

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN COLLEGE
8830 WEST BLUEMOUND ROAD
MILWAUKEE, WI 53226

WELS Historical Institute
Journal

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In This Issue

- 3 "... So the System Will Work"
An Ethnographic Interview with Mr. Tommy Burress
E. Allen Sorum
- 19 A WELS Historical Profile (1950-1960)
Arnold J. Koelpin
- 31 The Growth of the WELS Through
the Years
Robert C. Hartman
- 51 Membership Application

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Cover: Mr. Tommy Burress, a member of Garden Homes, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. See page 3.

“... So the System Will Work”

An Ethnographic Interview with Mr. Tommy Burress

Introduction

NOT TOO MANY YEARS AGO, it was fairly safe to assume that members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod had much in common with each other. Our roots in a German and rural culture go deep and spread far. Within this last generation, however, we have planted churches in all fifty states, in cities, in suburbs and in rural communities. Our constituency has become increasingly complex. God has blessed our witness to people who are not only not German, they are Latino, Black, Asian, Hmong, Indian and more. Praise the Lord of the harvest!

Among our new WELS brothers and sisters who are Caucasian there is tremendous cultural diversity. A seminary student who has been born, bred and raised in a small town in northern Wisconsin is very likely to head off to New Mexico or Maine to preach the Christ of the cross. Does his seminary degree give him all he needs to serve in that community?

How do people of one cultural background learn to serve people of a different background? Can we assume that models of mission and ministry and patterns of worship and discipleship training that work here are going to work as effectively over there? Does common sense allow us to believe that graduation from our seminary is all the preparation a pastor needs to shepherd any flock anywhere, any time? Are we even aware of the basic fact that our cultural background and assumptions might be different from someone else's?

The answers to these questions are obvious. How we might prepare to serve a different culture might not be. One effective way to learn how to serve people with a different cultural perspective than ours is through ethnography. Ethnography falls into the discipline of cultural anthropology and is an attempt to understand and describe a particular culture. It demands going into that culture with a humble, sincere desire to learn. With note pad and pencil in hand, we venture into a culture to observe by participating in it as best we can.

A basic ingredient to ethnography is the ethnographic interview. One interview with one “informant” from the culture we might be studying is not enough. But it is a significant beginning. The following article is an example of an ethnographic interview. The major goal of such interviews is to describe what is different and what is similar to our own culture. This, then, forms the foundation of the training, sensitivity, and strategy for reaching across cultures to preach Christ. Yes, the word is the only effective power for conversion. But how shall we present that word in such a way to get people to listen and to understand? This is the goal of ethnography.

The interview that follows is *exactly* what Mr. Burress said, but it is not arranged in exactly the way he said it. When someone is describing his life history, he may go back to one event a number of times. The more one talks, the more one remembers. Maybe what someone chooses to omit in one moment or in one session, he may choose to reveal in another. The interview was organized in a way that would increase understanding and impact.

An interview belongs to the person interviewed. Mr. Burress was consulted after his interview was re-arranged and was asked to approve the new organization. It is by his permission it is in print now.

Mr. Burress belongs to a congregation that is 60 percent black and 40 percent Caucasian. As you read his story, you will be impressed with many facts. Most impressive in my opinion is that in spite of his experiences, he measures people by their inner quality. The Spirit of God has taught Mr. Burress to look at people the way Jesus looks at people. This interview will also show you how his comments have served to improve a ministry to him and to people who shared some of his personal experiences.

If, as is hoped, this interview encourages you to look to ethnography to assist your own outreach, you will find *Participant Observation* by James P. Spradley (published in New York by Holt, Rinehart, Winston in 1980) and *The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in a Complex Society*, by James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy (published in Chicago by SRA, Inc. in 1972) to be most valuable.

E. Allen Sorum

My Early Education, Inside and Outside the Classroom

My birth certificate shows me as being born May 24, 1943. I was actually born on May 23, 1943. The reason that the date of birth is in error is because of the lack of importance that the doctors in that time gave to birth in a black family. It was just not something that was important. And so it laid around on his desk until he got ready to send it in. By the time it was sent in he had forgotten what day that he had actually serviced us. As a consequence I had to make a decision whether to go by what is on the birth certificate or by what I know to be the facts. The birth certificate won out so I celebrate my birthday on May the 24th.

I was raised in a fairly good-sized family, three brothers and two sisters. I spent my entire childhood in Dyersburg, Tennessee. I started out attending a school—I don't know if it was a parochial school—that was a one room building, about fifty yards from the church my parents attended. It serviced grades one through eight and there was one teacher. The age of students ranged from six to forty. I don't know how it all worked out. It was not necessarily a positive experience but it was interesting because, obviously, if you were six and you were going to school with guys who are twenty, there are some real problems created by that. They tend to be bullies and there was a lot of intimidation. I was five when I went there. I only went two years before they closed it down.

We were forced to go to a public school. My early recollection is that this school was about six miles from my home. We walked to school every day and

walked home every day. In order to get from our house to this school, we had to go through the white community so twice a day we had to fight. We had to fight going to school and we had to fight going home. It was a routine. In the morning we knew we were going to have to go through a battle. They were waiting for us.

These kinds of experiences stick with you. I think it serves to strengthen you. You realize that you have to face adversity, that you sometimes have to take a stand and you realize that sometimes you're just not going to win. You win sometimes and you lose sometimes. But as I look back on it, I think to the white and black kids it was a game. In spite of all the racial overtones involved, it was still a game. It was a contest, if you will, of who had the most stamina, who was more powerful. It was an opportunity to vie with one another when there were no other opportunities for white kids and black kids to compete. It was a totally segregated society.

Sometimes it was vicious. The rules depended on which group we were facing. There were some groups where it was one-on-one and whoever won, won, and no one else would get involved. And there were other groups that would never isolate themselves. They were like gangs. Whenever you encountered them, you had to face the whole gang.

Our parents equipped us early in life with the facts that this situation existed. We were to try to avoid it, we were to try to go around. We were very inventive. We tried all different kinds of routes to try to avoid conflict. That was part of the game too. We were trying to strategize on how to get to school without having contact, and they would strategize on what our next move would be. They would try to anticipate it. They would have people staked out at different locations. They knew where we lived, and they knew where the school was, and they knew that there was this vast land there that we had to come across somehow to get there. So they would lay for us somewhere. My father had to be at work early so he couldn't drive us or anything. He was on the railroad. He would be gone for a week or two weeks at a time. So we had to get to school.

It was just an interesting part of my life. I don't know what kind of emotions I have when I look back on it. I don't know if it was a very good experience and I enjoyed it or if it was a very negative experience and that it may have scarred me somehow. I don't think so but it just happened.

This all had a very serious impact on who I am, a very big bearing on the way I am now. My wife and others that I know are critical of me quite often because I have a tendency not to show a lot of emotion, not to get excited over things. If getting excited changes things, fine. But if not, why do it? That's the kind of attitude you develop in that scenario. You have to control yourself. Even though we were fighting, even though it was a daily thing, we all knew—most of us—that if someone got seriously hurt, that all of the black kids were subject to be killed. There was a limit to which we went so that no one ever got seriously hurt. Because if we had hurt one of those white kids to the point where the parents got involved, there would have been some lynching. We fought but it was clean fighting. It wasn't really a fight where someone was trying to hurt someone.

Lynching was a serious threat. The thing that frightened me the most was a true story that I had heard very young in life about a black kid who had an

impediment. The impediment was that he would blink his eyes. He was walking downtown in a community very close to Dyersburg. He was approaching this white lady and she thought he was blinking at her. She thought he was being fresh with her. So they tortured and killed him. So it was always in the back of my mind that these things can happen and still do happen. And I believe that it did happen, though it didn't make the papers.

That fighting thing subsided the older I got. As I moved into the teens, some of those same kids that I used to fight with became secret buddies. We used to play together. We formed our own scout group, became blood brothers, secretly. Among the kids there was no hatred, really. We were doing what our parents taught us was supposed to be done.

Everything around me focused on race. I came up at a time when, no matter how old you were, you were "boy." If you were black, no matter what the circumstances, you were the last one to be serviced. You took the back seat in everything. I came up when the public facilities were "Colored" and "White." The bus station had a section where white people could wait for the bus and in the back room, we could wait. Same thing with the train station. Just about everything you can name, the court house, the five-and-dime store, everything was segregated.

Mine was a subdued anger. I didn't like it. I was angry about it. But I was always told that what you have to do is you have to live with it and try to move on. You have to try to deal with life the way it is. You can't beat the whole society. You figure out a way to live in that structure, maintain your self-respect and survive.

I got my self-respect from my parents. My grandfather was very vocal. I don't know how he ever lived, given his temperament. To this day I don't know why he was never lynched or killed because he read the riot act to everyone, white or black. He was somewhat dismissed by whites as being crazy. But he taught us how to stand tall and to be proud of ourselves and our mother and father reinforced that. I think that had a bearing on my involvement in athletics and extracurricular activities, because from childhood I had always thought that I was as good as anyone despite what was happening in society.

I don't think I would have been secure if I didn't have a family image. I have always known from birth on that I was part of a family and in that family there was a father, a mother, a grandmother, a grandfather. There were uncles, aunts and cousins, all of whom were concerned about my behavior. And not only that, I had a family outside of that immediate family. The teachers in the school system, the adults in the community, they all helped raise me. You could not be on your bad behavior anywhere because the results were the same whether you were in your own house or whether you were ten miles away. You would get the same kind of scrutiny and the same kind of discipline. I don't think you have that now. I know you don't have that now. It would be wonderful to get the church to help recreate that.

Then we transferred to a school that was twenty-five miles from our house. We were bussed to this all-black school in a rural community. It was a very fine school and a very strict system. The education was second-rate by design. We were always two or three generations behind the current method in school systems and textbooks. In the sixth grade I managed to get transferred to the public high school that ranged from grades one through twelve, a place

called Bruce High School. I went there in the sixth grade and graduated from Bruce. Bruce was about three miles from my home. We were bussed there but I had to do some walking because I was involved in athletics.

Not all kids were able to get a transfer to Bruce. The school that I was in went through the eighth grade. Upon my insistence and my parents', I was able to get out of that school and into Bruce, the city school.

I was very active in school. My senior yearbook indicates that I was in every function that they had. Some of the finest teachers that I had ever come in contact with were in this segregated school. There were also some teachers that were absolutely the worst teachers I had ever experienced. They didn't have any ability, but the thing that was most significant about the school was it was very small. It had a total population of 500 in grades one through twelve. I graduated in a class of 33. So we got a lot of personal attention.

I guess because I was so involved, I got a lot of attention from my teachers and the principal. I had an academic scholarship and an athletic scholarship. I was planning on taking the athletic scholarship but at the time, believe it or not, I weighed about 160 pounds. I went to Tennessee State University and observed some of the football players and decided that I was not ready to be a football player among the giants I saw there.

I reverted to the academic scholarship and went to Tennessee State for one year. I was planning to major in electrical engineering. I decided that I was not serious about college and was wasting my parents' money and dropped out.

I went back to my hometown and worked there. I got a job at the country club in Dyersburg and probably would have been there quite awhile except that I had a traumatic experience that caused me to reject that employment. I left.

Coming Up in the Church

I was raised in the Fairview Cumberland Presbyterian Church. It was a rural church. There were about 30 to 35 families involved in the church. Every other Sunday the pastor delivered the sermon. On the even numbered Sundays the pastor didn't come in because he was servicing a different congregation. He lived in Mayfield, Kentucky, which was about 100-200 miles away. He wasn't just a preacher. He was a tobacco and sugarcane farmer. But when he came into town it was for the whole day. He came in and preached and then after the service he would rotate from house to house, eat and spend the evening. Then there would be an evening service and he would drive back home.

I joined the church when I was about eight or nine years old. I consider this my conversion. It was an emotional experience. It was during a summer revival.

I was very serious about my religion. They had summer vacation Bible school. You would leave home for two or three weeks and you would be isolated for awhile to study the Bible. Most of the time we were in Kentucky so there were people from all over Tennessee, Kentucky, and Illinois. It was a lot of fun. We got to fellowship with a lot of kids. In addition to that, during the summer we would be on loan to other churches from other areas. Parents

would take on some kids in their home and take us to their church and treat us as their own kids. That was a real experience. Some of the homes and some of the people keeping the kids had some very bizarre attitudes. In some instances it was very positive and in other instances it was very frightening. But in spite of that, it was something that all of us kids looked forward to.

My "Education" Continues While on the Job in Dyersburg

As I was going through school, in the spring we would chop cotton. A regular part of my existence was chopping and picking cotton, picking strawberries, chopping and picking soybeans and driving tractor for the white farmers in the area. You would go to chop cotton before sunup and by the time you got to the field the sun would just be coming up. And you would work all day until the sunset and you made three dollars a day.

