned to become parochial school teachers. There were none in our class. We were six male graduates. Besides those already mentioned we picked up from other classes some who were out practice teaching for a year and then returned to finish their course. Such were August Faubel, Alfred Windland, and Gustave Wachter.

Prof. Reuter welcomed girl students at the college because he also wanted a mixed choir. For this purpose he also recruited some outstanding female voices from the city, not college graduates. His Male Chorus made several concert tours in Minnesota. These were always enjoyed by the students. We did not travel by bus, but by train. Wherever we gave a concert, we were quartered in the homes of congregation members. Our concerts were church concerts. Miss Hertha Aufderheide (her married name was Gieseke) was our choir accompanist at the piano. Very good student organists often accompanied at the church organ. We gave concerts at St. Paul's church in New Ulm; included in our trips were also places like St. Paul, Stillwater, Arlington, Echo, Wood Lake, Fairfax, Gibbon, and Winthrop. To some of these places we went in the winter time. It was then that trains were often delayed on account of heavy snow storms. One time after an evening concert we wanted to go from Winthrop to Fairfax. The distance between these places is only approximately 25 miles, but we stayed up all night at the station waiting for the train. We got to Fairfax in time for breakfast. Another time we wanted to go from Wood Lake to Echo. That was also only a short distance, but we were in the midst of a terrible Minnesota blizzard. The M. & St. L. railroad was unable to cope with such huge snowbanks. After returning to New Ulm after this storm, the father of one of the boys was heard to say, "*Mein Ali ist ganz dahin.*" That was good New Ulm German for saying, "My Alfred is all in." Such were the sentiments of all choir members after the Wood Lake and Echo concerts.

D.M.L.C. was founded in 1884. Until 1912 there was only one building on the campus, now known as Old Main. This building, standing on a hill west of the city, served as administration building, dormitory, and classroom building. Yes, we also had an auditorium in which a pipe organ was located. Enrollment in 1908 was approximately 100 students. There were six rooms used as classrooms. On the third floor there were six bedrooms and an isolation room used in cases of illness. A bedroom usually accommodated 16 beds. This third floor was an ideal battleground for occasional pillow fights. At the foot of each bed there was usually a trunk, storage space for our personal

belongings. Every room had ample space for clothing.

There was no space in the old building for a gymnasium. A frame building about a block away served us during the basketball season. Outdoor activities such as baseball and tennis were practiced with a great deal of interest. Outdoor calisthenics were also pursued. There was no football playing.

During the fall of 1911 and the winter and spring months of 1912 a new dormitory was built. In September of this year we rejoiced when we could move into much larger study and sleeping quarters. The study rooms were all on one side of the building; across the hall were the bedrooms. All rooms were large enough to accommodate four students. There was now a gymnasium in the basement, a room for trunks, and a room for students from the city. The girls still had their room in Old Main. Old Main was now being used as classrooms only. In the basement there were still the dining room, kitchen, and living quarters for the cooks and other employees. Between Old Main and the new dormitory a music hall was erected. A spacious auditorium in this building was now being used for assemblies and morning and evening devotions. There were ample rooms for piano practice, music classes, chorus, and orchestra.

Our practice teaching was very limited and confined chiefly to St. Paul's Lutheran School in the city. The students in the two upper college classes, known as Class A and Class B, audited this teaching done by two or three students. This auditing was done once a week on a Wednesday afternoon.

Opportunity for additional practice teaching was had in some parochial school in a neighboring city. I had the privilege to do such teaching in a rural school in West Florence, six miles out of Lake City. This congregation conducted a parochial school for two months during September and October. One of my classmates, August Faubel, was sent there to teach during September. He then returned to D.M.L.C., and I was to continue the outlined course during October. Then I returned to New Ulm.

The West Florence school was not very far from Red Wing, my home. One weekend I wanted to visit my parents. I borrowed a bicycle from one of my pupils and then rode to Lake City, from where I wanted to take a train to Red Wing. I left the bicycle at the parsonage with Rev. (William) Franzmann. Of course, he was also interested to hear about some of my teaching experiences in the country. Immanuel congregation was his "*Filiale*." He took me out there with his horse and buggy on a Sunday afternoon.

