

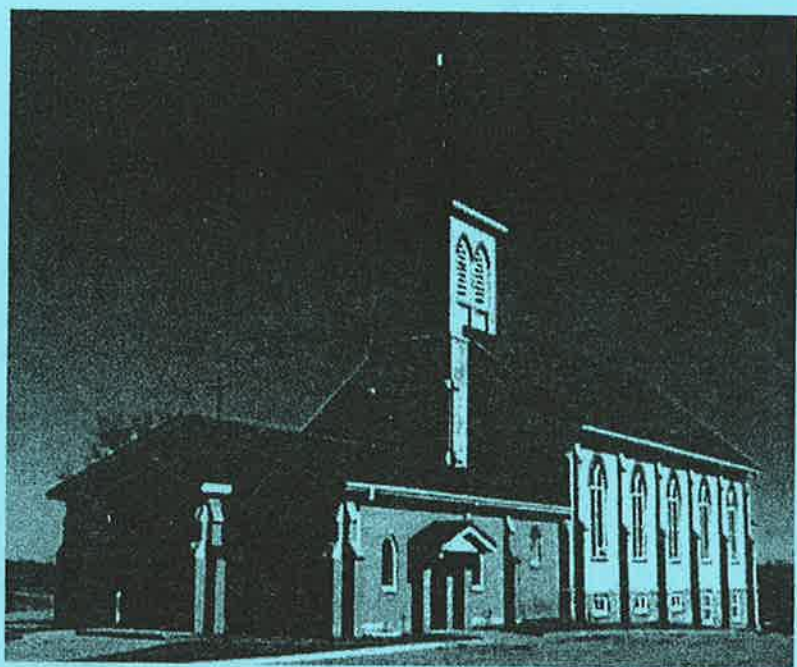
WELS Historical Institute

Journal

Volume 24, Number 1
April 2006

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Editor Arnold O. Lehmann

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The Cover

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. John, Peshtigo, Wisconsin joined the Wisconsin Synod in 1871.

**Proceedings
of the
Twenty-first Convention
of the
German Evangelical Lutheran Synod
of
Wisconsin and other States**

**held in the German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation
at Manitowoc, Wis.
June 8 to 13, 1871
(continued)**

[Three morning sessions were set aside for the reading and discussion of the fifth and last thesis of Pastor Hoenecke's paper on the doctrine of the church. The first four were discussed in 1869 and 1870.]

[You may recall that the secretary of the 1871 convention didn't record the minutes according to the order of daily sessions, but according to topics.]

Business Matters

1. Pastors' Right to Vote.

As a result of the recorded report in the minutes on the organization of the convention it was brought up in the second session whether only those pastors of congregations belonging to the synod and professors of our educational institutions have the exclusive right to vote at the synodical conventions.

After the matter of this question was reviewed, namely that the earlier stipulation in the synodical constitution indicated that a synodical pastor, if he could not persuade his congregation to join the synod within two years, would either lose his right to vote at the synodical convention or would have to leave his congregation and take on a congregation belonging to the synod, (that this earlier decision) indicating the departure of a pastor from a congregation is rejected by the synod as being an action contrary to the doctrine of the call; that the depriving of the right to vote was ambiguous; and after the matter was discussed sufficiently, the following resolution disposed of the matter:

Those pastors, who serve one or more congregations belonging to the synod shall be eligible voters at the synodical conventions; the others along with the professors are to be standing advisory members.

In connection with this it was resolved to list in the synodical report the pastors and professors according to their seniority. This has been done as much as possible in the list of names at the front of the Proceedings.

2. Visitation.

At the last convention it was resolved that the president should consider the vice-president and a third pastor selected by the assembly as his assistants for the office of the visitor and to use them in cases of necessity or permit them to do some visiting. From the reports of these visitors it showed that this resolution was not workable. The

president, upon resolution by the assembly to have a committee give further information on this matter, appointed such a committee, from which in the final session the following report was adopted:

1. The area of our synod will be divided into three districts which will be based upon the present conference-districts in this manner,
 - a) the first district consisting of the Southern and Dodge-Washington Co. Conferences,
 - b) the second consisting of the Central and Mississippi Conferences,
 - c) the third consisting of the Northern and Northwestern Conferences.
2. Each visitation district on the resolution of the synod elects its own visitor.
3. The synod elects a pastor who as soon as possible will compile instructions for the visitor, so that visitations can be begun in the very near future.

Delegate: *C. Woelz, A. Ernst, A. Hoenecke, Th. Jaekel*

No 1. of the report was adopted by resolution.

In place of no. 2, it was resolved that the entire synod elect the three visitors. Elected for district 1 was Pastor Jaekel, for No. 2 Pastor Adelberg, and for No. 3 Pastor Streissguth. It was resolved that the president at the request of a congregation, or on his own, may make a visitation to any of the districts without his appearing to encroach on the duties of the respective visitor.

No. 3 of the report was adopted as amended in the following form: The conferences should discuss visitation in their next meetings and send the results of the discussions to Pastor Jaekel within the next half year, so that he on the basis of these suggestions can work out a proposed instruction manual for discussion at next year's synodical convention.

3. Release of Congregational Members to other Congregations.

In regard to this matter it was resolved in the second session to request the writer of a recently appearing article in the *Gemeindeblatt* to present theses for the subject in question so that these can be attached to the proceedings; since this request could not be adequately presented by the writer at this convention, the matter was given no further time.

4. Care of Pastors' Widows and Orphans.

The committee assigned to report on the care of pastors' widows recommends to the synod the following:

To continue the same support for both pastoral-widows Muehlhaeuser and Braun. To grant Mrs. Wiese an annual support of \$125.00, Mrs. Bartlett an annual support of \$100.00.

Since there is the possibility that exceptional circumstances should enter in, making additional support desirable, the committee requests the Hon. synod to grant the president permission to approve of such support.

In connection with this matter, the committee takes the liberty to raise the question whether all pastors have performed their obligation of love in regard to the widows?

Marian Ebernau, Albert Kluge, Johanna Zirbel, T. Genske, P. Lukas

The motion in regard to the widows Muehlhaeuser and Braun was adopted. In regard to the other named women, it was resolved to grant Mrs. Wiese an annual support of \$150.00 and Mrs. Bartlett \$100.00. Also resolved to grant the president the right to approve of further needed support in case of necessity.

5. How we can in the best way possible come to the point of having competent confessionally true parochial school teachers.

At the discussion of this important question for our congregations it was revealed that our Watertown institution was really not designed to educate teachers since it had entirely other goals. To counter this, it was reported that in several cases the administration of the teachers seminary of the Missouri Synod in Addison had shown favorable reception regarding requests on our part involving this matter. Therefore it was resolved to authorize the president to effect the situation whereby we can send our young people to Addison to be educated as teachers and support them in the same manner as we support the theological students in St. Louis.

6. Report by the Committee on the Auditing of the Books of the Various Treasurers.

1. The same respectfully reports to the Hon. synod that it, after thorough audit, has found all of the presented books to be in the best order, and correct, and it requests the Hon. Synod to express sincere thanks to the respective men, Pastor Conrad, Pastor Bading, Mr. G. Gamm and Mr. G. Brumder.

2. The committee takes the liberty to offer the following remarks: At the occasion of the auditing of the book of the moneys for the widows' treasury the committee found that an entire row of pastors have not sent in any contributions for the widows' treasury and as a result have caused a deficit on this year's treasury report.

3. The audit of the books for the institutions showed that for various expenditures there are no receipts and the committee requests the Board of Trustees to have receipts for each expenditure in the future.

4. The committee further requests the Hon. Synod to take into consideration if it would not be wise that an accounting of the funds for foreign and home missions, as well as the funds for the *Gemeindeblatt* and the sale of the hymnals be a part of the agenda at the synodical convention.

August Wahl, W. Dammann, C. Mayerhoff, Ph. Brenner

Number 1. was passed by resolution.

Likewise No. 2 with the addition that the laggards be punished in a proper manner. Resolved to adopt No. 3 with the amendment that the necessary receipts be kept for even the smallest items.

No. 4 was resolved.

In the discussion of this report the convention took the occasion to recall that it is the obligation of the congregations to bear the additional cost of moving their incoming pastor, rather than as stated in the treasurer's book where there is a column that this payment is made from the synodical treasury.

In answer to the question by the president from what source he in the future is to get funds to pay the travel expenses of pastors and students sent us from Germany, it was resolved that these funds be taken from the synodical treasury.

7. Acceptance of New Pastors Committee report.

1. Pastor Friedrich Guenther has successfully passed the theological examination given by a committee appointed by the president, and Pastor Wilhelm Schimpf has done so likewise, it is thus recommended that they be accepted as members of the synod.

2. The testimonials before us, as well as the passing of the colloquies given by the undersigned committee to Pastors Friedrich Huebner, Johann Meyer and Heinrich

Wilhelm Hagedorn have satisfied the committee and thus they are being recommended to be accepted as members of our synod.

3. The colloquy with Pastor Koehler satisfied the committee, but accusations in the release certificate from Pastor Grossmann do not agree with the statements of Pastor Koehler, so we recommend to the Hon. synod that there be an investigation either in person or by correspondence, and if all things are satisfactory as a result of the investigation, to authorize the president to recommend Pastor Koehler for a pastoral position in our synod.

4. The acceptance of Pastor von Schlottheim into our synod and the continuation of the temporary arrangement in Sheboygan cannot be recommended by the committee. Rather it recommends to the synod seriously to dispatch a commission to the congregation in Sheboygan which would counsel the same in its difficult position and as much as possible seek to save them from a bad experience.

A. Theilig, W. Streissguth, Fr. Leistikow, A. Ernst, A. Hoenecke

Nos. 1 and 2 of the committee report were adopted by resolution and with that Pastors Guenther, Schimpf, Huebner, Meyer and Hagedorn were accepted as members of the synod. No. 3, in regard to Pastor Koehler, was resolved by the assembly as follows: Pastor Reim of La Crosse together with Pastor Reichenbacher are to investigate personally the matter of Pastor Koehler and give the report to the president.

No. 4 of the committee report was adopted and it was further resolved to delegate the president together with another person in the congregation in Sheboygan to be named later to set the matter there in order.

8. Relationship of the Synod to the Hon. Synod of Minnesota.

Pastor Hoenecke gave the following report on the last year's convention of the Hon. Synod of Minnesota, which he attended as a delegate:

The undersigned, who attended the synodical sessions of the Hon. Ev. Luth. Synod of Minnesota in Brownsville, Minn. from June 28 to July 4, takes the liberty to report to the Hon. synod the following:

Aside from the several business matters which are not necessary to mention here, a greater amount of time was spent on a series of theses, which the church union [*Kirchengemeinschaft*] had up for discussion. Your delegate could not only give his sincere assent to these theses, but had also to recognize how the correct basic principles of church union as presented in the theses and orally explained by the writer of the theses, Pastor Siecker, found complete agreement in the discussion. And thus your delegate cannot hesitate to declare that he, from the way the discussion went, has found the Hon. Minnesota Synod in regard to the principles concerning church union to be in full doctrinal agreement with our synod.

It isn't proceeding as quickly as one would hope, namely, the practical inference of these principles being drawn by the Hon. Synod of Minnesota in relationship to their ties with the General Council, but recently explanations were made by President Siecker, which would bring a hoped for by us early conclusion to the ties of the Hon. Synod of Minnesota to the General Council and may it then be the right time that our Hon. synod, on the basis of the present stand on the matters in its relationship with the Synod of Minnesota, make it a matter of discussion.

A. Hoenecke.

The above report, after some discussion, brought about the following resolution by the convention:

Since the convention of the Synod of Wisconsin has received sufficient information about the confessional position of the Hon. Synod of Minnesota from its publicly presented confession, from the printed proceedings of its last year's convention and from the present report of its delegates, it recognizes with great joy the true confessional beliefs of the Hon. Synod of Minnesota.

After the delegate of the Hon. Synod of Minnesota, President Siecker, expressed his satisfaction over this resolution, it was resolved that Pastors Streissguth and Ph. Koehler attend this year's convention of the Hon. Synod of Minnesota as delegates of our synod.

9. Representation of Our Synod at the Convention of the Hon. Synod of Missouri.

Pastor Adelberg and Pastor Hoenecke were named delegates for this year's convention of the Hon. Synod of Missouri, Northern District - President Bading and Pastor Dammann were selected as delegates to the April 1872 convention of the joint Synod of Missouri, Ohio, etc.

10. Election of Trustees.

Since the terms of three members of the Board of Control of our educational institutions, Pastors Bading, Ungrodt, Waitt expire with this convention, a new election was held, with the result being the re-election of the outgoing members.

11. Founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference.

Committee report: The committee which is to report on the founding of a synodical conference by the four Lutheran Synods of Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin and the Norwegian Lutheran Synod recommends to the Hon. synod the following points for acceptance:

1. The Synod, keeping in mind the words of St. Paul: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace," (Eph 4:4) [should be 4:3] speaks its happy thanks to the Lord for this, that in the area of the Lutheran church in America, after many years of terrible disunity, such an attempt at unity, based on the true confessions is in the making.

2. The synod recognizes in this attempt at unity, a way of the Lord to help our Lutheran church to a stronger development of the gifts and strengths it has, which, as long as the synods are isolated, cannot result in the same degree of accomplishment.

3. The synod embraces this attempt at unity and accepts (as published in No. 12, 1871 *Gemeindeblatt*) the proposed plan for the union of the named synods as the basis for the future constitution of this body.

Delegates: *Christoph Reinemann, Voss*

Pastors: *Jaekel, Koehler, Ungrodt*

The discussion of the above began with the consideration of No. 3 of the committee report. The proposed plan referred to in the report was read and discussed in detail.

The same reads as follows:

A form of the union of the synods of Ohio, Missouri, Wisconsin and the Norwegian Lutheran.

I. Name: [*Evangelisch-lutherische Synodalconferenz.*] Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference.

II. Confession: The synodical conference accepts the canonical books of the Old

and New Testaments as God's word and accepts the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran church of 1580, called the "Concordia", as their own.

III. Purpose and Goal: public expression of the spiritual unity of the respective synods; mutual strengthening in faith and confession; furthering of unity in doctrine and practice; rejection of rising or threatening disturbances against the same; joint activity for joint purposes; endeavoring to set bounds of the synods according to territorial or language bounds; union of all Lutheran synods in America into one true believing American Lutheran church.

IV. Authority. The synodical conference is solely an advisory body in all matters, in which it is not granted a particular authority by all the constituting synods; only the entire body of the represented synods decides on the acceptance of a church body into the Synodical Conference; The Synodical Conference should also see to it that regular, mixed pastoral conferences arranged by the respective district presidents be introduced and held; without the agreement of all of the synods of the Synodical Conference no member of the Synodical Conference can enter into church ties with another church body.

V. Matters of Activity: Church doctrine and practice; relationship of pastor and congregation of a synod of the conference towards another; relationship of the entire body and individual parts of the same to church bodies outside the conference; matters external and internal, such as emigrant mission; sick and orphanage matters; Lutheran literature in general and Lutheran tract matters in particular; matter of the education of pastors and teachers, and the like.

VI. Manner of Implementation:

a. The members of the synodical Conference: they are in part voter eligible, in part advisory; in the first group are those pastors and congregations selected to be delegates by the respective synods, in the second group are all those who are in attendance and either are standing members of the respective synods or those who functioned as congregational representatives in the previous synodical convention; each respective congregation has the right for each 40 voting members to select two as representatives in this body, however the pastor and representatives are in the number; also the smallest synod should have the right to have as representatives two pastors and two congregational representatives; likewise each congregation should be allowed two persons additionally, if there is an extra group of less than 40 voting members after the voters have been divided into groups of 40.

b. Time of meetings: annually, in July.

c. Officers of the body: a chairman and a secretary elected for one year and a substitute for each.

VII. Constitution: The constitution of the Synodical Conference will become effective after it is ratified by all the respective synods with an agreed upon resolution; also with that same type of resolution alone can amendments to the constitution have validity and enforcement; the Synodical Conference has the right to add to its statutes such provisions which neither are contrary to the constitution of the respective synods nor draw in matters that are in synodical competition in its membership.

Regarding the selection of the name, after it was brought up that actually the name was chosen to show that there was no amalgamation of synods, also no leader over the synods taking place, but only a conference of Lutheran Synods is to be formulated, in which all stand equal side by side, was No. 1 of the draft adopted unanimously by the synod. Likewise No. II.

With No. III it was remarked how the externals of such a union of Lutheran synods can quickly make an impression on and be a force against the world, the sects and the erring Lutheran synods and churches. The aspiration referring to the setting of boundaries for the synods according to territorial or language boundaries was brought up, and that geographic boundaries of congregations was virtually unable to be done, however it could be with synods as long as language is not in consideration; but also this could only happen if all the synods would be dissolved into one. The next achievable goal would be the removal of opposition-congregations of the respective various synods and the hindering of mission work of one of these synods in the congregational territory of another. In regard to the term "American-Lutheran Church" it is to be mentioned that with this term is meant the Evangelical Lutheran Church as it is adapted and fitting for American conditions.

After these remarks No. III was likewise adopted.

For clarification of No. IV it was brought up that the acceptance of a new synod into the Synodical Conference can only occur after each individual synod has resolved this in convention. The "No" of a congregation hinders the acceptance. It is indeed hoped that in the proposed constitution of the conference this point will be stated precisely and in a manner not to be misunderstood. The mixed pastoral conferences are to be understood to this point that the states are to be divided into districts in which the pastors of the respective synods annually hold conferences, to which it is the duty of all pastors in the district to attend. In regard to "entering church approved union with other church bodies," opinions varied on whether with that phrase, recognition of the correct beliefs of a synod without a further follow-up or not is taken into account. Finally No. IV was likewise adopted. In the same way, after explanatory discussion, Numbers V, VI, VII and finally the heading of the entire proposal were adopted.

After this No. 1 and 2 of the above committee report were adopted by resolution.

The discussion of this matter found its conclusion with the resolution, that the synod delegate its president to officially represent the synod in handing in the above resolutions at the announced next meeting on November 14 of this year.

12. Educational Institutions.

Annual report of the Board of Control of our educational institutions.

Dear Brothers!

With the beginning of the past year our institutions definitely entered into a new phase. With the transfer of the seminary to St. Louis and with the various directions from the last synod, especially in regard to housekeeping, to school rights, and to the procuring of professor salaries we at the same time began to plow anew. For that reason we peered into the future with various cares and anxieties and not without fears did we step into this school year. But the Lord, our faithful God and Savior, foiled all our fears and blessed us so richly this year and sustained us so graciously that we can only give to the synod a pleasing and good report today. The faculty of our institution is at present still the same as at the last synodical convention, consisting of three German and two English professors, and we must give them the commendation, that they also in this year worked with tireless energy and great faithfulness and thus the results of their work with the students was most pleasing. In spite of the fact that our institution does not have the number of teachers that similar institutions have, we still, in regard to the expanse of instruction as well as to the desired results, stand second to none among them, which truly we have to ascribe to the self-sacrificing diligence of our professors. - Pastors Stra-

sen and Adelberg have also this year helped with the religious instruction and Pastor Schumm has earned our thanks for being the singing instructor the past several weeks. - Professor Thomsen, who chiefly taught mathematics saw it necessary to hand in his resignation during the course of the year, which would take place at the end of the school year. As a result the Board of Control saw it necessary to look for another qualified person in order to fill the opening in the faculty. Such a person, Pastor Theodor Brohm of Boston, Mass., was recommended by several sources and we have therefore called him as professor at our institution. We are happy to report that he accepted our call and will arrive in Watertown already at the beginning of August in order to take up his position with the beginning of the next school year.

As stated in the recently released catalogue of the institution, the enrollment at the school this past year was very satisfactory. In the German gymnasium there were 58 students, who with but a few exceptions are preparing themselves to be pastors, and of these 24 are from our synod. The number of students in the English academy is 74, that brings the total to 132 students, more than attended the institution in any previous school year; for the next school year the prospects are for quite an increased number. Also about the diligence and deportment of the students, as well as about the spirit that reigned in the institution, we have great reason to be happy, and the Lord in the past synodical year graciously spared the faculty and students from illness.

In order to bring the housekeeping [room and board] to the point, if possible, that it be self supporting, we saw it necessary to search for an experienced and discreet manager to whom we could hand over the dormitory duties, and it was our good fortune to find such a suitable man in the person of Mr. G. Markworth. He, during the course of the year, and under the supervision of the inspector of the institution oversaw with faithfulness, discretion and skill the entire housekeeping program to our greatest satisfaction, and his and his wife's wise handling of the household affairs, as well as the action of love of many of our congregations, which donated considerable gifts of provisions, cause us to express our thanks, that this year the dormitory program not only paid for itself, but had a surplus of \$400.00 in its treasury.

Concerning the situation of the other institution treasuries, we let that up to the annual report of the particular treasurers.

Annual Report of Treasurer Geo. Brumder

Presented at the synodical session in Manitowoc on June 2, 1971.

Receipts

Moneys taken in from freewill offerings, etc. \$2893.89

Expenditures

Professors' salary for the schoolyear ending July 1870	\$ 649.97
To Prof. A. Ernst for two months board, according to resolution of the Board of Control	83.00
To Prof. A. Hoenecke, salary for July 1870	41.66
Professors' salary for the schoolyear ending July 1871	1460.00
Support for our students in St. Louis	299.60
Note to Pastor F. Waldt \$100.00 of which he gave back \$25.00 for the good of the institution, redeemed	75.00
Note to G. Brumder redeemed	250.00
For repairs to the building	56.54
For [a variety of small items]	7.00

To Pastor Brenner: restitution for lost sacks	<u>5.00</u>
Total	\$2927.87

Compilation

Total - receipts	\$2893.89
Total - expenditures	<u>2927.87</u>

expenditures more than receipts	\$ 33.98
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In the treasury on July 15 1870 as transferred to me by Mr. G. Gamm	<u>\$23.33</u>
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Deficit in the treasury on June 8, 1871	\$10.65
Shortage of funds for professors' salaries on the July 1, 1871 ending schoolyear	\$440.00
Deficit in treasury	<u>10.65</u>
Total	\$ 450.65

If we compare the present state of the treasury with that of the past year, we surely have cause to give thanks to God that he has so graciously helped us and that up till now the deficit was increasing each year but did not do so this past year, in fact quite a bit of the debt was paid off.

The obligations of this treasury on the schoolyear ending on July 1, 1870 plus the debt taken over and other expenses not repeated in this year amounted to \$1124.63.

Milwaukee, June 8, 1871 Geo. Brumder, treasurer

Annual report of receipts and expenditures. from June 1, 1870 to June 1, 1871.

Receipts

Capital	\$6702.00
Settlement	454.00
Interest	428.60
School money	<u>668.25</u>
Total	\$8252.85

Expenditures

Professors' salaries	\$1826.31
Old debt	5301.25
Settlement	1110.00
Miscellaneous	<u>15.29</u>
Total	\$8252.85

Owing Prof. Thompsen last term	\$ 175.02
Owing Mr. John Kaltenbrunn	<u>67.00</u>
Total	\$ 242.02

Outstanding school funds	<u>95.00</u>
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From these reports we can conclude that, had we not had to overcome a significant deficit as an heirloom from previous years, the receipts of this year would have covered all necessities of the institution, and may we express our sincerest thanks to our dear congregations for their love, which they have shown to our institution, and we ask them to continue such in the coming year, and in comparison with previous years not to let the treasury become in desperate need with our so favorable situation, since our necessities for the next year will demand all of our effort.

We were bothered with special concerns for some time over the heavy debt from the purchase of the piece of property for the college. We had in mind that we in case of necessity, if we could come to no agreement with the previous owner of the land and nothing could be gained from the land, simply to give it back to him, and thus the entire debt would be stricken. As now however the mortgage payment was due and the owner of the same demanded from us the payment, it became known that at the time of purchase of the land several members of our synod through personal notes made themselves liable for the payment of the purchase price, and the owner of the mortgage threatened to sue these persons for their private possessions to pay off the debt. The Board of Control saw no other way out than to pay off \$4000.00 from the capital funds for this debt, and thus there remains only the mortgage of \$1300.00 on our property—the only debt that we now report to the synod, and with the sale of a portion of the land can hope to eliminate that.

Since it has become clear to the Board of Control that the money for the scholarships sold is collected with great difficulty, in fact because of the demands of our rights, the good will of several scholarship owners has been embittered towards our synod, we recognized it to be necessary to resolve that we would come to some terms with all dissatisfied purchasers of scholarships in the best manner possible, and this was given approval at the last synodical convention. Accordingly, we have then in this year made settlements with quite a large number of persons, and we indeed on our part were quite liberal so that, as we believe, the hearts of the people have again been won for our institution and synod, and have made them happy for the support of our institution with their freewill gifts of love. And might we herewith make all aware who wish to settle up with their scholarships, to contact the president or secretary of the Board of Control.