We brought our own lunch but they provided a common bucket for water and a common dipper that everybody used, and, when I think back on it, it was funny. They would have ice in the water and the 30 or 40 people who would be working would bring sodas and, to keep them cold, would put them in the bottom of the ice bucket. Then they would come in at lunch, reach down into the water and grab their sodas. This was the water that you drank and you'd be happy to get it. You got to be quite thirsty, operating in temperatures of 103 degrees.

I was quite proficient at picking cotton. I managed to pick three to four hundred pounds of cotton a day. They paid \$3 a hundred. So \$12 back then was a lot of money. In addition to that I drove the truck that took the hands to the field. So my father got ten percent of what was sent to the gin. He split that with me because I drove the truck. I'd weigh up the cotton and empty the sack for the elderly and then, on top of that, pick three or four hundred pounds so I was quite proficient at that.

When the seasons were not ripe, I did handyman work in homes. I had two homes that I serviced on a regular basis. They paid me 50 cents an hour. I'd mow the lawns, wash the windows, all kinds of miscellaneous things. That's how I got my school clothing. I remember that this one year, I was in the 11th grade, I had a hot date coming up. I really wanted to impress this young lady. I wanted to have money. It was the Easter weekend. And there was always a big to-do after Easter Sunday at church. The community center would be open and all the kids would be there. I wanted to take her there and present her with a corsage and all of the trimmings. So I was looking for work.

That Friday night, I stopped to get gas at this gas station and the owner mentioned that he needed some help. That worked out just fine. He needed the help and I needed the money. He asked if I could start early, like at 5:00 in the morning. I worked from 5:00 that next morning until 9:00 that night. He fed me lunch. He raved about what a fine job I had done. And then he reached into his pocket and pulled out two one dollar bills and gave them to me. I don't think I passed any words. I hopped in my father's truck that I had tied up all day. I drove home about two miles away. I went into my bedroom and got my shotgun because it was my intention to kill him.

My father noticed that I was upset and that I was getting my gun and he stopped me and asked, "What are you doing?" Then I told him that I had

worked all day really hard for this man and done a good job and he gave me two dollars. I guess this was the thing that got me involved in unions. So my father said to me, "Tell me, how much did he agree to pay you ahead of time?" I said, "Well, we didn't talk about it." He said, "Well, what you're saying exactly is that you worked all day without any understanding whatsoever as to what you were going to get paid and now you want to kill him? You should go and kiss his feet that he paid you anything because he didn't have to!"

And I said, "That's right." And that changed my way of thinking as it relates to employment. The employer does not have an automatic obligation to tell you what you're going to make. If you want to know you have to ask. That turned my thinking around and it also saved me from being dead or in prison somewhere. My father suggested that I start by shooting myself first.

After that, I graduated from high school, went off to college for a year, came back and kind of floundered around. I worked at the compress, the place where the cotton comes to be put into bales. They took a liking to me. I was always a hard worker. I say that with all the modesty I can muster. I was always a hard worker. Normally that job lasted two months but I was able to work that job for six months because they kept me to the very end.

I remember that I tried to imitate some of the older hands that were on that job. The one thing that I remember everybody did, I wanted to do it. I thought it was the most beautiful thing: to chew tobacco. I wanted to chew tobacco. I have never been so sick in all of my life as I was when I had that slug of tobacco and swallowed some of it. I didn't think I was going to survive. I stayed there and when that was over, that's when I went to the country club.

But the Hard Lesson

I worked at that country club and lost all of my values. That country club job paid \$30.00 a week and we worked. We were combination bartenders, lawn cutters, waiters, cooks. We did a lot of work.

I had been there about three or four months when they hired this white guy, a real nice guy, who did not know the difference between bourbon and Scotch, didn't know what vodka was, didn't know what gin was. One day we were behind the bar and we were teaching him how to mix all the drinks and he was complaining that it seemed we were doing an awful lot of work for a measly \$120 a week. He was getting paid \$120 for me to teach him how to do what he was doing.

So a buddy of mine who worked there, we got together and we decided that we would supplement our income. They had illegal slot machines in that country club and for the time that we worked after that, my friend and I made the most profit off of those slot machines. Because we discovered how to get into them, how to loot those slot machines, how to make the jackpots, and we had certain club members that would sign for us and we'd split the loot with them. As I said, had I stayed there, I'd have lost all the principles I was taught.

I was working at the country club, I was saving my money and was going to get married that following year. We were going to move to the North and live happily ever after. Well, one Sunday afternoon things were slow and I

was going to call my girl friend on the phone. I happened to pick up the phone to hear the manager, who was always praising me and patting me on the back and telling me what a great guy I was, talking to a gentlemen who was supposed to come out and clean the swimming pool. The guy had been out and he didn't find anyone. So the manager asked, "Weren't any of my niggers around?" That hurt me more than anything that had ever happened during my whole childhood because I had this guy on such a pedestal that I thought that he was different, you know? So that day I tendered my resignation and I walked out of that place. The following week—my wife was a senior in high school—we got married that Saturday and I caught the bus coming to Milwaukee Sunday morning. She stayed and finished high school and then joined me in Milwaukee.

A New Wife and a New Life in Milwaukee

My wife grew up in Dyersburg also. She was a city slicker and I was a country boy but I'd go to town to the movies and she'd be there and I'd be chasing after her all over town and she'd be running but not running, really. But we had dated and we had gone steady for about five years prior to getting married.

But we had all of these plans about a big wedding and they were all aborted because I called my brother and he said, "I have a job for you at Zweifel Ford so come up Monday." So we had to make some serious decisions immediately. I remember going in to tell her father that we had moved up the marriage and he was working that day. He worked at Western Auto. And he couldn't get off from work so we had to take his sister with us to stand up with us at the wedding.

I had always planned to leave Dyersburg and I had always planned to go north where the perception was that there was not so much racial bigotry and tension. I guess Mr. Foster's comments accelerated my plans—that, plus I already had a job in hand when I came to Milwaukee. I was 20. The job I had at Zweifel was delivering cars.

My wife came up as a Baptist. I think the experience was pretty much the same I had. She was Baptist and we were Presbyterian. Once a month we had what they called a choir union when the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and the Methodists got together and they had a songfest. There was constant contact between those faiths in Dyersburg. And she was the girl. She had the qualities I thought a girl should have.

When we got to Milwaukee, we departed from our religion for a long, long period of time. We talked about it. We'd always sit down and say we needed to get involved with some church, we need to get to church. We knew we should but we didn't do it. We were having too much fun doing the things we were doing, living in the fast lane, partying, tavern hopping. We were really not settled at that point. The same thing would have been true had we stayed in Dyersburg. We loved parties, we loved dancing, we loved socializing. That's what we did.

We were living on 20th and Garfield. And she still thought she was in Dyersburg because she would talk to everyone, she would invite everyone over to the house. She just did not understand the big city so I was concerned about that.

I started working at A. O. Smith in 1965. I had a brother who was hired there and he tipped me off that they were hiring. I was disillusioned by the fact that people who were really doing good work did not get recognized. But it was easy. I didn't have a problem with it. I got involved with the union, and got a following. Before I knew it I was running for the grievance committee and ended up there. It's kind of like shop lawyer for the workers. I was elected at that time by about 5300 people.

Whatever racial tension there was at Smith did not have an impact on my daily performance on the job. Although we just recently had another election (for grievance committee) and I was voted out. Just looking at the election results, there was a lot of racial decisions made in that election. It's very subtle.

I think people are victims, victims of fear. At election time, candidates are able to play on that fear in order to get their win. There's a fear that blacks are going to take over this place. There's a fear that there are only a few good jobs left. If you let blacks in office, the only people who will get those good jobs will be blacks. So you need to vote right and vote white. And there are some blacks who play just the other angle of it. And I think both groups play on the fear and insecurity of people.

Career Goals for the Future

I have a desire to be an attorney. I need five more years to get a pension from Smith. I'd like to have a pension and then go back to school and get a law degree. I'd like to be in a financial position to practice law without regard to making money and to help some people that I see go into the system and get gobbled up by it because they don't have a defense.

My goal is to help the guy being stepped on by the system, who is out on the edge of the system—not just the minority. But I think there are probably more minorities in that category. I guess my biggest problem is that I see so many attorneys who will not handle any cases unless they got big dollar signs. If you got a case where you bought a \$40 iron that's no good and you think you should be given a new iron, you'll have a hard time finding an attorney willing to handle your case. And these are the kinds of things that I think need to happen in order for the system to be fair. Because what happens in court is that the judges almost routinely dismiss those kinds of cases, which causes people to become frustrated and cynical. Then they become part of the problem rather than part of the system.

Some Reflections on my Past at Garden Homes Ev. Lutheran Church

Our coming to Garden Homes was an accident. Our son, T.J., was starting the first grade. We wanted him to have some religious background, some religious teaching. We did not belong to any church, we were not active in any church, but we had the audacity to want our kid to have a religious education. This was in 1975 and we were living on 21st, between Melvina and Vienna. And we started looking around.

We wanted to go to Siloah. We decided it made sense to go to a school that was right down the street. And Siloah was booked. So we then considered the University School and came very close to putting him there, but we weren't

sure that that would give us what we wanted. We weren't really sure where they stood on religion.

We thought about Catholic schools but we weren't sure that we even understood what their faith was all about so we weren't real eager to get involved. We weren't real sure about Lutheran schools. We thought that because they were in the neighborhood there must be some sensitivity. So we started to look around and we noticed that there was a school that wasn't in the immediate neighborhood but was very close and that was Garden Homes.

We were pleased and shocked that the school told us that they wanted us to do two things. They wanted us to attend services and wanted us to attend Bible study. Really, that's what we had been saying we wanted to do all along. We were impressed because they sent some people out to visit with us and chat about religion. After they left, we were really excited about what they had said. We were always brought up to believe that your works, your deeds, your behavior is really what determines whether you get to heaven. And after hearing a presentation of the gospel from Mr. Wentker and a teacher by the name of Schultz, we were excited. We didn't believe it but we were excited about the prospect and we wanted to get to know more about it.

And so we got really involved in going to the studies and looked forward to them every week. If at the end of those classes, if they'd had said we couldn't join, we probably would have gotten an attorney to sue because we were really that impressed with what was being said in the sessions. We were eager to join. It was an easy commitment to us because it was really what we were wanting all along.

We were scared to death in our first Lutheran services. We were scared to death. We were always a beat behind everybody else. They would be sitting and we would still be standing. I remember talking to my wife and saying that the most frightening thing in the Lutheran church was that everybody was sitting in the pew as though they were mummies. They would not look to the right, they would not look to the left, they would not look behind them because it was a definite no-no to ever put your arm up on the back of the seats. So I felt very uncomfortable during the service. The message was good but I was not at ease because of all these I guess self-imposed restrictions that I thought were the way that you had to be in that church.

We discussed that and we started to think that maybe we ought to find out for ourselves whether these things were true or whether we just perceived them. Because there were some church members that you could overhear talking like, "Did you see them looking around, they didn't hang up their coats, the kids didn't sit with their parents." So we found an escape hatch. We sat in the balcony. That's where the friendly people were.

All the people in the balcony didn't care about that stuff. They were friendly, they spoke, they would turn around and talk to you. I'm ashamed because I don't remember this lady's name but I will always remember that this lady, a white lady—I should know her name—saw that I was struggling with the program and she took me by the hand that Sunday morning and made sure that I knew everything that was going on. Every time I was supposed to stand, why I was supposed to stand, she explained it all. I think she missed the whole service explaining to me what was going on. She made a

difference in my attitude toward the whole church because she took the time just one Sunday to look and see that I was having trouble. So she took and she helped me through that and gave me some warmth, some friendliness that has stayed with me ever since I've been at Garden Homes.

What about being a pioneer black member at Garden Homes? I never felt that I was one. I never felt that I was a pioneer at Garden Homes. I always felt that Mr. Polack (principal of the Christian day school) did me a great favor early on. He introduced me to a gentleman named Jimmie Dorsey who seemed to have the same values and same outlook on life that I had. Since we've teamed up, he's always been a source of strength for me. I've always been able to talk and discuss matters with him, so that anything that we saw that wasn't quite right, we were able to address it. We didn't always get satisfaction but we were able to address it. Thus I didn't feel that I was alone. That fortified me and it took away the feeling of being out there alone in the wilderness as a pioneer.

Mr. Dorsey and I accepted positions on the church council early on. We didn't totally clean up the church council but we were able to change the church council meetings from one where all the church council members sat and listened to sermons that lasted four hours to one where people got to say something. Jim and I would leave church council meetings that would start at 7:00 p.m. and end at midnight, and we would go and talk for another two hours and both of us had to work the next day. We talked about how wrong it was the way the council meetings were being conducted and that somebody needed to do something about that.