I enjoyed my short visit with my parents. Saturday night we had a very heavy rainfall. I wondered how that would affect my bicycle ride from Lake City back to West Florence. Late Sunday afternoon I boarded the train for Lake City. I called for my bicycle at the parsonage and started out for West Florence. This area had the same heavy rainfall which we had at Red Wing. I started out all right, but after going about a mile out of the city pedaling a bicycle in the mud became an impossibility. I felt I must push the bicycle, but I had no success with that either. I left the bicycle with a farmer along the way and walked home to my boarding place, a distance of about five miles. This was October 1912.

In 1911 a school paper, *The D.M.L.C. Messenger* was started. It was to be published four times a year. Henry Nitz was the first editor-in-chief. I was his successor. We exchanged publications with other schools.

ENDNOTES

1. These reminiscences were recorded shortly before his death in 1974 after more than 60 years in the teaching ministry, the last 27 of which were spent at Milwaukee Lutheran High School.
2. John became the father of two sons, Wilbert and Harold, both of whom were graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and entered the WELS pastoral ministry. Two grandsons, John and Daniel Gawrisch, are also WELS pastors.
3. Minna became the mother of Katherine (Mrs. Gerald Bruss, nee Fitschen), a WELS Christian day school teacher for many years. She also became the grandmother of Charlotte (Mrs. Herbert Prahl, nee Fitschen), who likewise became a WELS teacher.
4. Henry became the father of Rev. Kenneth Gawrisch, presently pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Franklin, Wisconsin. Kenneth's son, Joel Gawrisch, is a student at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Gail (Mrs. Allen Wollenzein), the daughter of Fred Gawrisch, also became a WELS Christian day school teacher. Fred was a son who was born later in the United States. Four more children followed Fred: Elizabeth, Emma, Dorothy, and Herman. The mother died in 1922 and the father in 1927.
5. Mr. Klatt later served as a professor at D.M.L.C.
6. Richard Janke became a professor at D.M.L.C. He died in 1955.

from the editor . . .

My apologies! The October edition is late because of circumstances caused by the relocation of residence of the editor in October. It had been planned to have the move take place during the summer months, but, as anyone knows who has endured real estate transactions, such was not the case.

In this edition of the *Journal* two contrasting approaches to the recording of WELS historical material are presented. The first article on Pastor Naumann is documented and analytical. The other two articles may be classified more under the heading of human interest accounts. Yet all three help to fill the recording of a portion of the history of the synod. Special thanks to the three contributors of these articles, all of whom are pastors in the synod.

Because of the length of Part I of the 1866 Proceedings of the Wisconsin Synod, the publication of this report is delayed until the April 1998 edition of the *Journal*. Valuable historical information in the development of American Lutheranism is contained in the Proceedings of 1866 and following years, leading to the formation of the Synodical Conference of North America in 1870.

Interesting developments are under way for the future of the Historical Institute and its function for the synod. Its value has been recognized. Look for interesting reports in the January *NEWSLETTER*.

Arnold O. Lehmann

The WELS Historical Institute was given formal approval by the synod in convention some twelve years ago to organize for the purpose of collecting and preserving historical data and artifacts that were related to the various periods of the existence of the Wisconsin Synod. For this purpose the Institute took over the former synodical archives which are now to be found in our seminary's library building. These are available for researchers and students of history. A museum was also established when Salem Ev. Lutheran Church made its old church building available for that purpose. It is now known as Salem Landmark Church. The Institute itself receives no funds from the synod, although some funds are given to the archivist for part of the cost of preserving synodical data. Funds, especially for the museum, have been received from outside sources. The majority of the costs to maintain the work of the Institute comes from membership fees, and for this reason it is hoped that our membership can be increased in size. Membership fees are: \$10.00 for individuals; \$15.00 for a husband and wife; \$5.00 for a student; and \$25.00 for a congregation, school, library or corporation.

Board members are: Dr. James Kiecker, president; Prof. Alan Siggelkow, vice president; Dr. Erhard Opsahl, secretary; Pastor Curtis Jahn; Pastor Mark Jeske; Mr. Clarence Miller, Miss Charlotte Sampe; Dr. Thomas Ziebell. *Ex officio* — Prof. Martin Westerhaus and Mr. Barry Washburn, treasurer.

Journal and *NEWSLETTER* editorial staff are: Dr. Arnold O. Lehmann, editor; Mrs. Naomi Plocher, Prof. em. Armin W. Schuetze — staff.

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