Now, dear Brothers, those who are engaged with the control of the institution will have a more favorable report, since the existence of the same concerning its situations and relationships could not be set aside as it was possible in previous years. We all together therefore want to sincerely rejoice over the demonstrated grace of our God and over his rich blessings, for which we want to thank him most heartily; indeed his undeserved love and mercy which he has shown toward our dear educational institution, should drive us so much more to work with zeal and joy for its continuation and development, according to the abilities that God has tendered to each individual.

In the name of the Board of Control

Johannes Bading, president R. Adelberg, secretary.

Committee report: The undersigned Committee takes the liberty to recommend to the Hon. synod the following for adoption, whereby we, with thanks to God the Lord, announce the joyful fact that the report of the Board of Trustees has reason to spread the

good news of the improvement of the condition of our institution to the assembled synod.

May the Hon synod therefore resolve:

1. to express its thanks to the faculty, as well as to the Board of Trustees and the house-father for the work they have done, also
2. to retain the present accepted program of the institutions; finally
3. to subsequently support the Board of Trustees in the payment of the debt of \$4000.00 from the capital fund.

August Habermann, Brockmann, J. Horwinski, O. Spehr, K. Oppen

The resolutions in the above report were adopted by resolution.

13. Resumption of the Traveling Preacher Program.

Committee report: The committee takes the liberty to present to the Hon. synod the following:

1. Many members of our church live in the northern and northwestern part of Wisconsin who for the most part lack spiritual nourishment, even though in many places congregations could have easily been organized, and with the tireless activity of the sects stand in danger of falling into their hands and being lost to our church.

2. For this reason the committee is convinced that the traveling preacher program is of urgent necessity and should be resumed as soon as possible, at the same time the Hon. Synod of Minnesota has offered to activate their traveling preacher program in part under the condition that our synod bear a part of the cost.

3. For that reason the committee considers it self-understood that the congregations assembled in Wisconsin by the traveling preacher of the Minnesota Synod should receive a pastor from the Wisconsin Synod.

Respectfully, Christ. Thiese, C. Strube, C. Wagner, J. Killian

No. 1 of the above report was adopted, likewise No. 2 with the amendment that the implementation of this point be undertaken as soon as the salary for the professor that we are to provide in St. Louis is secured. Also No. 3 was adopted in the present form.

14. President's Report.

Committee report: The committee reports respectfully that, in order not to encroach upon other committees, it will report only on the following points:

1. Since it was referred to in the Hon. President's report how much the Hon. Missouri Synod has done for the education of our students during the past year, the committee takes the liberty to propose to express in a very appropriate manner our recognition of this and our deepest thanks to the Hon. Synod of Missouri.

2. The committee recommends to the Hon. synod to discuss ways and means of how the practice of supporting our poor students can become a general support.

3. The committee recommends the Hon. synod to express our sincerest thanks to Pastor Harms for the sending of workers also in the past year, together with the request, that he would continue to work for the building of our Lutheran church in this land by sending qualified forces.

4. The committee recommends the Hon. synod to bespeak its acknowledgment of all of his official acts and to express sincere thanks for his many labors.

Respectfully,

J. J. Schmidt, C. F. Goldammer, L. Mielke, Prof. Neumann, R. Adelberg

The 1. sentence of the committee report was adopted by resolution.

The 2. sentence was amended, so that the synod be recommended, to work toward this, that the means for support of the education of our seminary students would flow in more vigorously, and it was resolved that such support money be sent to the treasurer Mr. Brumder, without special instruction as to its use.

Sentences 3 and 4 were adopted by resolution.

15. Departure of Congregations and Pastors from the Synod.

Committee report: The committee which is to report on the departure of congregations and pastors from the synod takes the liberty to report the following to the Hon. synod:

1. That the declaration of departure of the Matthew Congregation in Town Lebanon and of Pastor Stark be adopted.

2. The congregation in Germany together with its Pastor D. Huber be stricken from the synodical list because it was clearly and expressly stated that they are not in agreement with the doctrine and practices of our church, and in spite of all attempts to bring them to the acknowledgment of their false and non-conforming ways, they have withdrawn through their declaration of departure.

Respectfully,

H. Buck, C. Gausewitz, C. Tank, F. Schug, C. Reichenbecher

Both resolutions in the committee report were adopted by resolution.

16. The Seating of a Professor in St. Louis.

In regard to the agreement between the Hon. Synod of Missouri and that of ours concerning the joint workings at the two educational institutions (see the Synodical Proceedings of 1869), the Synod of Missouri is to place a professor at our institution in Watertown and to pay his salary, while our synod is to place a professor at the pastors' seminary of the Synod of Missouri in St. Louis. The Hon. Synod of Missouri implemented this decision soon after the agreement was accepted, in that it in the fall of 1869 sent a professor to Watertown, while our synod could not fulfill its obligation to the Hon. Synod of Missouri because of a lack of necessary funds. It seemed at the time to finally make a serious attempt to see if the funds could not be brought up. For this purpose a list was circulated among the pastors to pledge funds for the support of the theological professor in St. Louis, and in a short time the amount of \$571.00 was pledged by the pastors and some delegates, of which \$107.00 was immediately paid. It was resolved that to this sum the sum of \$137.75 due the synod by Mr. Brumder for its share of the sale of hymnals be added for the salary of the theological professor. After all of this, and after it was resolved that all congregations and pastors be called upon in the *Gemeindeblatt* to participate in this work, an involvement which would be equal to that of a single congregational collection throughout the synod and should certainly be sufficient for the salary of the professor - the assembly believed surely to be able to send a professor, and resolved unanimously to call Pastor A. Hoenecke as professor in St. Louis. Pastor Hoenecke stated that he did not know how he should prevail upon the synod for the release from his call, but that he must remain open minded, and that a very heavy burden has again been placed on him with this call. Pres. Bading and Prof. Ernst were by resolution authorized to deal with Pastor Hoenecke's congregation concerning this call.

17. Excuses of Absent Pastors.

Committee report: The committee which is to report on the legitimacy of excuses from absent pastors takes the liberty to respectfully submit the following resolutions to the Hon. synod:

1. To accept the excuses of Pastors Baarts, Haas and Sprengling.

2. To seriously discipline Pastor Sauer for his frequent inexcusable absences which is not an answerable wrong.

A. Hunsiker, C. G. Reim, J. Maerz, Fr. Waldt, H. Hoffmann

Both resolutions of the committee report were adopted by resolution.

18. Acceptance of New Congregations.

Recommended by the committee (9) appointed to give the report on acceptance of new congregations, the following were accepted as members of the synod:

1. Salem Congregation in Lowell, Dodge Co.

2. The German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Wilmot.

3. The Evangelical Lutheran Bethlehem Congregation in Hortonville, Outagamie Co.

4. The German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Wrightstown, Brown Co.

5. The German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Peshtigo, Oconto Co.

In connection with St. John's Congregation in Hamilton, La Crosse Co. it was resolved that its request for acceptance be postponed until its congregational constitution (especially #13) concerning the doctrine of our church is altered.

19. *Gemeindeblatt*.

In regards to the *Gemeindeblatt* quite a few opinions indicated that the same is not having the desired and hopeful results. It came out that the principal reasons for this are that the present editorial staff, involved too much with other occupational activities, is not in the position to give the necessary time to the editing of the *Gemeindeblatt*; and furthermore, the periodical is too small in order to publish what it wants to and should. It was therefore resolved that the present editorial staff be replaced by an editorial committee to be named, and to enlarge the periodical so that it will appear bimonthly in a larger form for the annual price of one dollar. To the editorial committee were named Profs. Hoenecke* and Ernst and Pastor Adelberg.

*Hoenecke resigned as a member of the editorial committee since then.

21. Vote of Thanks.

Resolved that the synod extend sincere thanks of the synod to the congregation in Manitowoc for the friendly reception it has demonstrated. This resolution was implemented at the conclusion of the Tuesday evening worship service by the Hon. president.

Also resolved to express sincere thanks to the Goodrich Transportation Co. as well as to the Fond du Lac and Sheboygan R. R. Co. for the granting of half price tickets to the synodical members.

22. Synodical Proceedings.

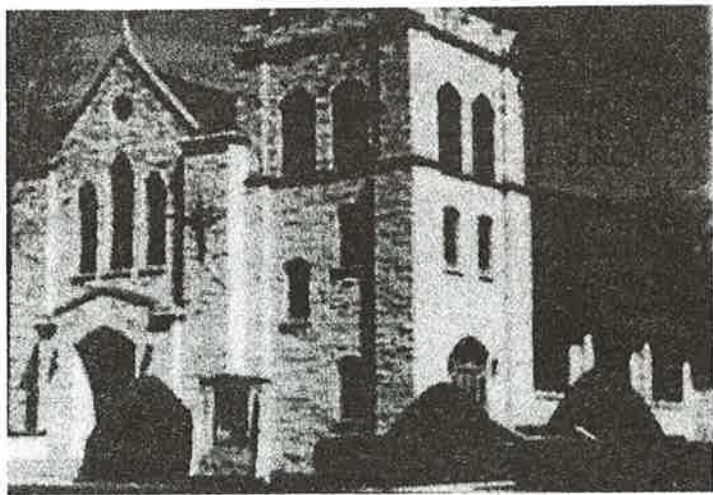
Resolved to print 500 copies of this year's proceedings, with the price of 15 cents on the title page. After this the synod adjourned with prayer by the Hon. president to the Thursday after Trinity Sunday of next year.

God be praised for everything!

Town Herman, Dodge Co., Wis, July 12, 1871
G. Thiele, secretary of the synod

The attached statistical report of the synod for the year shows:

pastors	54
congregations	86
preaching stations	13
parochial schools	49



Salem Ev. Lutheran Church, Lowell, Wisconsin joined the Wisconsin Synod in 1871.

“If You Cannot Speak Like Angels ...” **A history of mission work done among the Cora Indians** **by St. John Lutheran Church** **of Montrose, Colorado.** **Part 2.**

by Stephen T. Mueller

A Spanish Speaking Pastor

In June of 1991 Pastor Poetter traveled to Monterrey, Mexico to learn Spanish. He attended the “Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey” (*Institute of Technology and Higher Studies of Monterrey*) for three months. He is grateful to Pastor James Connell of El Paso, Texas, for arranging this study trip to Mexico. Pastor Connell also acquainted Pastor Poetter with the various Spanish materials that were being produced in El Paso by Latin American Mass Communications, and recommended that he read the book *Understanding Latin Americans*, by Eugene Nida. Pastor Poetter remembers that Nida’s book did much to help him understand Hispanic culture, and recommends it for anyone who is beginning to minister to Hispanics.¹³⁷ Pastor Poetter studied one and a half months at the University and spent the rest of his time studying with a tutor, all the time living with a Mexican family.¹³⁸ One might question just how much Spanish a person could learn in only three months. However, keeping in mind that Pastor Poetter was immersed in the language every day for three months, he was able to learn a great deal of Spanish. In fact, Nicki was quite impressed with his progress—after all, he had left speaking no Spanish at all, and was now able to communicate with the Coras!¹³⁹ This had a tremendous impact on the amount of work that could now be done, and on the awareness of the congregation toward the mission effort that had been going on for almost four years in their midst. The congregation as a whole had always been supportive of the Cora mission work, but Pastor Poetter’s visit to Mexico opened their eyes to the opportunities for more outreach.¹⁴⁰

Pastor Poetter remarks that in the early years, the congregation members probably considered the work among the Coras simply to be his and Nicki’s “pet project,” but that after he returned from Mexico, this “pet project” started to bloom.