It was difficult for me because I had this background in parliamentary procedure. And I knew what to do to stop it but in that environment it wasn't acceptable. Parliamentary procedure wasn't followed, even though they said it was. But I finally got to the point where Jim and I would say, "You made your point . . . several times. We think someone else ought to have something to say." And that did not endear ourselves to everyone, but we made progress. We got our meeting over with at 9:00 p.m. instead of 11:00. We were able to at least get the feeling that council members had some authority, could make some decisions. It was a slow, painful process.

We had a lot of small, small matters we debated over, like should there be a public telephone in the school, should the gym be allowed to be open for parents who want to come down to play. We were convinced that there were those that were trying to create a situation where the school could be closed. They did not want the school to stay open, so that slowly—this is just my opinion—slowly they were trying to discontinue things to the point where they reached the decision that, given what's left, we may as well close the school. Jim and I were determined that the school was one of our biggest assets, that it should be open, it serves the community and it should be one of the last things that we look at closing.

My early background taught me that there is a little prejudice in all of us. The big difference is that it is controlled in some and in some it is not controlled. And in others it becomes an obsession. My experience at Garden Homes was that there were some people in high places who had some responsible positions—and I'm not talking about Pastor Pankow—who were very prejudiced, very biased against blacks and I worked around those

people. I tried to make sure, because I was on the council, that those people would have very little contact where they would have to take positions in those kinds of relationships.

Subtlety I tried—with the help of Jim and some others—to put pressure on those people to show their hand. And ultimately they did. They transferred away, they ran. I didn't think that was bad. To the contrary, I thought that was good. You don't always regard a departure as a failure; it might be a success.

There are some things about our system that need to be changed. The first thing we have to do is purge the system of the people who are knowingly using the system. Most of them are black. They want one thing out of Garden Homes and that's a free Christian education for their children through the eighth grade. And you will never see them again because they are still committed to another congregation or they're talking the talk but they're not walking the walk. They're not sincere.

Pastor Sorum came in and was all excited and full of energy and we had been moving forward to getting the rotten apples out. And in my opinion, Pastor Sorum had moved us back to ground one when he said, "Let's start over again." At that point in time, I was not ready for that. I did not agree with that and I wasn't angry about it. I didn't blame him for it because I knew he didn't have the background I had. But I decided what I'd do is step back, pray that he would succeed, and watch what the results would be. And I think that despite my strong feelings, there were some people who were converted and changed. There were some, very few. And I think now we have gotten to the point where some of the people that should have been purged long ago were finally purged. But Pastor Sorum came right in the middle of a long struggle and sent us backward. So that was not a very good feeling at the time.

I guess it's a personal matter with me too. Although I don't accept responsibility for what all blacks do, it really concerns me and it really wears on my credibility when I see blacks taking advantage of Garden Homes. I shouldn't be that way. I don't know why I feel that way but I guess being black I can pick up easily on another black who is jiving and shucking and giving you the runaround where it might take you a long time to realize what he's doing. But because of my culture, I know I can identify, I can spot that a lot faster. When I started, I was real eager to say, "Get serious. What are you really going to do? You're not talking to Pastor now." And that's harsh. When you talk to whites about that, they don't understand that harshness. But that's what works with blacks who are trying to use the system.

My Dreams for the Future at Garden Homes Ev. Lutheran Church

The system is not where it should be. I'd like to see our Christian day school overflowing with kids. I'd like to see that school so busy that we would have to complete plans for that second story and bring kids in. I'd like to see us expose all of the parents of those kids to a true Christian education. Then I'd like to see us separate those who are not interested from those who see the light and want to move forward and continue to grow in that way.

I'd like to see us go back to our basics, in addition to a Christian education. I wanted my child to understand discipline, to understand that in this environment there are things you can do and things you cannot do and you need to do the things you can do and not do the things you cannot do. In public school they don't get that.

I would like to advertise our school in our community. If you look at the track record of the people we've screened and brought in, we really haven't done that great. So the worst that can happen is that we would continue to have the same experience we're having now. And I suspect that it might improve. The perception in the community to an extent is that we're an exclusive club. It really hurts when you're out in the neighborhood doing evangelism and you sense that that's the impression.

I guess if there is one thing that I would really want to change, it would be that when the members of the congregation are sick or hospitalized, they would be overwhelmed by all the members coming to visit them. We're guilty and most of the congregation is guilty of thinking that that's a function exclusively for Pastor. And yet, one of the greatest joys when you're hospitalized is to have a line of people come in and let you know that they're concerned about you. We need to have that.

You know, there are times when I'm sitting there in church and I'm thinking that I should shock the whole congregation. I have this urge when our pastor is saying something that is so true to verbally say, "That's right, that's true!" and to see what kind of reaction there would be. I guess we've had people that have transferred out of fear that the next thing that would happen is that somebody would say, "Amen!" But I think that there are—and I speak now primarily of blacks—those who are suppressing some desires to just get involved with the message. But you know that's a big departure from the norm. It's frightening.

What if our pastor said to one of the men in our congregation, "When we get to this portion of the service, what would you think if I asked you to lead us in prayer?" And you had someone who would say, "Well, I'll do that." I'd like to see us do something like that. Now the background that I come from, there's no prepping. It happens spontaneously. If not, someone is called upon unprepared and unannounced. I've wondered sometimes, what would happen if someone other than the pastor led us in prayer? The only place we don't ask people to pray is in church and in council meetings.

I guess we are still a white church with black people in it, because we have not changed a lot of traditions. We want our church to be cross-cultural and have all cultures recognized. I can understand that we all tend to want to do what we were raised to do. That's the way the white people were raised. That's the way the religion was for them coming up. The unfortunate thing is that the majority of the congregation now was not raised that way. What we're doing now really goes against the way most people were raised. My fear is that saying, "Amen" will detract from the message and I don't want that. But when the preacher is not getting any kind of expression, how does he know whether he is communicating?

But I totally, totally agree with our attempt to have a cross-cultural ministry. It would be great to have a black pastor and a white pastor at Garden Homes but I don't anticipate that happening. Where would you get the black pastor from?

A white pastor is able to minister well to black members within certain limitations. I think there are restraints that our white pastor has that keep him from providing the kind of services that a lot of blacks need: The volume of people that he has to service. The immenseness of the job that he has to do. And the training that he received in order to get where he is right now did not equip him to do some of the things he needs to do as it relates to blacks' needs. But I think clearly he is making an effort to do that. whether or not he is meeting that need at this point I'm not at all sure, given those restraints.

If and when we can raise a black pastor from our congregation to serve our congregation, our black members will accept him, I'm sure. Our current pastor might have a conflict then because the black members might identify more with a black man from the congregation than with the current pastor of the congregation. I'm just trying to be realistic. The biggest conflict is going to be the white members who know the process by which a pastor is developed and will feel that somehow the system has been changed in order to accommodate blacks.

I guess the thing that I think is missing at Garden Homes, especially among blacks, and I see some of that now, but not to a large extent, is a family commitment to the church. We have too many situations where only one of the parents belongs to the church, the other does not. One kid is in school and the older kids are not, they're off doing something else. So that you don't have the kind of commitment that you have when you have the whole family coming up through the system. I can be reasonably assured that had I stayed in Dyersburg I'd still be a member of Fairview Cumberland Presbyterian Church because it's a family tradition, a family thing. I wish there was more of that at Garden Homes. I wish there was more total family involvement. I don't have the answer as to how you do that, but I think that's a key.

I asked our pastor this question: "I think there is a long session in your training that says there is a certain decorum that you must maintain at all costs. And I've talked to my wife about this. If your child was involved in a sports activity and did well, I'd definitely expect to see you cheering, happy and boisterous. If you received something that you've always wanted as a gift, you'd express your appreciation. It seems that in the Lutheran theology that it's a no-no to be excited, it's a no-no to be joyful, it's a no-no to be expressive. Am I wrong in my assessment? The reason that I ask that is because there have been Sundays when I have sensed that you were at the verge of really coming out and expressing some strong, emotional feeling and something in you pulled it back and you cut it off. And I just wondered if that was training or just my imagination!"

I remember sitting in my church back home and hearing the elders and deacons saying, "C'mon, bring it on. Say it!" I was thinking to myself on a few occasions that there was a real powerful message that Pastor was going to tell us and then made a decision in a split second not to do that. And I just wonder sometimes, what was that message? What did we miss because of that?

In other ways, some things have really improved at Garden Homes. In my opinion, we are now a friendly church. It is a church where there are members who make a special effort to greet visitors and make them feel at home.

Not enough, but there are a few. It is a church where members after the service has begun might turn to a member in the back and say, "Good morning, glad to see you," without fear that they have messed up the whole procedure for being in church. It's not so rigid, it is not so inflexible that people can't be friendly. There is an effort now more than ever before to involve more people in more things. As a result, there are more people that feel that this is truly their church, their congregation, their faith. In the past it wasn't like that.

What I cherish the most about Garden Homes is the insistence upon following Scripture. We're unrelenting on not following issues that are not scriptural. It's probably the biggest frustration but it's also the biggest blessing. We probably could benefit by going across the street and joining with New Hope Baptist and saying, "Let's do some things together." But we would not be sincere to our worship if we did that. I know from my background I tend to want to do that. But I thank God that our position has not been compromised.

There are a lot of things that I personally enjoy about Garden Homes. The sports activity, I'm heavily into that. I enjoy simple stuff like seeing the kids who graduated five years ago come back to church, watching youngsters who used to play basketball when we first started out raise families in the church. Watching some of the old, old timers hang in there with us through all of the changes, through all of the transition, and are just adamant about staying and worshipping at Garden Homes. It's not easy. I understand that. I enjoy that.

We do many things well. Our evangelism program is good. I think our ministry is good. I think that we have converted our services to services in which people are attentive; they get something from the message. I used to go to church, I and 60 percent of the people would sleep through the service. I don't see that any more. Maybe we were getting the message by osmosis. I think that the services are interesting, they keep your attention, and I think people are listening, they're getting the message. I hear people talking about the message after the service. I think that's a good sign.

And our neighborhood is accepting us as a neighborhood church. There is more acceptance now than there ever was before. I used to tell people I was Lutheran and a half-hour discussion would ensue. Now I don't get people saying, "What? What are you doing in a Lutheran Church? They don't have any blacks in the Lutheran Church." I don't get that any more. There is a greater acceptance than ever before and I think that that's going to get better, especially in our community because of all the evangelism work that we've done. It's more acceptable than in some areas where the church is not reaching out.

But my wife and I will not go back to a traditional, black ethnic church. And the reason I say so is because while I long for some of the spiritual songs, while I long for some of the real sincere outpouring of the heart, I don't miss at all the hypocrisy that occurs in some of those situations. My wife and I have many occasions to frequent black ethnic churches when we go on vacations, go down south. And we love the music and we love some of the traditions but we deplore some of the hypocrisy. Both of us. It's one of the things that drove us away from the church. People that were putting on

shows. The answer is we are very, very satisfied with worshipping in truth and honesty as opposed to hypocrisy. We feel many things can be improved and changed at Garden Homes but the fundamental religious teaching is proper. And that's what we love about the Lutheran faith. We don't have to pretend and we don't want to.

Mr. Tommy Burress is a long-time member of Garden Homes Lutheran Church of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. E. Allen Sorum is pastor of Garden Homes and conducted the interview.

A WELS Historical Profile

Chronological Sketches of Our Synod's Past 1950-1961

Arnold J. Koelpin

THE BEGINNING OF the Wisconsin Synod's second century took place in the euphoria of post World War II era. Wartime contacts brought new opportunities. Post-war social mobility and airline traffic provided new possibilities for synodical growth at home and in foreign lands.

At home, record enrollments in congregational elementary schools and in synodical training schools produced the need for expansion of existing buildings and staffs. Opportunities for growth, as members moved from the Midwest to other areas of the United States, underscored the need for more pastors and teachers. The challenge was met by record outlays of monies for growth in mission work. Intercontinental concerns led the synod to care for the spiritual welfare of its soldiers in foreign fields, to send clothing, food and spiritual aid to German refugees, and to expand its mission to Central Africa, to Japan, and to the Hispanic in America.

This era of activity also produced decisive action with regard to synodical fellowship. The ecumenical euphoria sweeping the mainline churches in the nation caused the Wisconsin Synod to assess Scriptural practices with regard to church union and fellowship. The agony of debate and patient deliberation caused internal tension and produced membership losses and gains for the synod. At the end of decade, differing views and practices of fellowship caused a dissolution of the Synodical Conference, a stronghold of world confessional Lutheranism for almost one century.