Things abruptly changed [after his return from Mexico]. Prior to my going to Mexico, things seemed to happen very slowly ... the Bible classes would be more bilingual; I would speak in English and she [Nicki] would interpret. It took a long time and was hard to do. After I came back, we tried to organize it more, as to goals, having in-home Bible class, thinking about pushing them to come to church, and introducing Bible class there—to be a little more organized. I think we were a little more versatile too, because I could have a class and Nicki could have a class.¹⁴¹

He remembers that this was the year that St. John and its members started to see the

work as their own mission field, and were more willing to accept it as such. Therefore they began to organize it as a mission field and Pastor Poetter became involved in it more deeply. During that summer, however, much of the work was put on hold, as Pastor Poetter went to Mexico and the Parsons were gone on a much needed vacation for a month, with a stop at the Synod Convention. Before the Parsons left Pastor Spiegelberg conducted an evening Vacation Bible School. At that time, Mrs. Gretchen Rehm began to serve as the Vacation Bible School Coordinator for St. John, and performed this duty faithfully until approximately the year 1997.¹⁴² In 1991, three Hispanic English speaking adults, five Cora women and twelve Cora and Hispanic children attended, of which Pastor Spiegelberg later baptized three.¹⁴³ When Nicki was not on vacation, she held a Women's Bible Class at her home. Two Anglo women who were married to Hispanic men, and one of their husbands attended. They also made an attempt at having a Summer Sunday School. Some good news came when they found out that Guadalupe Molina had gotten a job working for a cattle/sheep rancher, and so he had moved his family back from Rifle to Delta in a trailer park-still quite a distance away, but much closer than Rifle.¹⁴⁴

New Opportunities

In the Fall of 1991, the church began to take advantage of Pastor Poetter's new language skills by starting more Spanish Bible classes, although it would take a long time to find a suitable time when all the Cora prospects could attend. Using several options, they found that Sunday afternoon classes were well attended (17 one time!) and Monday classes were consistently attended by a family that needed to be picked up forty miles away.¹⁴⁵ During this time, when Pastor Poetter was still working toward Spanish fluency, the Coras would help both Pastor and Nicki with vocabulary. However it was not like that from the beginning. The Coras are very polite people who hesitate to correct others, but once Nicki made it clear that she and pastor wanted to be corrected, the Coras obliged and were very willing to help them without being "impolite." She remembers that Teresa Molina in particular, who knew some English, helped with interpretation by supplying the words that the Anglos needed from time to time. In this way, they found out that for years they had been mispronouncing the name of these peoples' tribe. They had been using the word *Cura* for many years, not knowing that the word meant *priest* in Spanish! Finally a Cora pointed out to them that they were not priests (*curas*), but Coras. Another time Nicki remembers that Pastor Poetter was relating the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand, and used an incorrect word. He recalls,

At the end of the lesson, I asked them in Spanish, "What did Jesus use to feed the five thousand?" They couldn't give me an answer. So I said, "Didn't Jesus feed them with five loaves of bread and two sins?" And then, one of them said, "You mean with two fish?" At that very moment, I realized what I'd been saying to them all along ... You see, in Spanish the word for "sin," *pecado*, and the word for "fish," *pescado*, are very similar. And I had mixed the two words around.¹⁴⁶

Once that was pointed out, they all had a good laugh.¹⁴⁷

New Strategy

Ever since the Molinas had moved to Delta, quite a few other Coras had found

homes near there as well. This presented a logistical problem, since the Parsons, Pastor Poetter and other members were driving eighty miles in order to pick up people up in Olathe and Delta for a one hour Bible class. Gary Parsons suggested finding a place around Delta to have the Bible Class and then picking up the people and bringing them to that central location. By doing it this way, those who were driving would be able to pick up a lot of people on the way and cut their driving time in half. They asked the Molinas to host this Bible study because their trailer was the "end of the route" that they took when they picked up the other people, and because they were the most spiritually mature family at the time.¹⁴⁸ They agreed to open their trailer to the weekly Bible class, and by doing so established what would become a regular group for years to come.¹⁴⁹

The original group was composed of between eight and twelve Coras. That became a stable core group to which three Cora families were eventually added. In addition, they could count on the attendance of quite a few young, single Cora men who were shepherds, although they attended sporadically because of the nature of their job.¹⁵⁰ At times there were as many as 25 people in the trailer gathered to hear God's Word!¹⁵¹ In their long quest to find an appropriate educational method to teach Cora adults, they had begun to teach using illustrations and drawings to make Biblical concepts come alive for their Cora students. Now, they began to produce more detailed drawings, especially when Pastor Poetter became involved. This is a sound educational principle and was especially helpful to the women who only spoke Cora, and to the children. That year, the annual Spanish Christmas service and party was held in the Molinas' trailer, and even the regular English Christmas events attracted new and old Cora families as well as some Hispanic families. During Lent a five week series of classes, which a fairly stable group attended, was held in Montrose and Delta on Monday and Tuesday evenings respectively, to prepare for Lent and Easter. However, only one Cora and one Hispanic family came to Easter breakfast and only two Cora families came to the special Easter Spanish celebration that was held.¹⁵²

On the Road Again

"On the road again" is one way to describe our mission to the Spanish-speaking Cora Indians in 1992.¹⁵³ Because of the greater frequency of Bible classes being offered, Nicki made many trips to Cora families' trailers or houses to inform them about classes, since the majority still did not have telephones. At the weekly classes in Delta, the regular attendees had "grown in their understanding and ability to use God's Word," but they found it more difficult to have a consistent group for evening Bible study in Montrose on Monday nights.¹⁵⁴

That Summer, the congregation attempted to implement—and with quite a bit of success a new concept. They took Vacation Bible School "on the road" to the trailer homes of two original families—one near Kris Estates, near Montrose (the family of Guadalupe's half sister, Estela) and the other at the regular location in Delta (the Molinas' trailer). Adult classes were offered, and English songs and instruction were added. In this way the church demonstrated both a concern for the spiritual lives of the Coras, and for their secular lives. Nicki explains, "We also have used English instruction at these VBS classes and at the regular Bible studies as a way for the Coras to feel more at home in our English church activities and to help them in daily survival."¹⁵⁵ Of course children were also invited, and at both locations, about five extra children came as a result of this traveling VBS. The Parsons' children and Jonas Molina assisted Nicki with the Cora children. Whoever was teaching would tell the Bible story with both

adults and children present, and then when it was time to do the worksheet, Jonas would go in the back bedroom and review the story with the kids in English, listen to a song and do a project. However, for much of the class, the adults and children were together.¹⁵⁶

Throughout the Fall and Winter of 1992, the family style Bible class continued in Delta on Tuesday evenings. A growing awareness of Spanish materials published by the Wisconsin Synod greatly enhanced their ability to teach effectively. During these family style classes, WELS Spanish Sunday school materials were employed, which, Nicki remarks, can be used effectively in this type of class.¹⁵⁷ That year both Anglo and Cora Sunday School students participated in a Christmas Eve slide show, which the children narrated. Speaking parts were given to children, both Cora and Anglo, who could speak English. The non-English speaking children were given non-speaking parts, and all were dressed up as Biblical characters. They even used live animals! This approach worked quite well because they had just received a large influx of children from Mexico that were participating in Sunday School but who could not speak English. The narrated drama also helped to tell the Christmas story more effectively to the Cora parents who could only speak Cora, who were attending the service.¹⁵⁸ A good amount of Coras were present at both the Spanish and English Christmas activities that year.¹⁵⁹

Family Considerations

A new class "designed to be bilingual and teach some basics of Christianity to the Cora children was started, and was held thirty minutes before regular Sunday School," to which several Cora adults came regularly also. The same story that was to be presented in Delta on Tuesday evening was presented on Sunday, thus coordinating the lessons.¹⁶⁰ Since the Cora children were now coming early to attend the class especially intended for them before regular Sunday school, the Parsons began to take those children home before regular English service started. However they would let them remain for the English service when there was a special church event right after the service, or if their Sunday School class was to sing in the church service. The Parsons' children liked this arrangement better, because they could now sit as a family during church again.¹⁶¹ Regarding this decision, Nicki writes:

When we switched to keeping the Cora children mainly for Sunday School, my own children were young and I felt I was neglecting them if we kept too many extra kids for the church service. The Cora parents who don't attend church also seemed more likely to let their kids come if we did not keep the children too long. Sunday is a big day of traditional visiting friends and family or going to the park for Cora families. Unfortunately church going was not a tradition for most of our Cora families in Mexico and has not become a family tradition here yet either. Sometimes I think we should set ourselves up in one of the parks where the Coras and other Spanish-speakers seem to hang out on Sundays and see what happens!¹⁶²

For the most part, the Parsons' children had not been resentful of the amount of time that their mother was spending with the Coras. They were able to spend a good amount of time with Nicki each day, since the Gary and Nicki had begun home-schooling their children in 1988 after becoming frustrated with the public school system. Sometimes, though, conflicts would arise. If there happened to be a crisis in one of the Cora families during the day, while she was teaching the boys, or if the crisis came when one of her sons was sick, she often faced a dilemma.

Back to School!

A sign of the dedication that Nicki felt toward this mission project was her decision to enroll in a Spanish course at Mesa State University in Grand Junction, in the Fall of 1992. After attempting to use some home-study Spanish courses on her own, she realized that she needed to take another course. Although she attended classes several nights a week through the University extension in Montrose, it still took away from the nights she was able to do mission work. However, it was a sacrifice she felt had to be made, so that she could become more fluent and a more effective teacher in the long run-which it did. Up until this time, she had been using mostly the present tense and sometimes the future tense in her conversations, and had picked up some vocabulary and grammar from listening to native speakers. She learned much by having a native Spanish speaking professor for her first semester at the extension. During the second semester, she had a professor who was a non-native speaker, but was an excellent grammarian. This professor also tutored Nicki for a summer after she finished the course. She says that her Spanish improved greatly, but is still not at the level she would like it to be, and feels that she never will be the Spanish speaker that she would like to be.¹⁶³

Outside Assistance Arrives

By 1993, Pastor Poetter had become more involved, and the Cora mission work was taking up much of his time. Some felt that most of his time should be spent serving the members of St. John rather than the Coras, since his call was to serve St. John. Also, the financial burdens on this small congregation were rising. The District Mission Board informed them that they would need to do a diagnostic study of their congregation in order to determine their needs, so that they could apply for and possibly receive funding.¹⁶⁴ This diagnostic study consisted of: 1) A history of the congregation, 2) An analysis of current ministry, 3) A summary of congregational characteristics and challenges, 4) A demographic study of their parish area, and 5) An ethnographic study of the Cora Indians. This extensive study was assembled from church records, congregational surveys, census data, ethnographic interviews with Coras and Hispanics, and interviews with local church leaders and public servants.¹⁶⁵ It brought them new understanding of the Coras, especially of the Cora men's reluctance to attend church services—something that had frustrated them for years:

We had known that they had very little contact with the church and that part of this was due to feelings of discrimination from the non-Indian Mexicans. Now that we know that some of the feelings that church is not for them is because of their Indian beliefs and fears about economic well-being, we can better understand the initial hostility we have felt from the men when we have invited them to church, and how brave the men who come are.¹⁶⁶

Although the study required much precious time, Pastor Poetter felt it was necessary and was of benefit to the congregation to study where it had been, so that they could plan a course for the future with the Lord's help.¹⁶⁷ The study gave the congregation a better idea of what the Cora mission was all about and helped them see that they could not afford this mission "if they wanted to do it right." They did want to "do it right," and gave thanks to the Lord for the opportunities he had given them:

Our old, new and continuously growing understanding of the Cora people through

our normal contacts and the additional opportunities the congregational self-study has provided are reminders of how much we appreciate the opportunity we have been given to enjoy the friendship of the Coras. Most of all we are reminded of how powerful the Holy Spirit is when the seeds of God's word are being planted and watered even when that planting and watering are far from perfect!¹⁶⁸

Reflecting on the diagnostic study, Pastor Poetter has nothing but praise for the members of St. John. The Church Council spearheaded the effort and was enthusiastic in assigning duties and completing the study. The congregation members were very enthusiastic and active in assembling the data. They undertook the task believing that it would be beneficial for the congregation, but at the end, realized that it was even more beneficial than they had hoped it would be.¹⁶⁹ This diagnostic study was also part of the application process for the funding of a part-time worker through WELS Kingdom Workers, because it helped them analyze how much funding they should request. That first request from Kingdom Workers was for twelve thousand dollars per year to pay for materials, supplement the salary of Pastor Poetter, and pay a part-time worker. The funding was first approved by the District Mission Board and then by WELS Kingdom Workers, and Nicki filled that part-time position.¹⁷⁰

This new money from Kingdom Workers allowed them to buy Bibles, Sunday School materials, Bible Study materials, and also pay for transportation expenses—for which they were very thankful. This was something entirely new, as Nicki remembers how thrilled she used to be upon receiving twenty-five dollars to spend for the mission.¹⁷¹ The Kingdom Workers organization was very supportive in the letters they wrote, in their prayers and in their financial support. Nicki believes that they would not have been able to do the work of the past few years without the help of this organization. Pastor Poetter agrees, and is thankful for the wholehearted support of Kingdom Workers, and their national director, Mr. David Timm.¹⁷² It was their publicity that helped make the people of the Synod aware of the Cora mission, which stimulated some to give a portion of their offerings to the mission. Some WELS congregations also sent money, books and materials, and even had their Christian day school children send letters and gifts to the Cora children.¹⁷³

During the Winter or Spring of 1993, the Molina family went to Mexico for a month, which put the Tuesday evening class on hold until they returned. Also at this time, Nicki notes that Jonas, their son, began to "drift away" from church activities.¹⁷⁴ At Easter, the joint celebration held at church brought in about twenty Coras, four of which were adults. Jan Koepsell, a Sunday School teacher taught the Easter story, which was translated for the adults.¹⁷⁵ Since Guadalupe Molina had never set foot in St. John church (partly due to working hours), they decided to bring the traditional Easter party to his trailer the night after Easter. Nineteen people attended this special gathering, which consisted of a Bible class followed by several songs (accompanied on the guitar by Nicki) and the recitation of the Lord's prayer and Apostles' Creed. They later played a game to explain some of the 'religious and not so religious Easter symbolism used in the United States.'¹⁷⁶