1950-1961

- 1950** In the centennial year of the Wisconsin Synod's founding by German mission societies, over 20,000 German people are being served by pastors of the Wisconsin Synod's "Refugee Mission." The synodical Committee on Relief has sent CARE packages at a cost of \$238,000 and 100 tons of clothing and shoes. Pastor William Bodamer resigns after a long tenure as director of missions for Poland and Germany.
- 1950** Pastor Conrad Frey of Detroit accepts the call as president of Michigan Lutheran Seminary to replace President Otto Hoenecke who resigned that position but remains on the teaching staff.
- 1950** In December, Pastor Edgar Greve leaves Alabama Lutheran Academy in Selma to join the Rev. William Schweppe in serving the Synodical Conference Nigerian Mission at Obot Idim.
- 1951** The centennial book *Continuing in His Word*, a history of the founding and growth of the Wisconsin Synod, is placed on the market.

- 1951** The Northwestern Lutheran, the bi-weekly magazine of the Synod, carries a series of articles on differences with the Missouri Synod. Handled are such issues as the military chaplaincy and the "Common Confession" between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. The articles' chief author, Professor Edmund Reim of the Seminary in Thiensville and chairman of the doctrinal committee, entitles the insights, "As We See It."
- 1951** A 94-minute color film telling the story of the 7,000-mile-African mission tour of Pastors Edgar Hoenecke and Arthur Wacker is made available to congregations. The two pastors were commissioned in 1949 to search out opportunities for the Wisconsin Synod to expand its foreign mission work.
- 1951** The Lutheran Spiritual Welfare Commission serving men and women in the United States' Armed Forces indicates that the mailing list of synodical personnel abroad is approaching the 2,000 mark and growing.
- 1951** The Lutheran Home for the Aged in Belle Plaine, Minnesota breaks ground for a new addition which will provide 20 additional rooms, a chapel, kitchen, and dining room.
- 1951** In April, President John Brenner sends out a special appeal for the collection designated to construct needed buildings at Northwestern Lutheran Academy in Mobridge, South Dakota.
- 1951** The General Synodical Committee, the heads of various synodical boards, commissions, and standing committees, explains via a note in the Northwestern Lutheran that it acts on behalf of the Joint Synod between conventions. Because its actions are based on resolutions passed by convention delegates, the committee disclaims that it acts as a "super-synod."
- 1951** June 6, graduation day at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin, also serves as a dedication day for the new library and administration building, built from money collected for the centennial of the synod.
- 1951** The veteran missionary to the Apache Indians, Pastor Francis Uppleger reports that approximately 5,450 Apaches have become Christians through the preaching efforts of the Wisconsin Synod. Presently, 425 Apache boys and girls attend the mission schools.
- 1951** On August 8, the 31st convention of the Ev. Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States is held at New Ulm, Minnesota. Services are conducted in German and in English, and Centennial Hall of Dr. Martin Luther College is dedicated as a dormitory for women. Convention essayists review specific doctrines handled controversially by the Common Confession between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.
- 1951** As a result of the report of Pastors Edgar Hoenecke and Arthur Wacker, who explored possibilities of sending missionaries to Central Africa, the synod authorizes two missionaries for work in North-

ern Rhodesia, Africa. At the same time it agrees to send one missionary to Japan to serve synodical soldiers in Japan and Korea.

- 1951** The former mission in Poland, now officially called the "Church of the Ev. Lutheran Confession in the Dispersion," consists of 225 stations with 18,000 people served by 16 pastors.
- 1951** A review of home mission work at the turn of the first century of the Wisconsin Synod indicates that in the past two years the synod has:
- | | |
|--------|-----------------------------------|
| 21 | new missions |
| 217 | mission congregations in the U.S. |
| 30,550 | people in mission congregations |
| 196 | missionaries and teachers |
- 1951** The Synodical Committee on Relief donates \$150,000 to assist students of the Wisconsin Synod's "Refugee Mission" who are attending the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Oberursel, Germany.
- 1951** A special study of the question whether it is possible for pastors of the Wisconsin Synod to serve as chaplains in the Armed Forces of the United States without violating Scripture and Lutheran practice reaches the following conclusion. Despite all good intentions to find ways to make the military chaplaincy palatable to the most exacting consciences, the synod must reject the chaplaincy as an instrument of service to our people in the armed forces. Instead the synod intends to expand the system of camp pastors wherever possible, even overseas.
- 1951** The teaching program at Dr Martin Luther College in New Ulm expands to include the fourth year of college (fourth "normal" year).
- 1951** The Board of Education of the synod indicates that six new schools opened and 22 have added classrooms. The need for teachers is reflected in the 63 teacher vacancies in the elementary schools and therefore regulations for certification of teachers are developed.
- 1951** The archives of the Joint Synod of Wisconsin find a permanent home in the portal tower over the faculty room of the seminary in Thiensville.
- 1951** Pastor Reuben Marti and Mr. Bruce Thompson from St. John Lutheran Church in Burlington, Wisconsin plan and begin a program of Lutheran Pioneers, a congregational organization for practical training of young boys, particularly in outdoor skills and leadership, under Christian direction from congregational members.
- 1951** In September, Michigan Lutheran Seminary dedicates its new classroom and administration building, to which the new gymnasium-auditorium is attached.
- 1952** In April, the cornerstone for the new administration-gymnasium building of Northwestern Lutheran Academy at Mobridge, South Dakota is laid.

- 1952** As listed in the Northwestern Lutheran, contributions from the autumn harvest given to Dr Martin Luther College include 750 bushels of potatoes, 7,914 quarts of canned goods, 126 gallons of lard, 2,000 lbs of cabbage, 150 bushels of carrots, 600 lbs. of pumpkins and squash (as well as 270 lbs. of beef and 15 gallons of ice cream).
- 1952** In August, the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference, of which the Missouri, Wisconsin, "Little" Norwegian, and Slovak Synods are members, meet in St. Paul, Minnesota to discuss objections to Missouri's Common Confession with the American Lutheran Church.
- 1952** Professor Adelbert Schaller of the seminary in Thiensville is tragically and accidentally killed at a crossing near the seminary grounds. Pastor Gerald Hoenecke of Sleepy Eye, Minnesota replaces him. Pastor F.E. Blume of Columbus, Wisconsin accepts the call to the seminary to succeed the retiring Professor Max Lehninger.
- 1952** Lutherans of the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods in Milwaukee set in motion steps to divide the Lutheran High School Conference in the city because record enrollments are straining the old facilities and because tensions between the synods are straining relationships.
- 1952** The Rev. Edgar Hoenecke reports that the U.S. Government has established a program to permit emigration of German "expellees" to the United States. The expellees are Germans in Europe who were not born in Germany but in other eastern European countries, including Poland. Members of the synod are encouraged to sponsor families from the "Refugee" Mission who wish to emigrate.
- 1952** In March, Pastor Fred Tiefel, the first "contact pastor" of the synod working in a foreign field, sets out to survey work to be done in Japan as a result of the American military occupation of that country.
- 1952** The Synodical Conference refuses the plea to repeal the Common Confession drawn up by the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. Wisconsin Synod delegates report that "we find ourselves in the state of confession ('in statu confessionis') with regard to the Missouri Synod."
- 1952** The Synodical Council is advised to engage an educational consultant, disinterested yet professionally competent, to evaluate the present facilities for training church workers and the proposed program of expansion.
- 1952** The Common Confession, Part II, between the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church is made public. The document intends to show how faith (Part I) expresses itself in the corporate life of the church (Part II).
- 1953** In May, the newly formed Wisconsin Lutheran High School Conference organizes and proposes a new site for the high school on 76th Street near Wisconsin Avenue.

- 1953** A new full-length movie on Martin Luther and the Reformation is produced by the National Lutheran Council and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It is shown in public movie theaters and available to churches in 16 mm prints.
- 1953** Dr. and Mrs. Theodore Meves are commissioned as medical missionaries to Nigeria, Africa, where they will serve in a new 75-bed hospital in Eket, made possible by a \$70,000 anonymous donation of a Wisconsin Synod member.
- 1953** After ten years of debate, the Missouri Synod rules favorably on the distinction between joint prayer and prayer fellowship. According to the distinction, joint prayer at intersynodical meetings is not considered to be fellowship, provided that such prayer does not imply denial of truth or support of error.
- 1953** In August, the Joint Synod of Wisconsin in convention at Northwestern College, Watertown, marked the end of the 20-years presidency of President John Brenner who declined reelection. In his place the synod elected Pastor Oscar J. Naumann.
- 1953** After President E.E. Kowalke's essay on "Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," the problem of "unionism" in the church occupies much convention time. The floor committee on church union does not recommend a break with the Missouri Synod but "protesting" fellowship. Despite objections by some delegates, the matter was referred to a special convention in October.
- 1953** Professors E. Reim and C. Lawrenz of the seminary, as observers to the Houston Convention of the Missouri Synod, report that the Common Confession (Part I) was still considered a settlement of doctrinal issues with the American Lutheran Church and that Part II was under study to clarify any possible misunderstanding.
- 1953** The synod in convention votes a budget of \$950,000 for a dormitory, classroom building and dining hall at Northwestern College, \$135,000 for a new dining hall and central heating plant at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw, and \$40,000 for an addition to the music hall at Dr. Martin Luther College. The sum is to be raised by a special building fund drive.
- 1953** Pastor A.B. Habben of Hastings, Nebraska accepts the call as the first synodical missionary to Northern Rhodesia. He is accompanied by Mr. Paul Ziegler, a builder-farmer mechanic.
- 1953** The special session of the Wisconsin Synod, held in Milwaukee in October, resolves to give a direct warning to the Missouri Synod regarding its unionistic fellowship practices that a break in fellowship is imminent. At the same time the synod calls for further study in its synodical congregations so that everyone gains a grasp of the issues. The Wisconsin synod awaits the offer of the LCMS President Behnken to deal with the issues and doctrines involved in his synod and in the Synodical Conference.

- 1953** Since World War II, many Wisconsin Synod men (some married) who decided for the ministry later in life have attended the "practical" seminary of the Missouri Synod at Springfield, Illinois. The peak was 40 in 1951. This year 16 attended, ten of whom graduated and eight of whom took calls to the Wisconsin Synod.
- 1954** In January, the Northwestern Publishing House distributes a series of tracts to all Wisconsin Synod members on issues that threaten the Lutheran church in the United States and specifically the synod's fellowship with the Missouri Synod. These tracts treat doctrinal issues such as justification, election by grace, conversion, the inspiration of Scriptures, and such practical issues as scouting and the military chaplaincy.
- 1954** A Presidents' Conference between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods at the Northwestern Publishing House in Milwaukee aims at healing the breach between the synods.
- 1954** The "Gift for Jesus Offering," mandated for synodical buildings, reports that over one-half million dollars have come in thus far.
- 1954** The Arizona-California District organizes as the Wisconsin Synod's ninth district. Pastor E. Arnold Sitz of Tucson, Arizona is elected as its first president.
- 1954** The "little" Norwegian Synod, later called the Ev. Lutheran Synod (ELS), recommends that the Synodical Conference reject the Common Confession as a satisfactory doctrinal statement.
- 1954** In July, the Winnebago Lutheran Academy Association of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, breaks ground for the construction of a new school building, consisting of ten classrooms, a library and a spacious auditorium-gymnasium and costing \$326,000.
- 1955** The first synodical missionary to the state of Texas, Pastor W.F. Dorn, accepts a call to serve in Irving, Texas.
- 1955** The old classroom building which had served Northwestern College for the past 60 years is razed to make way for the new classroom building.
- 1955** The Wisconsin Synod convention, meeting in Saginaw, Michigan votes 94-47 to postpone action on its resolve to terminate fellowship with the Missouri Synod to a recessed session in 1956. Some 40 delegates record their dissent to this vote.
- 1955** The synodical Institutional Survey Committee reports that over 100 new teachers are needed and only about 50 will graduate. The committee recommends an emergency teacher training program which will certify women teachers after two summers at Dr. Martin Luther College and one year of college training at Winnebago Lutheran Academy. This emergency "Winnebago Program" becomes operational in the 1955-56 school year.
- 1955** The synod endorses the creation of seven new professorships at its training schools and makes long-range provisions for starting an academy in Nebraska. To encourage Lutheran high schools to pro-

vide courses for future ministerial candidates, a payment of \$200 per year for pre-ministerial candidates is given to Lutheran high schools in the synod.