More Workers for the Harvest Field

A problem that many congregations face is recruiting members to volunteer for service in the congregation. People are very busy with their families and are many times reluctant to give up some of that time. However, at this time, two members who had

transferred from another congregation, Vern and Marie Dokter, decided to take some Spanish classes so that they could help with special Cora events. They even began to visit Cora families to plan summer events, but unfortunately, had to move out of Montrose soon after that.¹⁷⁷ Throughout the history of the mission, there have been lay people who were interested, and were willing to lend some of their time to help the mission, of which the Dokters were two such people. Even despite family problems, some members still willingly gave of their time.¹⁷⁸ The teenagers of the congregation regularly offered their assistance, about whom Nicki says, "Without our teenagers we would have been lost part of the time, because they did Vacation Bible School for us. The older ones sometimes took the classes by themselves, or team-taught them."¹⁷⁹ Other people who helped regularly at other times in the mission's history were: the Rehms, Jan Koepsell, Pat Sivils, the Dokters, the Schuessiers, the Holdens, the Austins, the Eisbergs, Edith Stine, Ardith Hasty, and the Sullivans.¹⁸⁰ Sunday School is an area where some of these lay people served, and Nicki gives credit to those who taught, because they often had a difficult time, since the Cora children often did not speak much English. Even small children who only spoke Cora would learn English in about six months, and even after just a few weeks, were starting to understand who Jesus was. Nicki recalls that if she would point to a cross, the little Cora children would point to the picture of Jesus. Incredibly, she added, "They're learning about Jesus in English, even though they don't speak it!"¹⁸¹ Some teachers were wary of trying to teach children who did not speak their language, and may have wished they could have done it a different way, but they taught anyway. Nicki later pointed out to them that the Cora children really did learn what they were supposed to learn. Some teachers, like Jan Koepsell, did an outstanding job. She tried to use a little Spanish (she had taken Latin before), and if she got stuck, she would ask Nicki for assistance. Jan would look up in the dictionary the key words she would need to use in her lesson. Nicki says that the students that Jan taught "adored her," and when they had the option to move up to an adult Bible class taught in Spanish, they chose to stay in her (English) class instead.¹⁸² This is yet another demonstration of what the Holy Spirit can accomplish through his willing people! He can take people from a completely different culture and language, who may have doubts about their abilities, and use them to communicate the love of Christ in their message and in their actions. Nicki also praises those whom she calls the "young retired," who were not able to help on a weekly basis, but would regularly pitch in on special occasions, especially VBS, and parties.¹⁸³

Spiritual Progress

In her notes from 1993, Nicki records some simple, but exciting things, that were happening in the Tuesday evening Delta Bible study group. Some encouraging signs were the fact that the people were waiting for the Parsons to pick them up, and generally were ready when they arrived. One woman, Paula Madera, would call every Monday to make sure that they were coming to pick her up, and Nicki writes that, "The Molina family also has made us a part of their routine." She was encouraged by their growing ability to study and use God's Word.¹⁸⁴ In fact, their most consistent work was taking place in this group.¹⁸⁵ It was encouraging to them that at least one family—the Rosas—had been attending church and Sunday School regularly, coming by themselves—without having to be reminded and picked up! She remarks that this family was showing "tremendous growth in their ability to understand and retain information about their faith." Aside from these successes, one aspect of their work was causing problems at St. John.

Too Much Noise!

As a note in her 1993 report, Nicki asserts, "We'll continue to work on... improved church behavior."¹⁸⁶ At some English services, especially Lenten services, twelve to thirteen Cora children were attending, which created noise and other distractions in church. It was understandable that members would want to hear God's word without too many distractions. Therefore to remedy the noise, they took the children down to the basement during the sermon. During that time, Nicki would "draw the sermon" or illustrate it using a flannelgraph for the children and then they would have to tell her at the end what it was about. They too would then draw pictures of the sermon topic. In his sermons, Pastor Poetter made it clear that the children were welcome, but worked with the mission workers to find a solution. So they eventually decided to assign one older child to a younger Cora child, or a family or adult to a Cora youth during the service, to maintain order and still keep the Cora children in the English service. They asked for help from other members, and some were willing to help on a regular basis. At this time, the congregation was not sure if the Coras should be integrated into the Anglo congregation, or if they should be developed into an independent congregation.¹⁸⁷ Recently, some seemed overwhelmed by the extra work that was needed to allow the Coras to participate in church activities. Nicki's response is, "As a church matures in dealing with people of another culture, it is easier to see the struggles and label them as blessings rather than problems—or to be willing to see them as 'good problems,' i.e. problems that can be solved with the help of the Holy Spirit."¹⁸⁸ If there has been any dissatisfaction, it has not been publicly displayed in a way that would offend the Coras. In the ethnographic interviews that were conducted for the Diagnostic Study of St. John, most Coras said that they would like to take part in church activities with the English speaking members of St. John. In the same interview, most said that the members of St. John had treated them fine. "They are not offended by any of our customs because they like all of our customs."¹⁸⁹ In that same 1993 report, several matters were mentioned as being worthy of future discussion. Among them were: 1) Church space limitations, 2) The need for more ways to transport people, 3) The continued difficulty of a trilingual situation—Cora, English and Spanish, 4) Difficulties with behavior of Cora children, and 5) The development and use of Cora leadership in the future. Some Cora men have seemed to be potential leaders, but unfortunately these potential leaders fell away from the Word. One problem was that the men were still so involved in their indigenous religious life in Mexico. In fact, over the years, only one Cora man has really rejected his indigenous beliefs, but he has moved to Nebraska. They did not have someone like Chief Alchesay in Apacheland, who served as leader and role model for his tribe. However, they realized that they needed to be patient and let God work on his timetable.

An Unexpected Arrival

One day in 1993, a package arrived from their supporters—WELS Kingdom Workers. Enclosed was a *free* set of video tapes that they had neither known were in existence, nor had ordered. It was the *Communicating Christ* adult Bible instruction course, written by Missionary to Colombia, Carl Leyrer, and produced by Kingdom Workers. Pastor Poetter suspects that it might have been Pastor Eugene Ahlswede who secured the videos for them at no cost.¹⁹⁰ Nicki, as well as St. John congregation was surprised and very thankful to this organization, which had not only supported them with money and encouragement, but now also with a Spanish language resource that they could put

to use. That Summer, another Vacation Bible School was held "on the road" in Delta, which the regular families attended. Some of the *Communicating Christ* tapes from Kingdom Workers were employed for the adult classes. The Coras, because of their lack of greater Spanish knowledge, however, found the tapes difficult to understand at times. This was simply because the level of Spanish used on them was intended for native Spanish speakers, whereas the Coras' native language was Cora.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, they were still used, and the VBS teachers made their own worksheets and children's projects to accompany these videos. Another opportunity to explore ideas for mission work and Spanish language resources came that Summer when the Parsons family visited Pastors Hartman and Connell in El Paso, Texas. On a visit to Nicki's brother, who lives there, Pastor Paul Hartman—Director of Mass Communication to Latin America—gave them a tour of their facilities and introduced them to some Spanish materials that they might be able to use in their outreach.¹⁹² This helped them find out more about the resources that were available, although they were still limited because of the low educational level of the Coras. Most of the Spanish materials available today are above the level of the Coras ability to understand them.¹⁹³

Rocky Mountain Christian Camp, Here We Come!

One church activity that has been of great benefit to the spiritual maturation of some of the Cora youth has been "Rocky Mountain Christian Camp." Begun many years ago, it is a week-long camp held at a campground in Leadville, Colorado. In her twenties, Nicki served as a camp nurse at this camp where pastors, laymen and teachers come together and conduct devotions, Bible classes and worship services. She herself conducted some bilingual Bible classes for the Cora children who came with a meager knowledge of English.¹⁹⁴ She believes that attendance at the camp really helped strengthen the Cora children who have gone, some of whom have gone for several years in a row. She wrote in her report, "Cora Indian Mission: Fall 1994":

With the help of members of our church and Rocky Mountain Christian camp, five of our older Cora girls spent eight days at camp doing intensive Bible study in special Spanish classes conducted by Nicki Parsons and mixed in with a group of English speaking teens who helped them look up passages and answer questions in English Bible classes.

Over the years, many people have been helpful in assisting the Cora children who could not afford the fees and had no equipment. Among them are the members of St. John, who generously donated clothing, jackets, sleeping bags and other camping gear, and Mr. Paul Schultz, then principal at Longmont, Colorado and director of Rocky Mountain Christian Camp. He graciously reduced or eliminated the fee required for the Cora children to attend.¹⁹⁵

El Mensajero

Most WELS congregations have some sort of newsletter that is sent to their members on a regular basis to keep them abreast of news and activities at the church. Up until the Summer of 1995, there had been no such newsletter in Spanish that could be sent to the Cora prospects. In her "Spring/Summer 1995 Update," Nicki wrote, "During the spring and early Summer of 1995 there have been the usual joys, frustrations, uncer-

tainties, ups and downs that come when mere sinners attempt to do the work needed for any church or mission.” One of the joys of which she speaks was the printing of the first Spanish newsletter of St. John intended for the Coras: *Mensajero De La iglesia Luterana San Juan* (Messenger of St. John Lutheran Church). Most pastors and church secretaries will agree that assembling a newsletter can be a chore, but the Spanish newsletters were even more difficult for them to put together. They included a lot of pictures and captions, and tried to translate Pastor Poetter’s devotions with a Spanish translator program on a computer, which didn’t work well, because it gave a very literalistic and wooden translation. It was a time-consuming process, and they only published a few issues a year, because of the time it required, but the people really loved it. Receiving a newsletter seemed to give some of them a sense of belonging, even though they weren’t members.¹⁹⁶

The “American Dream”

A significant event occurred in the Molinas’ life that year, as they bought their third mobile home—a brand new unit, which, Nicki adds, “has made a perfect ‘church’ for us in Delta the last year.” They also purchased a small piece of land in a trailer park about two miles from the Parsons’ house in Montrose, where they moved their new trailer, Nicki writes, “It’s hard to believe that this same family about eight years ago was living in a very small, chilly house provided by an employer when Guadalupe worked on a ranch.” They now work at the Russell Stover candy factory in Montrose—ten hours a day, six days a week! “In this area Cora people have a reputation for being hard, honest workers. The Molina family is a prime example of why Coras are gaining this good reputation,” says Nicki. As a sign of their growing fondness of the United States and their pursuit of the “American dream, “Eudolia ... and Jonas, her son, also recently applied to update their temporary residency cards to permanent residents. When we first met this family, only Juanita the daughter who was born here was legal.”¹⁹⁷ Unfortunately, the Molinas seem to have gotten too caught up in the “American Dream,” and have neglected their spiritual nurture.

Guadalupe and Eudolia have stopped participating in Bible classes, but the children, Jonas and Juanita, have continued, although sporadically. Nicki visited the Molinas, who expressed interest in a class just for them (excluding others—“we had overwhelmed them for years” [with the Tuesday evening Bible class in their trailer]), but the class was never started. Guadalupe seems interested, but “doesn’t have time.” Nicki believes it may take a crisis to turn them back to the Word.¹⁹⁸ Although it was discouraging that this family seemed to be neglecting its own spiritual care, a second disadvantage to their inactivity was the lack of positive contact the Molinas would have on other Cora families. After all, it was through this family that St. John had come to know many of the Cora families with which they were then working. Now that the Molinas were inactive, they ceased to be positive role models, and perhaps evangelists among their Cora friends and neighbors.