- 1955** The annual synodical budget is set at a record \$2.5 million despite the fact that difference between collection and goals over the past two years had been over one million dollars. A missionary's salary is set at \$250 per month with a \$2 increment per year of service up to 12½ years.
- 1955** Pastor Edgar Hoenecke is elected to head the newly formed Foreign Mission Board.
- 1955** Professor Edmund Reim, president of the seminary, resigns as spokesman for the Standing Committee on Church Union because the synod postponed action with regard to the Missouri Synod.
- 1955** The "little" Norwegian Synod takes action to sever relationship with the Missouri Synod by stating that it will continue fraternal relations with members in the LC-MS who agreed with this position, while it will suspend fellowship with the Missouri Synod as such.
- 1955** The Wisconsin Synod authorizes the building of a chapel and classroom for work among the Spanish-speaking people in Tucson, Arizona. Pastor Venus Winter is in charge of this outreach in the Spanish language.
- 1956** A special committee of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod recommends that its church body refuse to join the Lutheran World Federation because such a move would involve a fellowship contrary to God's word. This position receives a negative review from the American Lutheran Church, with whom the LCMS drew up the Common Confession in an effort to achieve unity.
- 1956** The Missouri Synod terminates its work with the National Lutheran Council in supporting the Lutheran Council of Great Britain. The action is viewed as a hopeful sign in the Synodical Conference.
- 1956** The first volume of an American Edition of Luther's Works to assist all who no longer can read Luther in German is published by Concordia Publishing House in conjunction with Muehlenberg Press.
- 1956** Final plans for \$1.5 million expansion of facilities at Bethesda Lutheran Home, a care center for special people with mental infirmities, is undertaken by member synods of the Synodical Conference.
- 1956** Professor Werner Franzmann is installed as literary editor of the Northwestern Publishing House.
- 1956** On August 5, Wisconsin Synod Lutherans in the Fox River Valley assemble to break ground for the new Fox Valley Lutheran High School. The new school is located on a 13-acre tract in Appleton, Wisconsin.
- 1956** On August 21, the new buildings (dormitory, chapel and classroom, and dining hall) at Northwestern College are dedicated.

- 1956** As a result of the Winnebago Program for certification of women teachers who complete two summer sessions and one full year of college in the synodical system, the summer sessions at Dr. Martin Luther College are attended by a record enrollment of 140 students.
- 1956** Because of the action of the Missouri Synod in turning down membership in the Lutheran World Federation (because of fellowship implications) and in setting aside the Common Confession as a functioning fellowship document, the recessed convention of the Wisconsin Synod votes to hold any decision in abeyance until its regular 1957 meeting.
- 1956** In September, Manitowoc Lutheran High School begins operation with a ninth grade of 14 students.
- 1957** The Joint Union Committees of the Synodical Conference meet in Chicago and work toward drawing up a common doctrinal statement to settle issues disturbing their relationship.
- 1957** In March, Pastor Walter Adolph Hoenecke, son of Dr. Adolph Hoenecke, passes away at age 88. He had served 45 years on the editorial staff of the *Gemeindeblatt* ("Congregational News") and 33 years as managing editor.
- 1957** The Board for Foreign Missions announces that it will follow the policy of making its foreign missions independent and self-sufficient. This "indigenous" policy intends to have these missions "supply wages and homes for native workers, as well as simple buildings for chapels and schools" as soon as possible.
- 1957** The Northwestern Lutheran features articles called "Know Your Synod." The following statistics on the Wisconsin Synod are cited:
- | | | | |
|----------------------|-----|---------------------|--------|
| Congregations | 858 | North Wisconsin | 46,580 |
| Active pastors | 710 | Southeast Wisconsin | 49,184 |
| Professors (Pastors) | 74 | West Wisconsin | 49,513 |
| Districts | 9 | Minnesota | 38,736 |
| Communicants | | Michigan | 24,585 |
| (next column) | | Dakota-Montana | 7,776 |
| | | Nebraska | 6,974 |
| | | Pacific Northwest | 1,569 |
| | | Arizona-California | 3,212 |
- 1957** The Board of Education reports that 202 congregations in the Wisconsin Synod have a school. Over the past 11 years enrollment in the elementary schools almost doubled from 10,937 to 21,313. These children are served by 647 teachers (270 men and 377 women). An Educational Survey Committee is appointed to suggest plans for the expansion of teacher training facilities.
- 1957** The synodical Board of Education is expanded by the creation of a Department of Christian Day Schools and High Schools and a Department of Part-time and Adult Education.
- 1957** The room and board rate at synodical schools for the 1958-59 school year is set at \$275.

- 1957** An invitation to the Wisconsin Synod to send official observers to the Third Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation is turned down because the LWF practices fellowship before true unity is established on the basis of God's word.
- 1957** A translation of Professor J. P. Koehler's essay, *Gesetzliches Wesen Unter Uns* ("Legalism in our Midst") is presented to the synod convention by Pastor Waldemar W. Gieschen. President Naumann encourages all, in the synod to study this essay.
- 1957** On June 2, the Rhodesian Lutheran Church lays the cornerstone of its first permanent church building, Matero Lutheran Church, Lusaka.
- 1957** The Wisconsin Synod's convention, meeting in New Ulm, Minnesota, debates the question of its fellowship with the Missouri Synod. By a vote of 61-77 (with eight abstentions) it turns down the floor committee report to break with the LC-MS. Instead, the convention votes to remain in vigorous protest against the course the Missouri Synod is pursuing.
- 1957** Following the decision of the synod's convention, President Edmund Reim of the seminary in Thiensville discontinues his fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. Professor Carl Lawrenz is appointed acting president and later becomes president of the seminary.
- 1957** Onalaska Lutheran High School in the LaCrosse area of Wisconsin begins operation with an enrollment of 21 in the ninth grade.
- 1957** On October 17, the first copy of "Meditations," a daily devotional booklet, rolls off the press at Northwestern Publishing House.
- 1957** After years of service, Pastor W. J. Schaefer asks to be relieved of duties as managing editor of the Northwestern Lutheran. The Reverend Werner Franzmann replaces him.
- 1958** In January, the first stewardship conference held in the Wisconsin Synod convenes in Milwaukee. Representatives of the nine districts meet with the synodical Board for Information and Stewardship.
- 1958** The Bachelor of Divinity degree is conferred, for the first time, on members of the graduating class at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Thiensville. The class, numbering 34, is the largest in the history of the seminary up to this time.
- 1958** The Synodical Conference convention evidences a better atmosphere. A statement on Scripture, prepared by the Joint Union Committee, is unanimously adopted with minor emendations and sent to the constituent synods. The conference also votes to expand its African mission into Ghana.
- 1958** In September, two additional Lutheran high schools open. They are Jefferson County Lutheran High School at Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin (later renamed Lakeside Lutheran High School at Lake Mills), and St. Croix Lutheran High School at St. Paul, Minnesota.
- 1958** After 48 years of service in the Apache mission, Missionary Edgar Guenther asks to be relieved of routine work so he can carry out his

dream to go as a modern circuit rider to remote areas of Apacheland and bring the Gospel to Apaches scattered there.

- 1959** Professor John P. Meyer, still teaching at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary at age 87, asks for relief from his long service as writer for the Northwestern Lutheran.
- 1959** Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota celebrates its 75th anniversary with offerings for the Memorial Organ fund.
- 1959** President E.E. Kowalke, longtime president of Northwestern College in Watertown, steps down from the presidency effective July 1. He is succeeded by Professor Carlton Toppe of Northwestern.
- 1959** The Church Union Committee reports favorably on the Oakland (California) Conference of Theologians represented by members of the Synodical Conference and by overseas brethren in fellowship with the LC-MS.
- 1959** In August, the Synodical Convention in Saginaw, Michigan votes to continue its vigorously protesting fellowship with the Missouri Synod, but is encouraged by Missouri's willingness to face all issues and urges the Joint Union Committees to continue their efforts.
- 1959** The synod convention makes the office of the president a full-time position.
- 1959** By a constitutional change the cumbersome name "Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States" is changed to the "Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod" (WELS). The revised constitution also streamlines the synodical machinery.
- 1959** The synod in convention approves a major expansion program at Dr. Martin Luther College: three new buildings and alteration and additions to already existing buildings. Also approved is a new teacher training college with a two-year course in or near Milwaukee. The school is to begin by using the facilities of Wisconsin Lutheran High School.
- 1959** Wisconsin Lutheran High School dedicates its \$2.5 million school on September 20. It begins the school year with 620 students. In the same year, Racine Lutheran High School, a joint venture of the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods, enrolls 347 students, 143 from the Wisconsin Synod.
- 1960** A Federation of Wisconsin Lutheran Churches of the Milwaukee Area is formally incorporated.
- 1960** From July 20-30, a second Conclave of Theologians meets at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to discuss issues in the Synodical Conference. The meeting centers on "The Doctrine of the Church." Included are members of the four synods of the Synodical Conference (The LC-MS, WELS, Synod of Ev. Lutheran Churches - Slovak, and the ELS) and representatives from the Lutheran Churches of Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, England, Germany, India, the Philippine Islands, the Lutheran Black Churches of the United States, Nigeria,

Ghana, and Rhodesia. The National Ev. Lutheran Church of Finland also planned to send representatives. The conclave fails to resolve the issues.

- 1960** The Synodical Conference requests that the conclave of theologians review and evaluate the statements on fellowship prepared by the doctrinal committees of the four synods in the conference. At the same time they resolve to ask the constituent synods to create an International Federation of Confessional Lutherans.
- 1960** Michigan Lutheran Seminary of Saginaw celebrates its 50th anniversary as a preparatory school by taking a choir tour of the Midwest.
- 1960** An interim committee lays the foundation for the Church of the Lutheran Confession, made up of pastors, teachers and congregations that left the Wisconsin Synod because of its failure to break with the Missouri Synod.
- 1960** A hymnal survey reports that in the Synodical Conference there is a wide range of hymn preference, a need for better translations of hymns from foreign language origins, and a need for contemporary hymns and tunes.
- 1961** In April, the Wisconsin Synod's Commission on Doctrine meets with an overseas delegation, but the meeting does not lead to any modification of the Wisconsin Synod's position on church fellowship.
- 1961** The Wisconsin Synod convention resolves to urge the Western Wisconsin District of the synod to reconsider the Watertown Resolutions in the Protestant controversy and the suspensions in the Fort Atkinson case in order to bring about a resolution of the Protestant matter that occurred some 30 years before.
- 1961** The WELS Advisory Committee on Doctrinal Matters prepares a statement for publication entitled "Fellowship, Then and Now." The statement clarifies two conflicting views on church fellowship which have led to the impasse between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods.
- 1961** Delegates to the Wisconsin Synod convention, meeting in Milwaukee, vote 124 to 49 to: "suspend fellowship with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16:17,18 with the hope and prayer to God that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will hear . . . an evangelical summons to come to herself (Luke 15:17) and to return to the side of the sister from whom she has estranged herself."
- 1961** The Wisconsin Synod presents its principles of church fellowship to the doctrinal committees of the Synodical Conference. The document explains the "unit concept" of fellowship.

The end of the Wisconsin Synod's almost 90-year association with the Missouri Synod in the Synodical Conference came in 1963. Sprung free from a decade of debate on the issues of fellowship and unionism, the Wisconsin

Synod turned toward expansion of its mission abroad and in the 50 states of the United States. A profile of the subsequent history living in the memory of those who are still participating in it will be recorded by a generation that can view the present in historical perspective.

The Growth of the WELS Through the Years

Robert C. Hartman

Introduction

THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH is the fruit of the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of people. God extends the church, not men. God our Savior has charged us with the proclamation of the gospel, to witness to people everywhere, to make disciples in all the nations of the earth. This commission of our Lord is addressed in the recently adopted mission statement of our Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod, "As men, women and children united in faith and worship by the word of God, the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod exists to make disciples throughout the world for time and for eternity, using the gospel to win the lost for Christ and nurture believers for lives of Christian service, all to the glory of God" (Adopted at the 1989 convention).

We talk about growth in people in a variety of ways. People grow up. They grow older; they grow spiritually; they grow in maturity. They grow big; they grow fat, lazy, sick, etc.

As we speak about the growth of a church body and its individual congregations, we can likewise speak of growth in a variety of ways. Of first importance is spiritual growth, the spiritual growth of the individual Christian, of congregations, of a church body.

However, it is my assignment to speak about the numerical growth of the WELS through the years. We recognize that such growth is the work of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace. Nevertheless, by examining the patterns of numerical growth in the WELS some observations could affect our planning agenda as we determine, under God, what are to be our key thrusts as we approach ministry in the 90s and prepare for the first decade of a new century.

The Early Years

(This section will cover founding of the state synods of Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota up to the year 1892 when the three synods federated.)

The founding of our synod as it exists today had its origin in three state synods, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota. The primary emphasis of these state synods was the searching out of settlements of German Lutheran immigrants and gathering of such people into Christian congregations. Much of this work was accomplished by circuit riders (*Reiseprediger*), who in the spirit of the apostle Paul traveled from place to place, ministering with the means of grace and gathering people into congregations. Prior to organization such locations were known as *Predigt Platze*.

In Wisconsin work was begun in the 1840s by a few pastors who in 1850 organized the Wisconsin Synod with five pastors serving 18 preaching stations. As *Reiseprediger* names like Fachtmann, Moldehnke, Thiele, Monhardt, and Zibell come to mind. In 1859 the synod listed 21 pastors, 17 parishes, and 40 congregations. By 1870 the number grew to 50 parishes and 92 congregations. In 1878 each conference was requested to commission one pastor to serve as a part-time itinerant missionary. In 1879 the synod elected its first superintendent of missions E. Mayerhoff, who served until 1894 when he had to resign for health reasons. As I perceive, he served much as in the fashion of today's mission counselor.