Before Pastor Poetter left in June of 1995 to attend Summer Quarter at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he conducted a special Bible class (“Life of Christ” by Glen Thompson) with Gary and Nicki to help give some guidance to Gary, who was considering becoming more involved with the Cora work, and to help both Nicki and Gary in their spiritual growth. Nicki wrote, “Gary has always helped with the practical aspects of this mission effort—advice, support, driving, helping with broken plumbing, helping with broken cars, and helping with special events, but he has not been involved in the

actual teaching of adult classes because he knows no Spanish (he had taught children’s classes).” This class was designed to help him decide if he wanted to help teach also. More Spanish speakers were definitely needed because they had almost too many prospects to handle. The non Spanish-speaking volunteers from the congregation continued to be valuable and effective in teaching and encouraging the children. Yet help was needed for teaching the Spanish speaking adults, since more than enough help was being received for the physical needs of the Coras (in this way, she adds, they were not like the early Christian Church in Acts). “We pray to be more effective with the adults both spiritually and in ways which help them to live with less difficulty in our country.”¹⁹⁹ The strategy of adult education that they were able to offer to the Coras has been a concern of St. John’s and Nicki’s. One weakness in the adult Bible studies with the Coras was the inconsistent nature of it, which was not the fault of St. John—it was due partly to the mobility of the Coras. In addition, many of them worked long hours in the fields picking crops and would come home exhausted, and not eager to study on a regular basis.²⁰⁰ With new people coming in and old people dropping out, they would often have to begin a lesson again that had been taught in the previous class, which was frustrating and boring for those who had already been through it. Also, sometimes the sinful nature prevented people from attending regularly. She admits that sometimes it looked like their adult education courses might be successful, but never reached the level that she wanted. She blames herself, stating that sometimes she backed off, deciding she needed a break, or quitting for the Summer. She laments the fact that an “ongoing church life” for the Cora adults never materialized. It was constantly starting and stopping because of their attendance.²⁰¹ Because of these concerns, wishes for a full-time Spanish speaking pastor were also voiced during that Bible study between Pastor Poetter and Gary and Nicki. This need was obvious to those most closely involved with the mission, but the members of St. John were sometimes uninformed about the work and the needs of the workers.

Cora Mission Advisory Committee

Nicki wrote, “Sometimes our own members do not really understand what we are doing with the mission. Some faithfully ask about specific families or how things are going, but many remain uninformed. Some work hard to help us with the mission even though they are frustrated by what they sometimes see as problems rather than opportunities created by our contact with the Coras and other Spanish speaking peoples.”²⁰² In order to oversee the mission and to keep the congregation better informed, the *Cora Mission Advisory Committee* was formed in 1995. The purpose of this committee was to make financial, budgeting, and other major decisions affecting the Cora mission, so that the pastor wouldn’t have to struggle with such decisions. The idea came from Mr. Martin Rehm and Mr. Mike Schuessler, two church council member, who saw that the pastor was “burning out” and was struggling with making decisions that should not have been made alone. The committee was composed of the Chairman of the congregation, the Treasurer, Elder and Pastor Poetter, and conducted its meetings on an as needed basis. Pastor Poetter saw the formation of this committee as a real blessing because: 1) It reduced the burdens placed on him, 2) Put congregation members into decision making roles in the mission, 3) Got more people involved, 4) Gave the congregation a sense of oversight, and a sense that the Cora mission was an arm of the congregation, and 5) It made the congregation more aware of the day-to-day work of the mission because committee decisions were publicized to the congregation. Throughout its existence, Pastor

Poetter stressed to the committee the importance of having an organizational goal-working toward organized mission status, so that the District Mission Board could eventually take over.²⁰³ Nicki agrees that this committee was very helpful. She could go to them with any requests for money (Cora money was always separate from the congregational funds) or materials and they would decide if it should be taken to the congregation or if they could make the decision themselves. She compliments them for being a good decision making group that would quickly take care of the problem at hand.²⁰⁴

Vacation Bible School 1995

Because of space limitations at church, St. John felt the need to borrow a tent to accommodate the children that attended VBS in 1995. Fifty-six children came—twenty visitors and twenty regulars, thirteen of which were Coras.²⁰⁵ Nicki commented on the “fantastic help” they had for VBS that year, including six teens who were in charge of classes and seven “young retired” people, who came long distances. One lady even went ten miles out of her way to pick up the Molina children, who had been unable to attend any classes at church for years, although they had “church” at their home nearly every week. Because of the large amount of assistance, they were able to have almost a one-to-one ratio of teachers to students in the youngest classes: where four out of the five children were Coras who spoke little or no English. “After VBS, it was the first time Cora parents or older siblings ever told us how much their children had enjoyed the classes” certainly a satisfying feeling for those who had worked so hard to bring the gospel to these children! She remembers that one little four-year-old boy, Carmelo, told his sister Gloria to be sure and wake him up in the morning so that he would not miss VBS. Regarding the success the gospel has had through St. John’s VBS programs throughout the years, Nicki remarks, “Most of the other older Cora children who now can tell you that Jesus is their Savior also started out in our Sunday School and VBS classes learning about Jesus first in English because we can’t tell them in Cora, and as preschoolers they haven’t learned Spanish yet.”²⁰⁶ A sure testament to this occurred during the VBS closing service: “During the question and answer format service (final service), Juanita, whose emergency baptism eight years ago was one of the miracles that helped to start our mission with the Coras, raised her hand proudly to answer correctly one of Pastor’s tough questions.”²⁰⁷

In the Spring/Summer 1995 Update, some challenges and wishes for the coming months and years were expressed. Among them: 1) The desire to offer Sunday morning Bible class for Cora adults, which was not seen as practical at the time, 2) the desire for a full-time worker, and 3) The fact that the pastor was torn between the Cora work and his commitment to the English speaking congregation, and that Nicki was torn between the Cora work and her wife/mother duties as well as her duties in the English-speaking congregation. On this point, Nicki comments, “Unlike a foreign mission, our mission is constantly dividing us between the two groups in our congregation.” One problem in integrating the Cora adults was that none had been confirmed, although some had begun Bible Information Courses. There were quite a few children at confirmation age who had attended Sunday School for many years, but Pastor Poetter was unsure if they were ready to take that step, thinking that they might need special classes and tutoring. Also the presence of a Wycliffe Bible Translator, Eugene Casad and his wife, Betty caused some confusion. Mr. Casad was translating the Bible and other Christian texts and tracts into Cora, and for a time it seemed as if they and a church they were working with were “stealing” the Coras away from St. John. Some Coras preferred to attend their classes

because they were offered in Cora. In the past, Pastor Poetter and Nicki had discussed learning Cora, but this was not seen as feasible. She writes, “For us to teach in Cora, even if we knew Cora, would not be practical because at a typical class we have people who can learn best if we use English (the older children); some who speak only Spanish, and some who speak Cora best, but if they can read, read in Spanish.” Yet the Casads have been helpful to the Coras in translating the New Testament into Cora, alerting Nicki to some health problems, and volunteering to translate for them when needed. Betty Casad later wrote Nicki a pleasant note assuring her that they were not trying to proselytize St. John’s Cora prospects.²⁰⁸ Because of St. John’s desire for input from someone more experienced in these matters, a visit was arranged.

A Special Visitor

In December of 1995, Rev. Roger Sprain visited St. John for a day. As a former missionary to Puerto Rico and Colombia, and at that time professor of Spanish and Minority Cultures at Martin Luther College, he came to offer his expertise, and to see how the Synod could possibly help St. John to better teach the Spanish and Cora speakers among them. With Nicki, he visited the homes of some families, such as the families of Eulogio Aguilar, Reynaldo Lopez and Fidel Medina, and also spoke to Pastor Poetter, the Parsons family and some English speaking members of the congregation.²⁰⁹ What he found was very encouraging: they seemed to have made no major cultural mistakes that might have put human barriers in the way of the gospel in the future, and he felt that they were correct in identifying the Cora children as the more promising mission field. He suggested that the Parsons go to Mexico for six months to improve their Spanish, but they were wary because of concerns over the temporary loss of manpower and how it would affect the mission. One fear was that if there was no one working the mission for St. John, all the Coras would fall away or join other churches. The Assembly of God church and the “Christian Church” had done some work among the Coras,²¹⁰ and one church had told the Coras that the Lutheran Church was a “bad” church.²¹¹ Also at that time, the Casads seemed to be luring the Coras away from St. John, a fact which added to their apprehension. She now suggests that perhaps they didn’t have enough trust in God, but nevertheless, they were thinking practically and decided not to go. Regarding the manpower shortage, St. John wanted preferably a full-time Spanish-speaking pastor or a highly trained teacher to add to their mission team, and urged the Synod to send a full time person to work the Cora mission.²¹²

In his “Cora Mission Report and Recommendations,” Pastor Sprain noted the following regarding the Coras:

- ◆ Their low educational and Spanish language level.
- ◆ The relatively small number of Coras in the Montrose area (about two thousand).
- ◆ Their inability to contribute financially to the congregation.
- ◆ The inevitability of very slow (if any) development of adult male leadership.
- ◆ Their earthly (social) needs.

In this report he had many positive things to say about the mission work that had been done to date, as well as some concerns:

- ◆ The faith, patience, persistence, and common sense of the workers.

- ◆ The large amount of time Pastor Poetter had to spend in preparation of Spanish materials.
- ◆ The high quality of the congregation's 1993 Diagnostic Study.
- ◆ The growing harmony between St. John and the Coras.
- ◆ The inadequate facilities of St. John.
- ◆ The innovative nature of the newly formed "Cora Mission Advisory Committee."

In the end, Pastor Sprain recommended that the purchase of a new church van receive a very high priority. He encouraged them not to give up on the adults, but not to become frustrated if the work progressed slowly. Instead, they should continue focusing mainly on the children. Contrary to their hopes, his opinion was that no "synodically budgeted monies should be used" for providing additional manpower for the Cora mission. Instead, he recommended that financial support be sought from another source for a period of five to six years, and that these funds be used to pay the salary of a male teacher or pastor if there were an excess of pastors in the Spring of 1997. He made these recommendations because he felt that the work being done among the Coras should not be abandoned; that the Parsons might become "burnout" victims eventually; and that the pastor should be relieved of most of his duties with the Coras so he could devote more time to Anglo outreach.²¹³

Nicki speaks well of Pastor Sprain and feels his visit was helpful and encouraging.²¹⁴ Pastor Poetter also feels that his visit benefited the congregation in several ways. First, it reassured them that there was a possible solution to the problem of his pastoral time schedule, since they had been wary of the amount of time he was spending with the Coras. It also gave the congregation direction and helped them conclude that this should be a teaching ministry, rather than a preaching ministry, because of the size of the field and the smaller potential for a self supporting mission.²¹⁵ Eventually, Pastor Sprain's recommendations were implemented. Fortunately the purchase of a van proved to be unnecessary when St. Paul Lutheran Church in Monroe, Michigan, and their pastor, Mark Ochsankehl, approached St. John with an offer to purchase a van for them. Apparently, Pastor Harold Hagedorn (former pastor of St. John, but now WELS Administrator for Home Missions) had been searching for a van for St. John, and had connected with St. Paul in Monroe.²¹⁶ This congregation eventually gave them enough money to purchase a used fifteen-passenger van. The next step was funding.

Further Funding Request

In late 1995 or early 1996, St. John applied for a second level of funding from Kingdom Workers. Their request was for forty-five thousand dollars per year to pay for a male teacher's salary. However, their request for a Martin Luther College graduate was denied, because in the words of Pastor Poetter, "they don't send teachers where there is no school. They're not trained as missionaries."²¹⁷ Finally, the idea for a lay evangelist position was proposed and funding for this full-time position was approved by WELS Kingdom Workers. Pastor Poetter agreed that this was mainly a teaching ministry, but the congregation had been hoping for a called teacher, because the ministry involved primarily teaching children in Spanish. However, they felt that the lay evangelist position was a suitable alternative.²¹⁸ Nicki says that she had always hoped and prayed that they would be assigned a pastor, and envisioned him as an associate pastor at St. John. In that way the congregation would remain one unit—that is, integrated—but would have someone to work fulltime with the Coras and Hispanics. One

problem was the lack of Spanish-speaking pastors in the Synod that could be put into such a setting. Nicki also calls the Cora mission "small potatoes," which she felt hindered their chances for getting a pastor. She contrasts the Cora mission with the Navajo mission, which in some ways seems to be quite similar to their situation. The Navajos already have a full-time pastor, but there are probably twenty thousand Navajos and at the most, two thousand Coras in Colorado. She understands that there are many vacancies in the Synod and that their mission is, in her own words, "small potatoes," but seems frustrated that they are unable to call a pastor.²¹¹ In spite of that frustration, there were many things for which to thank the Lord.

We are very thankful for the help that has come to us from Kingdom Workers, Rocky Mountain Christian Camp, willing church members at St. John and from other congregations and church organizations which have helped us with donations and our "new" used van. Being able to purchase materials in Spanish has been one of the greatest assets to our work here. In the past year alone we have been able to give out over forty bilingual New Testaments and three English Bibles. The Cora and Spanish-speaking students have been bringing their Bibles to our classes in Montrose and Delta. It is a thrill to see how excited they are about using God's word. God's word is very beautiful in Spanish!²²⁰

Very soon more blessings from above would be showered upon this congregation and their faithful mission efforts.

The Lord Provides New Workers

In 1995, Jace and Sandy Holden joined St. John, and would later prove to be very valuable to the Cora mission work, beginning in the Spring of 1996. At that time, Sandy began teaching some of the children at the Tuesday evening Bible class in Montrose, and eventually, Jace began teaching as well. September 1, 1996 saw the arrival of the long-awaited full-time Cora mission worker. On that day Mr. Michael Festerling arrived to fill the position of "lay evangelist and teacher."²²¹ Pastor Hagedorn had approached Pastor Paul Kelm of Wisconsin Lutheran College about finding a man to fill this position. Finally, Mike was "discovered" and recommended by Pastor Kelm as a qualified person. He was raised in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, the son of a WELS area Lutheran High School teacher. Both he and his wife, Julie, were recent Wisconsin Lutheran College graduates, and Mike had graduated in January of 1996 with a degree in Public School Elementary Education.²²² Before he came to Montrose, the congregation had outlined his responsibilities in a job description, which he was able to consider before agreeing to do the work. He says that he had wanted to try work like this someday, and thought it would be a good way to spread the gospel, although he initially felt inadequate since this was not the type of training he had received. Yet trusting that God would be with him and help him to do this, he accepted the task, and was engaged into the work of being full-time teacher and evangelist²²³ by the direction of the Board for Home Missions. This position was given on a one year commitment basis, that is, every year he has the option of continuing or not.²²⁴ It was created to expand the outreach to the Coras, since he would be working with Nicki Parsons, who was still a part-time worker. His responsibilities were to work closely with Pastor Poetter in order to:

- ◆ “continue the teaching ministry and expand the outreach effort to the Coras and Hispanics,” by offering weekly Spanish Bible classes at different levels, by organizing and teaching Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, and by assisting the pastor with special Spanish services.
- ◆ “help in the evangelism outreach effort of St. John,” by assisting St. John in canvassing the area and making regular evangelism and devotional visits to prospects.
- ◆ “expand the educational programs for the Coras and Hispanics,” by teaching practical English and living skills.
- ◆ “prepare and bring Cora youths and adults through confirmation instruction.”
- ◆ “establish a church life among the Coras.”

He also occasionally drove the church van for transportation, attended monthly planning meetings with Pastor Poetter, Nicki Parsons and other lay workers and volunteers, and in general, encouraged Anglo member involvement in the mission.²²¹ Yet Mike could not begin any of this work until one problem was solved—he did not speak much Spanish!

June 17, 1996 was the date when Mike was officially hired, and at that time, he and Julie traveled to Mexico to learn Spanish. Although he had taken two and a half years of Spanish at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he needed to deepen his knowledge. Upon MLC Professor Paul Bases’ recommendation, they went to Oaxaca, Mexico, where they studied for ten weeks at the *Instituto Cultural de Oaxaca* (Cultural Institute of Oaxaca). This training, he says, prepared him as best as possible in the amount of time available, and is thankful that he had this opportunity, but adds that he would have preferred to extend the amount of time he spent there. He does believe that it was an excellent place to learn Spanish, because in the villages around Oaxaca live some indigenous tribes that are similar to the Coras. Mike and Julie were able to tour some of those villages and see the people and their culture firsthand. In this way, they were able to understand the Cora culture much better.

In order to gain the Coras’ trust, at first he used a “mercy ministry,” helping needy Coras with their physical needs. Today that work continues, but comprises only about ten percent of his total work. Sometimes people contact him when they are out of work and need money, transportation or food. Although he doesn’t want to be an enabler, and does not want to spend more time on the physical needs than on the spiritual needs of the Coras. Mike still strives to help people in this way if possible. St. John still has a food bank, at which food is handed out on an as needed basis. An important part of his work was, and still is, coming to an understanding of the Cora people and their culture, so that he can serve them better.

Some observations about the Cora people that Mike was able to make were that they were nice, hard-working people who did not mind doing manual labor. They were not “book smart,” but yet intelligent people, although they did not seem to value education very highly. This last observation was an important one, since part of Mike’s job was to expand educational opportunities among the Coras and bring them through confirmation classes. He was also charged with fostering a church life among them, yet he characterizes them as being “very spiritual people” “Catholic in the heart,” yet unclear as to their actual beliefs and lax in their church attendance.²²⁶ Mike was excited about this work, but knew it would be difficult to clear the hurdles that awaited them. Yet in his first year at St. John they were able to continue some programs that had to be put aside in the past for lack of manpower. Nicki Parsons calls Mike “an extremely enthusi-

astic, hard working person,” whose work at St. John has been beneficial. She writes that, “a group for Sunday School age children similar to Pioneers, an active youth group, a regular adult and teen Sunday morning class in Spanish, and extra tutoring classes which Mike has been providing for the four Cora and Hispanic confirmation age students do not need to be seen as extras now, but as tools for encouraging and strengthening especially our young prospects.”²²⁷ This was what the Coras needed—the strengthening of their faith in Christ. Another class that was started in March of 1997 with that same goal was a Friday morning Bible Class for women (although men were also welcome). They used videos from the *Communicating Christ* series to teach the Bible lessons and would do something practical like make Rice Krispies bars for conversational English practice.

About fifteen women attended this class! Also, since three years of confirmation instruction were offered at St. John, Mike was put in charge of the first year group, which included children who were at least twelve years of age or in sixth grade. However, if a younger child desires to take this class, he or she is allowed to attend on a trial basis.²²⁸ In September of 1996, a milestone was reached, as two Cora and two Hispanic children entered St. John’s confirmation classes, however later, three of the four discontinued.²²⁹ During this time also, the regular Sunday morning and Tuesday evening Bible classes in Spanish were also being provided, as well as English Bible classes at the same time for those who spoke English. Mike writes of the focus and goal of these Bible classes:

Slowly, but surely we are discussing and encouraging membership concepts with our Cora/Hispanic prospects. Currently, we are applying the principle that the Gospel message must be taught in its truth and purity first and foremost. Then, we hope and pray that the prospects believe in Jesus and follow Jesus. Finally, membership, as much as we would like to see it happen, is a fruit of faith and a fringe benefit to the outreach efforts. Membership cannot be forced, so we continue to encourage the prospects with the Gospel and pray for the Holy Spirit to work through the Word.²³⁰

Another hurdle, besides the lack of workers, that had consistently hindered the expansion of the Cora mission work was the space limitations of their church building. Nicki described Sunday mornings as a “zoo,” and added that for Christmas Eve, there were between one hundred thirty and one hundred forty people in the church building, which was built to hold a maximum of ninety! In September of 1997, that problem was solved, at least temporarily.

The Ministry Center

As the congregation was trying to solve the space problem, they approached the District Mission Board for assistance. Its chairman, Pastor Mark Birkholz, secured a one-time gift of five thousand dollars that was allocated by the board for the rental of a facility. Pastor Poetter considers Pastor Birkholz to have been instrumental in gaining outside assistance for the Cora mission work. He also credits Pastor Birkholz with being very supportive and open to any ideas that the congregation had regarding outreach to the Coras.²³¹ Mike Festerling and Pastor Poetter were keeping their eyes open for a pos-

sible location, but the rental spaces they found were too expensive.²³² Finally Gary Parsons noticed that the Delta/Montrose Electric Association building in Montrose had been closed and remained vacant. After inquiring about the possible use of the building, they were told that they could use it if they would only pay the cost of the utilities that they expended. Plans were made to use it as a center for Cora and Hispanic outreach, and the move into this five thousand square foot building was made in September of 1997. Mike is pleased with how well it has worked for their purposes so far, since it has a lot of classroom space, handicapped accessible bathrooms, good parking, and the building is in good shape. They receive the five thousand dollars in monthly increments of two hundred fifty dollars, which is used for the payment of utilities. Unfortunately their agreement only lasts until May of 1998, when it may be revoked, at which time they would have to find another building. However, they are attempting to rent the building, but the cost could be prohibitive, and they could be asked to leave at any time until that takes place. Meanwhile, gifts of love come pouring in:

Gift money has gone toward furnishing and supplying the Ministry Center with the necessary items to carry out education and ministry. Such items already purchased using the gift money include: tables, chairs, an overhead projector, dry erase boards and a vacuum. Also, a television, VCR, microwave and stand, phone and answering machine were donated by St. John's members. All of these items help in outreach and education and we are grateful to the Lord of the harvest for such blessings.²³³

There is a clothing bank at the Ministry Center, which is opened up for about five minutes at the end of Bible class every week. People are then free to take what they want. Some activities (Cora and Anglo) are integrated, but the Cora programs are run only out of the Ministry Center.²³⁴

A Typical Week

On Mondays, the youth group meets (first and third Mondays), and once a month the Cora planning meeting is held with Pastor Poetter, Mike, the lay workers and volunteers in attendance. On Tuesday nights there is bilingual Bible Class at the Ministry Center at 7:00. Mike writes, "We have been encouraging more of a worship style for the Tuesday night Bible class. We begin the night with a fifteen minute devotional service using a prescribed liturgy. Key elements are included in the liturgy in this order: invocation, confession of sins or confession of faith (alternated), hymn, message, offering, hymn, prayer, Lord's Prayer and Benediction." They have used an innovative approach to this "mini-worship," borrowing the idea of San Juan Lutheran Church in El Paso, Texas, in which they alternate the language that is used for each section of the service on a weekly basis. For example, one week the Lord's Prayer is in English, and the following week it is in Spanish.²³⁵ They then divide the group in to four classes, with the adults being taught in Spanish, and the children in English at three different grade levels. Mike leads the worship and teaches the adult classes, whereas the children's classes are taught by volunteers. The average attendance on Tuesday nights is between 30 and 35 people (five adults and twenty-three children, in addition to volunteers). On Thursdays, at 4:00 P.M. Mike and Jace Holden teach the first year confirmation class. There are currently seven children in this class, six of whom are Cora. Finally, on Sundays there is no regular adult class, but Sunday School is offered for all children of the con-

gregation, including the Cora children at the Ministry Center from 9:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M. The English service begins at 10:30 A.M. at St. John, to which Coras are welcome and invited, but generally Mike and the volunteers take the children home before the service begins.

Changes

In November of 1997, the Cora mission lost a gifted and enthusiastic worker as Nicki Parsons resigned her job as part-time mission worker,²³⁶ due to personal reasons.²³⁷ Yet the work still proceeded with Mike and the other volunteers, although another significant change was about to take place in the oversight of their work, as the District Mission Board took over the administration of the Cora mission in February of 1998. Pastor Mark Birkholz, who is the Chairman of the Board is the official overseer of the work. He visits Montrose occasionally to see if he can assist, and all major decisions go through him, not through the Cora Mission Advisory Committee, which has been discontinued. Mike prepares monthly reports for the Board, as well as an annual report. He feels that Pastor Birkholz has been very helpful in his suggestions regarding the Cora work.²³¹

A Coordinated Effort

In January of 1998, Pastor Poetter officiated at St. John's first Cora funeral—that of a man named Jose Sanchez. Mike Festerling helped him translate a funeral sermon into Spanish, and the funeral took place at a funeral home in town, in front of many family and visitors—both Cora and Hispanic. Some Anglo members from St. John also attended, thus showing their Christian love and support for Jose's family. After the funeral, however, a problem arose.

The family wanted Jose to be buried in Mexico, but could not afford to send the body by air. However, St. John congregation allocated some money that it had received from the WELS Commission on Relief to the payment of the air freight. A member of St. John generously offered to drive the casket to Denver International Airport—more than three hundred miles away—so that it could be flown to Arizona. When the casket arrived in Arizona, a member from the WELS church in Glendale picked it up from the airport and transported it to the Mexican border, where it was picked up by family members. Yet another fine example of Christian love in action that brought strangers together to accomplish a work of love!

The Present

Currently St. John has ninety-eight Cora prospects on its list, and between forty-five and sixty are actively attending Bible classes.²³⁹ There are approximately ten to eleven volunteers who assist Mike on a regular basis, helping to teach classes or serving as helpers, organists or food servers. They were needed, because of the increasing numbers of Cora prospects. This is an encouraging sign, since they have never had so many members volunteering their time on a regular basis since the work began in 1987. Pastor Poetter feels that although not everyone at St. John supports the mission effort by active participation, all of them do support it by their prayers.²⁴⁰ About seven Cora and three Hispanic children have been baptized to date, and there has yet to be an adult confirmand. Although no teens have yet been confirmed, there are seven students in Mike's first year confirmation class, and it is their prayer that some of these children be con-

firmed in the future.²⁴¹ An exciting development is that these children are beginning to invite their Hispanic and Anglo friends to church and Sunday school, which shows that they are growing in faith and in their desire to serve their Savior through evangelism.²⁴² 1998 may be the last year that WEIS Kingdom Workers will fund the Cora mission, but the District Mission Board has assumed its oversight. From a financial perspective, the status of the mission seems secure for the near future, yet there are still struggles with which they must deal.