In Michigan much of the initial work was done by Pastor F. Schmid, who organized 20 congregations in southern Michigan. He began his work in the 1830s, establishing the congregation in Scio Township near Ann Arbor in 1833. An interesting sidelight is that the Michigan Synod was initially called the Mission Synod because of its determination to do work among the American Indians. In 1878 the Michigan Synod listed 14 pastors and 24 congregations.

In Minnesota work was begun in the 1850s with the organization of Trinity, St. Paul, and St. John, Stillwater, in 1855; St. John, Red Wing, in 1858; and St. Paul, New Ulm, in 1865. In 1868 the Minnesota Synod listed 22 pastors, 35 parishes, 53 congregations and 3000 communicants.

Congregational development also took place in the Dakotas, in Nebraska, and in the Pacific Northwest prior to 1892. Work was begun in Nebraska when an entire Lutheran congregation from the vicinity of Lebanon and Ixonia, Wis., moved to Norfolk, Neb. When their pastor, who migrated with them, died in 1877, the congregation appealed to the Wisconsin Synod for a new pastor. In the years that followed the synod answered other appeals by existing congregations for pastoral help. These German Lutheran congregations, bonded by mutual doctrine, banded together for mutual support and formed the Nebraska District Synod in 1904, becoming a district of the more fully organized Joint Synod in 1917.

Work in the Dakotas was begun in the 1870's in South Dakota under the direction of the Department of Home Missions of the Minnesota Synod. The early settlers came primarily from Germany and Southern Russia (known as Ross-laenders). Here, too, much of the work was accomplished by the *Reiseprediger*.

The first congregation in the state of Washington was established as St. Paul congregation in Tacoma. Early records say that this work was begun in 1884. In our current statistical report 1894 is listed as the year of organization.

In the 1895 report of the Joint Synod (the first published Joint Synod record that I uncovered), the following statistics were noted for October 13, 1892.

	Pastors	Congregations	Preaching places	Communicants	Schools
Wisconsin	158	260	65	83,743	168
Minnesota	62	89	18	16,594	54
Michigan	37	62	8	9,552	35
	257	411	91	109,889	257

A Few Comments

1. The 1894 statistical report lists only 6603 communicants for the Minnesota Synod (Wisconsin—83,967, Michigan—9,669). It would appear that

the 1894 number is the more accurate number as the report for 1915 lists 18,886 communicants for the Minnesota Synod.

2. The 1897 report for the Michigan Synod lists 14 congregations (three preaching places) and 1600 (circa) communicants. The 1909 report lists 15 congregations (two preaching places) and 3704 communicants. A separation occurred in the Michigan Synod in the early 1890s, which accounts for this loss of congregations and communicants.
3. Schools are not to be defined in the same way as our day schools of today. I was told that the first assignment of our first full-time secretary for schools in the late 1930s was to determine how many schools (full-time day schools) we really had.
4. Of the 411 listed congregations in 1892, nearly 339 exist today as member congregations of the WELS. A few of the currently listed 339 congregations organized prior to 1892 came to us from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and other Lutheran church bodies. The loss of congregations from the original 411 is explained by the following; losses to LCMS and Church of the Lutheran Confession in the 1950s and 1960s, losses as a result of the Protestant controversy, and losses as some congregations merged and disbanded.
5. In 1894 the Wisconsin Synod listed five congregations over 2000 communicants and 18 between 1000-1999 communicants. There was one congregation each with over 1000 communicants in the Michigan and Minnesota Synods.
6. Early statistical records identified only the name of the pastor, and the number of baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals as essential information. Later records followed this pattern but added the pastor's address, location of preaching place and the number of communicants. Churches were not listed by name. Truly we were a synod of the clergy.

The *key thrusts* of the pre-1892 era were:

- A. The search for and gathering of German immigrants into Lutheran congregations.
- B. The struggle for confessionalism, including the separation from the "theologically tainted" German mission societies.
- C. The development of an education program for the training of church workers (necessitated by the separation from the German mission societies).
- D. The search for and banding together of confessional Lutherans. This prompted the formation of the Synodical Conference in 1872 and the Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and other states in 1892.

Formative Years 1893-1919

These years saw the continuing thrust of gathering German-speaking immigrants into Lutheran congregations. In fact it wasn't until after World War I (and in part as a response to the anti-German sentiments generated by that war) that much mission work (or any congregational work for that matter) was done in the English language. The 1900 synod convention report indicates that there was a need for English speaking congregations. In 1901

the need was again emphasized and it was stated that "the synod should take a position whether it wishes to receive such congregations into membership." The 1902 convention said that an English mission program was premature because, "English Lutherans . . . will be cared for . . . in a satisfactory fashion by our German pastors." It is obvious that this directive limited the potential growth of the church during these years. Nevertheless, some work was being done in English. In Waukesha, for example, Grace congregation was established in 1909 as Grace English Ev. Lutheran Church. In 1920 only 54 of our 737 congregations had any English services and only nine used English exclusively.

New church development continued in the outlying areas of the Dakotas, Nebraska and the Pacific-Northwest. The report for 1902 lists 10 pastors, 14 congregations and two preaching stations in the Nebraska District. Nebraska became a district synod in 1904. In 1907 the Wisconsin Synod (all references until 1917 refer to the state synods. In 1917, the state synods became districts of the joint synod) mission board sent Missionary J. Martin Raasch to do mission work in North Central Washington. In the early 1900s work was also begun west of the Missouri River in South Dakota. Expansion of the railroad west brought new settlers and new congregations. These years also saw mission outreach expand into Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Ohio. Because of the emphasis on reaching German immigrants, most of our congregational expansion took place in rural areas and small towns, as these were farm people for the most part. It wasn't until the 1920s that the thrust of our congregational expansion was changed from rural areas to the cities.

The statistics for the Joint Synod in 1915 present the following:

	Pastors	Congregations	Preaching Stations	Communicants	Souls
Wisconsin	306	373	65	100,000	150,000
Minnesota	103	135	48	18,886	28,357
Michigan	37	55	6	9,417	14,998
Nebraska	<u>21</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>2,500</u>	<u>3,200</u>
	467	583	133	130,803	196,555

Notes

1. The statistics for Wisconsin are viewed as estimates (as also Nebraska) and probably are on the high side based on the more accurate statistics for 1921 and 1931.
2. The number of congregations grew from 411 in 1892 to 583 in 1915. The number of preaching stations grew from 91 to 133. The increase in the number of congregations is 172 or 42%. Our current records list 158 congregations organized between 1893 and 1919. Of the 158 congregations organized during this period, 90 were in Wisconsin, 26 in Minnesota, 12 in Michigan, 15 in the Dakotas, seven in Nebraska, five in the Pacific-Northwest, and 3 in Arizona (the last an outgrowth of our Apache Indian Mission). By 1920 71 percent of the current congregations in the Northern Wisconsin District, 55% in Southeastern Wisconsin, 70 percent in Western Wisconsin, 55 percent in Minnesota, and 35 percent in Michigan, were established.

3. The number of communicants grew by 20,924 from 109,879 to 130,803 or 19 percent. The conclusion we may draw from this is that the numerical growth during this period came as a result of the establishment of new congregations.

An interesting statistic from this period is the reported number of baptisms and confirmations. In the state synod of Wisconsin baptisms (of children only?) numbered nearly 6000 each year (1894-5619, 1895-6097, 1896-5898, 1897-5738) and confirmations (again, the assumption is children) averaged over 3000 (1894-2852, 1895-3245, 1896-3416, 1897-3665). This trend continued into the early 1900s. In 1919, the first year the statistical report broke the state of Wisconsin into its three districts, baptisms totaled 7210, and confirmations totaled 5208. It is obvious that in 1919 we were a very young church. In 1989 with more than double the number of communicants and souls, we baptized 8677 children and confirmed 5313 children.

The key thrusts during this period were:

- A. Continued expansion of mission work in the heartland, in the existing mission fields in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Nebraska, the Dakotas, and in Washington.
- B. Further development of the Joint Synod with its "refined" formation in 1917 as districts of the Joint Synod (including the division of the state synod of Wisconsin into three districts).
- C. The beginning of "world" mission work with our mission among the Apache Indians in Arizona. This step initiated the beginning of nationwide expansion and an outreach to non-German speaking people.

Difficult Years 1920-1959

In 1920 the WELS was primarily a German church and a rural church. The 20s saw the beginning of the change from German to English and from working in rural areas to working in cities. In 1920 the only concentration of congregations in metropolitan areas was in Milwaukee and Minneapolis-St. Paul. In the Detroit area our oldest congregations were in rural settlements, in Livonia, Plymouth and Westland. We have only three congregations in Detroit: Zoar, a black congregation established in 1952, Paul the Apostle, established in 1939 as a "separation" church, and Mt. Olive, established in 1928. Three other Detroit city churches either closed or relocated. Today we have 72 congregations in metro-Milwaukee, 36 in metro-Minneapolis-St. Paul, 19 in metro-Detroit, 18 in metro-Chicago, 14 in metro-Phoenix, nine in metro-Seattle-Tacoma, and eight in metro Dallas-Ft. Worth as the most heavily represented metro areas.

In 1920 the synod authorized a general missionary for Arizona, an authorization that seemed to go unfulfilled until 1939 when F. Stern was sent to Arizona and Im. P. Frey was sent to Colorado. A loss of membership also occurred in the late '20s as a result of the Protestant controversy. Ten congregations separated and formed the Protestant Conference.

The 1930s saw, as we might have expected, the slowest period in new congregational development. The Great Depression took its toll. Only 38 new congregations were organized, the lowest in any decade of our history. The synod during these years faced a growing indebtedness. Salaries of called workers were reduced. In 1931 one-half of the graduating class of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary went unassigned. Yet it is to be noted that our communicant growth rate during this decade was the second highest of any decade this century, exceeded in the '50s by only 0.2% percent. "While man proposes, God disposes." God will have his way. The 1930s also saw the beginnings of our doctrinal controversy with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

During the 1940s, in spite of four years of World War II, 80 congregations were organized, more than double the number of the 1930s. Nevertheless, the growth rate in new congregations in the '40s fell to the rate of the '20s. During the period of 1920-1959 an average of 66 congregations per decade were organized as compared to 58 per decade in the 1893-1919 period. For a much larger church body and one that enjoyed considerable prosperity in at least two of the four decades, this was an insignificant increase in new congregational development. During the period of 1941-45 (in the midst of war) 88 "new trial fields" were undertaken. In 1943, and again in 1950, statistics for home mission congregations showed more adult confirmations than children confirmations. The mission statistics for 1950 showed 221 mission congregations, 24,681 communicants, 155 pastors, and activity in 16 different states. The numbers are not much different from today, but note the ratio of pastors to congregations, a sign of what the synod would face in the '50s.

Growth in the number of new congregations in the 1950s was slowed by a shortfall in the number of pastoral candidates available and a shortage in the Church Extension Fund to buy mission properties and build mission chapels. This is the primary reason why only 80 congregations were organized during the '50s, a period of spiritual "revival" in our country. Our communicant growth rate was at its highest, 17.6 percent for the decade, and children's baptisms reached an all time high, 105,455. The '50s also saw the beginning of our change into a nationwide church body as congregations were organized in Florida and California.

The first published statistical report for the WELS was introduced in 1955, containing the report for 1953-54. Previous to this statistical reports were included in the Proceedings and, I might add, without any real consistency. It is obvious that we are better at theology than numbers. The 1956 statistical report included a special report on adult confirmations, noting that 540 congregations had adult confirmations while 314 had none. Ten congregations had more than 20 adult confirmations, five in Michigan, three in Minneapolis-St. Paul, and two in Milwaukee.

During the 1950s the Synod was consumed with its doctrinal controversy with the LCMS, sapping much of its energy and consuming much of its time. In 1959 the synod lost a net of 10 congregations and 2001 communicants, many of which formed the Church of the Lutheran Confession and some of which joined the LCMS. Again in 1961, while experiencing a net gain of 11 congregations, the synod lost 1496 communicants. The next time the synod was to lose communicants was 1988 with a net loss of 297 communicants. The

loss in 1959 was felt most severely by the Dakota-Montana District, losing a net of five congregations and nearly 800 communicants. The Western Wisconsin District experienced the greatest loss in 1961, a loss of five congregations and 4000 communicants.

The key thrusts during this period were:

- A. Reduction of the synod's debt in the 1930s.
- B. The doctrinal controversy with the LCMS (which covered nearly 30 years), and the Protestant Controversy of the late '20s.
- C. A world mission emphasis; joint work with the Synodical Conference in Nigeria, Africa, and our mission in Poland. In 1939 we identified eight pastors, 12 congregations and 2818 communicants in the Poland Mission.
- D. The first steps toward national expansion, in Arizona and Colorado in 1939, and in Florida and California at the threshold of 1950.

Nationwide Expansion (1960-1979)

In many respects the '60s and '70s represent the period of our synod's greatest numerical growth and expansion. In 1960 we were active in 16 states. By 1984 we had organized congregations in all 50 states. (Maine was the last state with Beautiful Savior congregation in Portland organized in 1984.) In the '60s 136 congregations were organized and 203 in the '70s. Twenty percent of our current number of congregations were organized during this 20-year period. We also experienced communicant growth of 12.7 percent in the '60s and 15.8 percent in the '70s.

During the '60s and '70s the greatest number of new churches in any district were established in the Arizona-California District and in the outlying areas of the Michigan District. The '70s also saw a high number of new churches organized in the South Atlantic District. Over 15 percent of our communicant growth in the '70s came in the AZ-CA District, in a district that was only one-third the size of the five large midwest districts. Most of the balance of our communicant growth came from these large midwest districts (Michigan—12.8 percent, Minnesota—10.8 percent, Northern Wisconsin—16.1 percent, Southeastern Wisconsin—9.8 percent, and Western Wisconsin—17.5 percent) The growth of the '70s is no less than amazing.

Much of this growth came from children's confirmations (a result of the high number of baptisms in the '50s), and from those who joined us by profession of faith, confessional Christians joining a confessional church body. Adult confirmations decreased in the '60s as compared to the '50s, but increased by 17.5% in the '70s. The '80s show the highest number ever in adult confirmations, an increase of 22 percent over the '70s. Children's confirmations reached an all time high, 74,436. However, children's baptisms in the '70s declined to 81,618, 25,000 less than during the peak of the '50s and gives one primary reason for the flattening of our growth rate in the '80s.

We had a very clear focus during this period. Start new churches and start them all over this country. The slogan of the '70s became "Every state by '78."

In fact, we could say that the '60s and '70s had but one key thrust: mission expansion—both at home and abroad.

The Eighties (1980-1989)

Our growth rate flattened during this decade. In fact, it was virtually non-existent during the past five years, as we gained a net of only 1620 communicants. The growth rate of 3.6 percent communicants is the lowest in this century and the total net communicant gain is the lowest since 1920.

There are several contributing factors:

1. Children's confirmations were at the lowest level in three decades, a decline of 15,000 from the previous decade. This decline accurately reflects the decline in children's baptisms in the '70s. What is most disturbing about the decline in children's confirmations is the decline in the ratio of confirmations to baptisms. In 1978 we confirmed 78.1 percent of the number of children's baptisms of 1964. In 1989 we confirmed only 66.3 percent of the number of children's baptisms of 1975. We are losing our children via "the back door" (and their parents) prior to confirmation. This is an issue we must address as a synod.
2. Acquisitions by profession of faith have been recorded in our statistical reports since 1974. Based on this 15-year record, we saw a decline of 1000 per year in the number of professions of faith as compared to the last half of the '70s.
3. During the past four years we have also recorded back door losses, those who joined other churches and those who were removed from membership. During each of the past four years we have experienced back door losses numbering some 8000 each year. During the past four years over 10 percent of our membership was lost via the back door. This is a most disturbing statistic. This is an issue that is being addressed by the Member Retention Committee and will also serve as the subject of the fifth year in our series of district evangelism workshops. It is my feeling that the number of back door losses has increased significantly over previous decades. What this seems to indicate is a decreased loyalty to the word, to the local congregation and to the church body. Is not the low percentage of adults involved in group Bible study a primary contributing factor? It also indicates a weakness on the part of our congregations in assimilating new (as well as existing) members.
4. The number of new churches organized during the '80s was 101, less than half the total in the 70s, and closer to the rate of the '40s and '50s. We might point to inflation as the primary culprit. What is also of considerable concern to the Board for Home Missions is the large number of mission congregations organized in the 70s that are still receiving operating subsidy. Seventy-one congregations organized prior to 1980 are still receiving operating subsidy. The mission explorer program and the new contract or subsidy grant program will hopefully reduce the length of time for operating subsidy needed by mission congregations. The BHM must still tackle the growing problem of high land and high construction costs for mission chapels.

In a study by F. Toppe of Kimberly, Wis., a few years ago, he concluded that 26 percent of our numerical growth since 1938 came from our largest 100 congregations and 21 percent of our growth has been in mission congregations in the four new districts (South Atlantic, North Atlantic, South Central, and Arizona-California). While this may have been true, especially in preceding decades, it was not true in the '80s. Over 86 percent of our communicant growth in the '80s came from our outlying districts (Arizona-California—25.6 percent, North Atlantic—12.2 percent, Pacific Northwest—7.3 percent, South Atlantic—24 percent, and South Central—17.4% percent). In 1989 our largest congregations, those over 500 communicants (54 over 1000 communicants and 118 between 500-999) lost a net of 476 communicants. However, these same congregations accounted for 1285, or over one-third of our adult confirmations. What this says is that our large churches are capable of winning larger numbers of people, but at the same time must give serious consideration to assimilation and retention of members. In 1989 it took 86 communicants to gain one adult confirmand. In contrast our 176 mission congregations in 1989 (exploratories and operating subsidized, no interest subsidized congregations were counted in) confirmed 513 adults and gained a net of 1018 communicants. It took 53 communicants to gain one adult confirmand in a mission congregation.

In many respects the '80s might be described as "business as usual." Perhaps this may have caused us to become lackadaisical about the mission of the church. It is hard to pinpoint any key thrust during the '80s. One key thrust was the Reaching Out program, aimed at reducing the "high cost of doing business" (high interest costs for borrowed funds for CEF and capital improvements), which provided over \$20 million for the Church Extension Fund, the World Mission Building Fund and the Institutional Building Fund. In contrast, shortfalls in the operating budget, especially in the past five years, have slowed our home and world mission expansion.

Conclusion

What will the 90s and the next century bring? The safest and most correct answer is, only God knows. Nevertheless, it is our responsibility to plan and coordinate our ministry that we may most efficiently and, prayerfully, most effectively carry on our Lord's mission. The Coordinating Council of the WELS has established the key thrusts as we enter the '90s; parish renewal and home and world mission expansion. From my perspective I view a "renewed parish" as one that is giving priority to "reaching the lost for Christ."

WELS GROWTH RECORD
1921-1990

	Communicants	Souls	ChBap	CC	AC	Decade Number Growth	Decade Percent Growth
1921	131,029	186,960	—	—	—	—	—
1931	144,828	207,821	—	—	—	13799/20861	10.5%/11.2
1941	179,790	—	—	—	—	34962/-	17.4%/-
1947	192,452	—	—	—	—	121103/-	11.7%/-
1959	231,356	348,725	³ 105,455	³ 157,464	³ 26,444	² 34684/-	17.6%/-
1969	265,069	376,319	89,141	71,566	24,455	33713/27594	12.7%/7.9
1979	306,985	405,512	81,618	74,436	28,731	41926/29193	15.8%/7.8
1989	317,914	420,419	88,775	59,903	35,097	10919/14907	3.6%/3.7

*Pro-rated, based on 6 years 1941-47

†Pro-rated, based on 12 years 1947-59

‡Pro-rated, based on 8 years 1952-59

WELS GROWTH STATISTICS

Statistics 1970-89

	Souls	Com	ChBap	CC	AC	POF	Train	Deaths	TrOut	JoCh	Removed
'89	420,419	317,914	8677	5313	3707	3477	8075	3651	8129	3817	4612
'88	419,750	317,740	8501	5316	3496	3405	8162	3755	8248	3929	4498
'87	419,806	318,037	8534	5378	3419	3344	8120	3611	7980	3691	4279
'86	417,755	317,322	8739	5895	3156	3456	8275	3648	7999	3809	4261
'85	416,624	316,297	9035	6168	3647	3893	—	3992	—	—	—
'84	416,657	316,228	8968	6440	3404	3859	—	3846	—	—	—
'83	415,368	314,792	8914	6133	3429	3708	—	3994	—	—	—
'82	413,503	312,917	9100	6309	3584	3900	—	3688	—	—	—
'81	411,216	312,049	9209	6329	3745	4334	—	3841	—	—	—
'80	407,987	309,342	9098	6422	3510	4515	—	3770	—	—	—
'79	405,512	306,995	8943	6602	3081	4469	—	3807	—	—	—
'78	403,910	304,677	8331	7083	2942	4418	—	3690	—	—	—
'77	402,573	302,687	8300	7424	2946	4265	—	3756	—	—	—
'76	400,201	298,614	7811	7565	2972	4617	—	3894	—	—	—
'75	396,545	293,982	8019	7655	2977	4328	—	3660	—	—	—
'74	390,028	287,633	7725	7624	2764	3840	—	3710	—	—	—
'73	388,411	283,885	7595	7824	2826	—	—	3788	—	—	—
'72	386,244	279,239	7886	7464	2833	—	—	3874	—	—	—
'71	383,263	275,500	8437	7749	2650	—	—	3737	—	—	—
'70	381,321	271,117	8571	7446	2740	—	—	3760	—	—	—

Gains 1970-89

	Souls Total/Ave	Com Total/Ave	ChBap Total/Ave	CC Total/Ave	AC Total/Ave	POF Total/Ave	Deaths Ave
85-89	3762/752	1686/337	43486/8697	28070/5614	17425/3485	17575/3515	3731
80-84	11145/2229	9233/1845	45289/9058	31633/6327	17672/3534	20316/4063	3828
75-79	15484/3097	19362/3872	41404/8281	36329/7266	14918/2984	22097/4419	3761
70-74	13709/2742	22594/4519	40214/8043	38107/7621	13723/2745	—	3774

Children's Confirmations/Baptisms Ratio

89/75	5313/8019	66.3%
88/74	5316/7725	68.8%
87/73	5378/7595	70.8%
86/72	5895/7886	74.8%
85/71	6168/8437	73.1%
84/70	6440/8571	75.1%
81/67	6329/8128	77.9%
78/64	7083/9072	78.1%
75/61	7655/9930	77.1%

Congregational Development

	AZCA	DKMT	MI	MIN	NE	NA	NW	PNW	SA	SC	SEW	WW	TOTALS
Pre-1892	0	11	40	65	8	1	77	0	0	0	59	78	339
1893-1919	3	15	12	26	7	0	30	5	0	0	19	41	158
1920-29	3	8	7	10	11	0	9	1	0	0	10	7	66
1930-39	2	8	8	1	5	0	5	3	0	0	4	2	38
1940-49	10	5	16	12	10	0	10	3	0	0	5	9	80
1950-59	11	6	15	14	6	0	7	4	4	0	9	4	80
1960-69	26	9	18	13	9	7	6	6	7	8	16	11	136
1970-79	35	9	26	19	19	13	4	13	25	13	15	12	203
1980-89	19	6	8	5	12	17	4	8	2	20	6	7	133
TOTALS	105 cong.	77 cong.	148 cong.	161 cong.	84 cong.	33 cong.	150 cong.	40 cong.	54 cong.	37 cong.	142 cong.	170 cong.	1201 cong.
	4 expl.		2 expl.	4 expl.	3 expl.	5 expl.	2 expl.	3 expl.	3 expl.	4 expl.	1 expl.	1 expl.	32 expl.

Arizona-California

	Apache	Black Canyon	Gadsen	CA North	CA South	TOTAL
Pre-1892	0	0	0	0	0	0
1893-1919	1	1	1	0	0	3
1920-29	0	1	1	0	1	3
1930-39	1	0	1	0	0	2
1940-49	1	7	1	0	1	10
1950-59	2	2	2	1	4	11
1960-69	1	3	6	7	9	26
1970-79	5	6	3	9	12	35
1980-89	0	7	6	2	3	18
TOTAL	11 cong.	25 cong.	20 cong.	19 cong.	29 cong.	1 0 4
cong.		2 expl.	1 expl.		1 expl.	4 expl.

Apache—Work began in 1890s. Initially there were mission stations with congregations organized much later. Became a part of AZ-CA district when formed.

Black Canyon—Zion, Phoenix, 1911

Gadsen—Grace, Tucson, AZ, 1911; Trinity, El Paso, TX, 1968, Shepherd, Albuquerque, NM, 1966

CA North—Faith, Anderson, 1956 (LCMS); Christ, Lodi, 1960 (ALC); Peace, Santa Clara, 1960

CA South—St. Paul First, North Hollywood, 1928 (LCMS); Gethsemane, Los Angeles, 1950; St. Paul, Honolulu, HI, 1971; Mt. Olive, Las Vegas, NV, 1971

Growth Record

	Communicants	Souls	
1947	(1479)		(included in SE Wis. District)
1959	3706	8124	
1969	6957	12,863	(includes South Central District Congregations)
1979	13,329	19,971	(includes South Central District Congregations)
1989	16,121	23,218	

Dakota-Montana

	Alberta-Mont.	Eastern	Western	TOTAL
Pre-1892	0	9	2	11
1893-1919	0	3	12	15
1920-29	0	3	5	8
1930-39	2	3	3	8
1940-49	2	0	3	5
1950-59	3	2	1	6
1960-69	4	3	2	9
1970-79	2	5	2	9
1980-89	2	2	2	6
TOTAL	15 cong.	30 cong.	32 cong.	77 cong.