Mike reveals a truth that applies equally to Anglos as well as Coras in any congregation: they sometimes don't always see how precious the gospel is (especially the adults). The adults are less interested in spiritual things than the children, and sometimes they give Mike the impression that the only reason they come to Bible class is to get monetary help or free clothes. The Coras are still a very mobile people. They are widely spread out, many living up to one hundred miles from Montrose, and their frequent moves make continuity difficult at times. Mike and the other volunteers continue to struggle with the behavior of the children, which necessitates a large number of volunteers for every church-sponsored event. It seems that the parents do not discipline them very much in the home, and that affects their behavior at church and in Sunday School.²⁴³ Nicki believes that the Cora adults do discipline their children, but not in the same way that Americans do, and don't always realize the dangers of living in America. For example, they may let their children wander the streets because they could do that safely in Mexico, not because the children have no discipline or because the parents don't care. Sometimes the discipline problems in church are due to the fact that the mission workers only have contact with them once a week. Therefore the gospel has not had as much time to work in them, and more time is required for their behavior to improve.²⁴⁴ Perhaps the most serious struggle they face is the lack of spiritual support and leadership coming from the Cora fathers in the home. For example, Mike sometimes calls a Cora home to find out why their child was not in confirmation class, and the parents express their indifference. They might say, "He doesn't want to go, and I'm not going to make him go." This, and the fact that few parents go to church, causes the children learn the same things. The lack of leadership in the home has meant a lack of Cora leadership in the church.²⁴⁵

Although they have not given up hope, they are skeptical about the likelihood of finding a Cora man to take a leadership role. In May of 1997, Mike attended a WELS conference on Hispanic outreach in El Paso, Texas. The Hispanic Lutherans who addressed the conference said that church leadership principles were generally foreign to them before they became involved in the Lutheran Church.²⁴⁶ This seems also to be true of the Cora adult males, and indicates that it may be a long process. However, the boys are not quite as engrossed in the culture of their parents, and may be able to be cultivated as the leaders of the future. Some of the Cora boys, like Inés Medina, have been good missionaries among their peers, and this is where Mike and Pastor Poetter are concentrating their efforts. They see some potential leaders in the current confirmation class, and their plan for cultivating these boys as leaders is this: preach and teach the gospel—first and foremost make sure that they know Jesus as their Savior. Then they plan to stress membership, and then finally leadership.²⁴⁷ It is easy to see the patience that these men have, and their confidence in the Word of God is evident in the fact that they allow the Holy Spirit to create leaders. Right now they encourage the youth to take a role in the congregation by having them sing in church, make banners, help with Good Friday service, and clean the church. Would it be possible to have a Cora pastor in the

future? Nicki remembers that someone once offered to help financially any Cora young man who wanted to be a pastor, but she does not think that they would have the parental support to send someone to Martin Luther College. Inés is a smart boy who has some qualities that might be used in the ministry, but is currently living in Mexico, while he waits for his green card to come through (before this he was an illegal). St. John sent Bible story books with him, hoping that he would stay grounded in the Word of God. Nicki says he "knows his stuff," and she is hoping that he doesn't lose it.

In spite of the challenges, there have also been many joys. Mike finds great joy in talking with Coras and getting to know them and rejoices when a child or adult understands the message of the gospel and believes that Jesus is their Savior. For him, the joy of being able to see them in heaven will be the greatest of all.²⁴⁸ Nicki cites the joy of seeing the Holy Spirit work in the Coras, an example of which was a note that Inés wrote to Nicki while he was still very young while sitting in church with her. Although there were several spelling errors, it read "Jesus died for our sins. We will all go to heaven." Another time, a boy came in off the street to Vacation Bible School. Nicki describes him as "a wreck." He used obscene language and was very uncooperative. They next day they were reading the crucifixion story and the boy looked at Nicki and asked, "Is that for me too?" After she told him that it most certainly was for him, he was tranquil and did not act up at all. It also makes her happy to see that even though the Cora families may move or drift away, they tend not to forget about St. John, and usually keep in touch or come back. One time, when Nicki had tick fever, some of the Cora women surprised her by calling her to say that they were praying for her.

The Future

At end of July of 1998 Mike Festerling will be stepping down, and Jace Holden may take over Mike's position. That is a decision that the District Mission Board will have to make, but right now Jace does evangelism and devotional visits both with Mike and on his own. He is willing to go to Mexico to learn Spanish and is willing to do the work if asked to do so. Mike hopes to see some Coras becoming members, and prays that some leaders eventually will step forward, which, he believes, would make the mission blossom and expand. He also prays that the migrant Coras will stay in the area long enough to produce such leaders in the church.

Whether this happens or not remains to be seen, but those who serve in this field continue to trust that the Lord is with them. Nicki writes, "Though the challenge put before our congregation has ups, downs, and uncertainty about how we should proceed, God appears to be blessing our efforts. We have much to learn about how we can best serve these unique, wonderful, sometimes exasperating people."²⁴⁹ This spirit of trust, thankfulness and humility pervades their work, and motivates them to continue moving forward with the Lord's help, despite mistakes and setbacks. Although none of them are "experts" in cross-cultural mission work, their trust in the Holy Spirit's power to aid them is implicit: "I see that the Holy Spirit works with very practical and common sense means as well as the miraculous ones... The Holy Spirit also is not small at all. He can take reluctant workers with minimal skills and do His saving work."²⁵⁰ Their outlook for the future is positive because they are confident that the Lord Jesus controls all things in this world for the good of his Church. "Things are going well, people are coming, people are working hard. We have our own set of ups and downs, but the Lord, overall, has blessed us with a viable ministry."²⁵¹ The success of the work St. John Lutheran Church has undertaken among the Cora Indians is not due to extensive training in cross-cultural

outreach or many years of intensive language and cultural study. It has succeeded because of the power of the gospel that has been preached by the workers and members over the years. That gospel alone has the power to change hearts and engender faith in the Savior of all the world—Jesus Christ. The hymn writer could have had Nicki, Pastor Poetter, Mike and all the members of St. John in mind when he penned this famous verse:

If you cannot speak like angels,
 If you cannot preach like Paul,
 You can tell the love of Jesus;
 You can say he died for all.
 If you cannot rouse the wicked
 With the Judgment's dread alarms.
 You can lead the little children
 To the Savior's waiting arms.²¹²

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The Museum's Corner

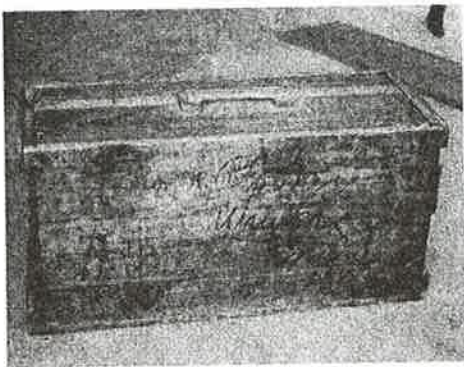
by Char Sampe

The WELS Historical Institute's museum is located at 6814 N. 107th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It is open to the public and anyone wishing to visit it should contact the curator whose name is listed at the end of this column. Many artifacts and displays connected with the history of our synod may be seen at the museum. Following are three such items:



reed organ

With hinged cover and decorated pedals for pumping the bellows. The donor is Mark Braun.



crude wooden trunk with lid

Inscribed on the front is: Rev. R. Plocher, Winona Minn. Donated by David and Naomi Plocher.



small child's chair, with black mourning veil and child's crocheted cap

Given to the museum in memory of six of ten children of the Ludwig Olbser family who died young. The family immigrated in 1864 and attended the old St. Matthew's Lutheran Church. Donor is Charlotte Sampe

A Lost Tradition

by Arnold O. Lehmann

Vignette

Few former Northwestern College students may still be living that experienced a tradition that lasted approximately 25 years, and then suddenly had its curtain rung down by the faculty due to the discontent of a student whom we today would describe as being a party of the politically correct.

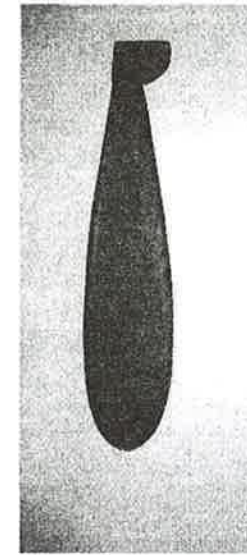
The dormitories of older times had several distinct rules, among them—no smoking in the dorm rooms. When the 1905 dormitory was built, a portion of the basement was designed as a smoking room. Soon thereafter a club was started known as the Vesuvius Club. A student desiring to smoke or use the room and its contents had to apply for membership. Available in the room for members were lounge chairs (not found in dorm rooms), a billiard table, tables for card games and especially a radio, the only one in the entire dorm. To listen to the Green Bay Packer games, the old Milwaukee Brewer games, the Saturday afternoon Metropolitan Opera presentations, the Sunday symphony concerts and Sunday evening comedy shows were attractions for many of us to become members. The smoking wasn't really too bad, for many who smoked did so out of doors.

As was the custom in those days, initiations were a part of the program. These were held a month or two after the fall session opened and the new students had become aware of the Club. Usually six to eight were initiated every Saturday evening until all applicants had been taken care of. A portion of the initiation was held in the Club rooms. I remember in my initiation we had to dunk for and eat apples in a big wash tub and if you weren't trying hard enough to eat you would get a swat on the seat of your pants. Some things had to be done blind-folded; and silly kid's tricks, none of which were harmful, were part of the program. Most were attempts to make one look foolish. In conclusion some type of outside activity took place. In my case the six of us were taken to the Main Street bridge and given certain directions. I do not remember what the other five had to do but I had to stand near the sidewalk, and to everyone that passed by I had to point to the sky and shake my head up and down, but could not say a word. This of course caused many to laugh at me, but virtually all who passed the group knew that it was part of an initiation. In some cases, especially if the applicant had been a haughty type of person, or one who brought dislike upon himself, he would be taken several miles out into the country, blind-folded in an auto and let out. The auto would then go "home" the wrong way often causing the initiate to go away from Watertown than toward it. Not until he would meet an auto or other person would he get his directions straight.

The next step—an initiate had to make a paddle, usually of soft pine, shaped as the photo shows. The initiate had to get the signature of every member of the Club on this paddle, and the signer had the privilege, if he so wanted, to swat the initiate on the seat of his pants with the paddle after he signed it. About 50% of the members did so. Others just signed. When all had signed, the initiate had to show the paddle to a select person, and he then became a full-fledged member.

No one was ever hurt by this initiation, except for his ego. The signing of the paddle was in the open and anyone, including the faculty, could easily see what was going on. It was unfortunate that this malcontent caused a tradition to be discontinued, but

such happens in life constantly, and we continue to live on, dreaming about traditions, and lamenting their loss as did the poor farmer in *Fiddler on the Roof*.



The editor's paddle for his initiation into the Vesuvius Club of Northwestern College. Some of the black spots are the names of members who signed the paddle. Date: 1932.

from the editor.....

by Arnold O. Lehmann

We again thank Pastor Stephen T. Mueller for allowing us to publish the rest of his paper, the first part appearing in *The JOURNAL* Volume 22, Number 2, October 2005. A follow-up is planned for The October 2006 *JOURNAL*, in which the activities in connection with this mission will be reported. One can visualize the difficulties in doing mission work with a group of people whom we might say are half-settled, mobile, speak a language not commonly known, who seem to have ties with their homeland as well as with the United States and who tend at times to lean to their old religious customs and practices. We laud the Montrose area Lutherans for carrying out the Great Commission in their area. With this issue of the *JOURNAL* we hope to begin a series of vignettes featuring the former Northwestern College and its preparatory department. Comments are welcome, and if former students or friends have suggestions or short stories about the former college, we welcome them also. Send all to:

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The WELS Historical Institute was given formal approval by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) in convention in 1981 to organize for the purpose of collecting and preserving historical data and artifacts that are related to the various periods of Lutheranism in America, especially of the WELS. In recent years the synod took over the responsibility of maintaining the archives. The Institute maintains a museum and publishes a *JOURNAL* and *NEWSLETTER*. Membership is open. Fees are as follows, which include the subscription fees: Single: \$15.00; Family: \$20.00 (2 votes but only one publication issue); Congregation, Library, Organization: \$30.00; and Student: \$10.00. Fees may be sent to the WELS Historical Institute, 2929 N. Mayfair Road, Milwaukee, WI 53222.

The board members are: Dr. Mark Braun, president; Prof. Alan Siggelkow, vice president; Prof. Robert Bock, Pastor Curt Jahn, Prof. Joel Pless, Clarence Miller, Steve Miller, Naomi Plocher, and Duane Kuehl.