Alberta-Montana—Salem, Circle, MT, 1933; St. John, Wetaskiwin, Canada, 1965 (LCC) St. Peter, St. Albert, Canada, 1966

Eastern—Bethlehem, Raymond, SD, 1884; Emmanuel, Henry, SD, 1884

Western—St. Paul, Mound City, SD, 1887; Trinity, Carson, ND, 1908; Christ our Redeemer, Gillette, WY, 1983

Growth Record

	Communicants	Souls
1921	3442	6997
1941	5008	
1947	5564	
1959	7256	11,191
1969	7843	11,353
1979	9021	12,033
1989	9117	12,105

Michigan

	Northern	Ohio	Southeastern	Southwestern	TOTAL
Pre-1892	22	3	11	4	40
1893-1919	4	1	2	5	12
1920-29	2	0	3	2	7
1930-39	2	2	4	0	8
1940-49	6	0	6	4	16
1950-59	4	3	5	3	15
1960-69	5	5	5	3	18
1970-79	10	10	5	1	26
1980-89	2	4	1	0	7
TOTAL	56 cong. 1 expl.	28 cong.	42 cong.	22 cong.	148 cong. 1 expl.

Northern—St. Paul's, Saginaw, MI, 1851

Ohio—St. Paul, Columbus, 1821 (ALC); Trinity, Jenera, 1883; Good Shepherd, Beckley, WV, 1978, Faith, West Newton, PA, 1971

Southeastern—Salem, Ann Arbor, MI, 1833

Southwestern—St. Paul, Hopkins, MI, 1864; Peace, Granger, IN, 1972

Growth Record

	Communicants	Souls	
1921	12,209	18,417	
1941	15,279		
1947	17,274		
1959	26,552	41,468	(includes South Atlantic District congregations)
1969	35,241	51,131	(includes South and North Atlantic District congregations)
1979	40,613	54,613	(includes North Atlantic District congregations)
1989	37,859	49,844	

Minnesota

	Crow River	Mankato	New Ulm	Red Wing	Redwood Falls	St. Croix	Southern	TOTAL
Pre-1892	8	9	7	15	13	13	0	65
1893-1919	6	1	4	5	5	5	0	26
1920-29	2	1	1	0	0	6	0	10
1930-39	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
1940-49	1	2	1	3	0	3	2	12
1950-59	1	0	1	1	0	7	4	14
1960-69	4	0	0	1	0	5	3	13
1970-79	3	1	1	1	1	9	3	19
1980-89	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	6
TOTAL	26 cong.	14 cong.	15 cong.	27 cong.	20 cong.	49 cong. 1 expl.	13 cong. 1 expl.	164 cong. 2 expl.

Crow River—Immanuel, Rural Hutchinson, 1864

Mankato—Friedens, Rural New Prague, 1864

New Ulm—St. Paul, New Ulm, 1865

Red Wing—St. John, Red Wing, 1858

Redwood Falls—St. Matthew, Rural Renville, 1872

St. Croix—St. John, Rural Stillwater, 1855; Trinity, St. Paul, 1855

Southern—Lincoln Heights, Des Moines, IA, 1946; Grace, Oskaloosa, IA, 1946; Our Savior, Norrisville, MO, 1965

Growth Record

	Communicants	Souls
1921	19,337	25,660
1941	29,242	
1947	35,680	
1959	38,985	57,944
1969	42,375	58,869
1979	46,887	61,527
1989	46,829	60,842

Nebraska

	Central	Colorado	Rosebud	Southern	TOTAL
Pre-1892	4	0	0	4	8
1893-1919	0	0	5	2	7
1920-29	1	0	7	3	11
1930-39	0	3	2	0	5
1940-49	2	2	1	5	10
1950-59	1	2	0	3	6
1960-69	0	4	0	5	9
1970-79	4	9	0	6	19
1980-89	2	5	1	4	12
TOTAL	13 cong. 1 unorg.	24 cong.	16 cong.	32 cong.	85 cong. 1 unorg. 1 expl.

Central—St. Paul, Norfolk, 1866; Grace, Sioux City, IA, 1925

Colorado—Zion, Ft. Morgan, 1933; 4 Denver churches merged in 2 cong. in 1965; Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, UT, 1972; Good Shepherd, Cheyenne, WY, 1973

Rosebud—St. John, Rural Brewster, 1904

Southern—St. Paul, Plymouth, 1880; Messiah, Wichita, KS, 1966

Growth Record

	Communicants	Souls
1921	3101	4765
1941	4320	
1947	4989	
1959	7049	11,145
1969	7318	10,576
1979	9294	12,563
1989	9645	13,218

North Atlantic

	Colonial North	Colonial South	TOTAL
Pre-1892	1	0	1
1892-1919	0	0	0
1920-29	0	0	0
1930-39	0	0	0
1940-49	0	0	0
1950-59	0	0	0
1960-69	2	5	7
1970-79	8	5	13
1980-89	7	10	17
TOTAL	16 cong. 2 expl.	17 cong. 3 expl.	33 cong. 5 expl.

Colonial South—St. Paul, Amherst, NH, 1975; Christ the Redeemer, Barre, VT, 1981; King of Kings, Clifton, NV, 1972 (LCMS); Grace of God, Dix Hills, NV, 1974; St. Paul, Ottawa, Canada 1874 (LCMS); Abiding Word, Orleans, Canada, 1974; Faith, Pittsfield, MA, 1967; Messiah, South Windsor, CT, 1968; Good Shepherd, Rumford, RI, 1973; Beautiful Savior, Portland, ME, 1984

Colonial South—Atonement, Baltimore, MD, 1986; Gethsemane, Raleigh, NC, 1973; Our Savior, East Brunswick, NJ, 1966; Grace, Falls Church, VA, 1965; Peace, King of Prussia, PA, 1967; St. John, Newark, DE, 1973

Growth Record

	Communicants	Souls	
1969	(527)	(808)	(included in Michigan District totals)
1979	(2064)	(2831)	(included in Michigan District totals)
1989	3394	4874	

Northern Wisconsin

	Fox River Valley	Lake Superior	Manitowoc	Rhineland	Winnebago	TOTAL
Pre-1892	31	11	17	3	15	77
1893-1919	6	5	3	7	9	30
1920-29	0	4	1	1	3	9
1930-39	2	1	0	0	2	5
1940-49	4	0	2	2	2	10
1950-59	1	3	2	0	1	7
1960-69	3	0	0	2	1	6
1970-79	2	1	0	0	1	4
1980-89	2	1	0	1	0	4
TOTAL	49 cong. 2 expl.	26 cong.	25 cong.	16 cong.	34 cong.	150 cong. 2 expl.

Fox River Valley—St. Paul, Nole, WI, 1859

Lake Superior—St. Paul, rural Marquette, MI, 1863; Zion, Peshtigo, WI, 1968

Manitowoc—St. John, rural Manitowoc, 1851

Rhineland—Zion, Rhineland, 1888

Winnebago—St. Peter, Fond du Lac, 1858

Growth Record

	Communicants	Souls
1921	31,258	47,015
1941	38,138	
1947	40,915	
1959	48,789	69,876
1969	55,125	76,639
1979	61,858	80,287
1989	62,710	81,900

Pacific Northwest

	Alaska		TOTAL
Pre-1892	0	0	0
1893-1919	0	5	5
1920-29	0	1	1
1930-39	0	3	3
1940-49	0	3	3
1950-59	0	4	4
1960-69	1	5	6
1970-79	3	10	13
1980-89	3	5	8
TOTAL	7 cong.	33 cong. 3 expl.	40 cong. 3 expl.

Alaska—Faith, Anchorage, 1968

Pacific Northwest—St. Paul, Tacoma, WA, 1894; Grace, Portland, OR, 1909; Messiah, Nampa, ID, 1973

Growth Record

	Communicants	Souls
1921	542	909
1941	928	
1947	961	
1959	1386	2442
1969	2101	3459
1979	3559	5148
1989	4357	6167

South Atlantic

	Cypress	Everglades	South Central	TOTAL
1950-59	3	1	0	4
1960-69	3	2	2	7
1970-79	8	6	11	25
1980-89	8	5	7	20
TOTAL	21 cong. 1 expl.	13 cong. 1 expl.	19 cong. 1 expl.	53 cong. 3 expl.

Cypress—Faith, St. Petersburg, FL, 1954

Everglades—Peace, Bradenton, FL, 1958

South Central—Crown of Life, New Orleans, LA, 1970; Sola Scriptura, Decatur, GA, 1970; Redeemer, Huntsville, AL, 1966; Faith, Columbus, MS, 1983; Hope, Lexington, SC, 1971; Rock of Ages, Madison, TN, 1971

Growth Record

	Communicants	Souls	
1959	(225)	(414)	(included in Michigan District totals)
1969	(817)	(1177)	(included in Michigan District totals)
1979	2889	4065	
1989	5507	7685	

South Central

1960-69	8
1970-79	13
1980-89	20
TOTAL	37 cong. 4 expl.

Calvary, Dallas, TX, 1964; St. Mark, Duncanville, TX, 1964; Mt. Zion, Hillsboro, TX, 1964; Gethsemane, Oklahoma City, OK, 1967; King of Kings, Little Rock, AR, 1977; King of Kings, Alexandria, LA, 1973

Growth Record

	Communicants	Souls	
1969	(509)	(751)	(included in Arizona-California District totals)
1979	(1490)	(2168)	(included in Arizona-California District totals)
1989	3386	4869	

Southeastern Wisconsin

	Chicago	Dodge Washington	Metro North	Metro South	Southern	TOTAL
Pre-1892	5	16	14	13	11	59
1893-1919	3	2	4	8	2	19
1920-29	1	0	4	3	2	10
1930-39	1	1	2	0	0	4
1940-49	2	0	0	2	1	5
1950-59	1	1	4	2	1	9
1960-69	5	0	8	2	1	16
1970-79	8	1	2	2	2	15
1980-89	3	0	1	1	1	6
TOTAL	29 cong.	21 cong.	39 cong.	33 cong.	20 cong. 1 expl.	142 cong. 1 expl.

Chicago—Zion, Crete, IL, 1849 (LCMS); Immanuel, Waukegan, IL, 1892; Grace, Indianapolis, IN, 1920 (LCMS); Divine Savior, Indianapolis, IN, 1969; Hope, Louisville, KY, 1973

Dodge/Washington—Zum Kripplein Christi, Rural Iron Ridge, WI, 1848

Metro North—David's Star, Jackson, WI, 1843

Metro South—St. John, Milwaukee (Forest Home Ave.), 1846

Southern—St. John, Oak Creek, 1843

Growth Record

	Communicants	Souls	
1921	28,289	36,046	
1941	41,057		(included in Arizona-California District congregations)
1947	45,136		
1959	50,937	74,123	
1969	55,503	78,469	
1979	59,594	78,160	
1989	58,179	77,022	

Western Wisconsin

	Central	Chip. Riv. Valley	Mis. Riv. Valley	South -western	Wi. Riv. Valley	Wissillowa	TOTAL
Pre-1892	25	7	13	16	14	3	78
1893-1919	14	3	4	10	10	0	41
1920-29	3	0	2	1	1	0	7
1930-39	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
1940-49	2	0	2	1	2	2	9
1950-59	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
1960-69	3	1	0	1	1	5	11
1970-79	2	1	2	0	1	5	11
1980-89	3	3	0	0	2	0	8
TOTAL	55 cong. 1 expl.	15 cong.	24 cong.	29 cong.	32 cong.	15 cong.	170 cong. 1 expl.

Central—St. Peter, Helenville, 1848

Chippewa River Valley—St. Paul, Menomonie, 1871

Mississippi River Valley—First, LaCrosse, 1859; St. John, Lewiston, MN, 1866; Trinity, Rural Winona, MN 1866

Southwestern—St. John, rural Hamburg, 1861

Wissillowa—St. Paul, Platteville, WI, 1876; Trinity, Mt. Carroll, IL, 1880; Gethsemane, Davenport, IA 1866

Growth Record

	Communicants	Souls
1921	32,851	47,151
1941	45,820	
1947	41,933	
1959	50,696	72,412
1969	52,606	72,960
1979	59,951	77,902
1989	60,810	78,702

Robert C. Hartman is administrator for evangelism for the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.



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

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