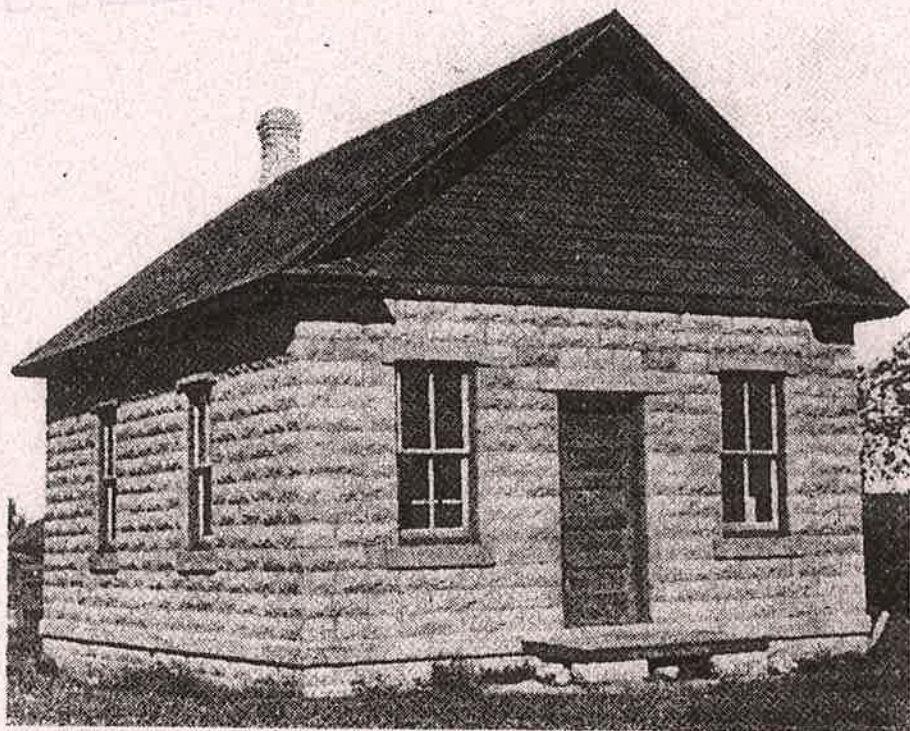


WELS Historical Institute

Journal

Volume 17, Number 1
April 1999

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The photograph on the cover is of the late 19th century St. John's Lutheran School in Bowdle, South Dakota

**Proceedings of the Thirteenth Convention
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(Part II of the Proceedings.
Part I was published in the *Journal* Vol. 16, No. 2)

Second Session

Friday, May 29, 2:00 p.m.

Opened with prayer by the Hon. Senior Joh. Muehlhaeuser.

The minutes of the previous session were read and adopted by resolution.

Then the revision of the constitution was taken up and completed through §19.

Committee No. 2 presented the following report:

The committee on Acceptance of Pastors who made application for membership into the Wisconsin Synod, after reviewing the appropriate papers and hearing from witnesses, is thoroughly satisfied to recommend for membership: Pastors A. Lange, A. Denninger, H. Bartelt, C.G. Reim, Fr. Meier, C. Titze, A. Hoenecke, H. Hilpert, L. Evert, A. Leupp and Waldmann, and does so herewith.

Respectfully: *Pastors H. Quehl, C. Gausewitz, J. Conrad, C. Koester.*

It was resolved to accept the report of the committee and accordingly to accept these pastors as voting members of the synod.

Resolved to adjourn to 9:00 a.m. on the following morning.

Closed with prayer by Pastor W. Dammann.

Third Session

Saturday, May 30, 9:00 a.m.

Opened with Hymn No. 230, *Awake Thou Spirit* etc., with the reading of Titus 1 and a prayer by Pastor Goldammer.

The minutes were read and adopted by resolution.

Committee No. 4 presented the following report:

The Committee on Accepting Congregations seeking membership into the synod takes the liberty to present the following report:

The committee recommends to the Hon. synod the acceptance of the following congregations into synod membership:

1. The Ev. Lutheran John Congregation in Greenfield, La Crosse, Co., since it has resolved, according to a letter from the church council, that it will adopt the Hon. synod's recommended congregational constitution as its own.
2. The Ev. Lutheran John Congregation in Ridgeville, Monroe Co.
3. The Ev. Lutheran Michael Congregation in Fountain City, Buffalo Co., Wis.
4. The Ev. Lutheran Congregation in Buffalo City, Buffalo County, Wis.
5. The Ev. Lutheran Paul Congregation in Forest, Fond du Lac Co.
6. The Ev. Lutheran John Congregation in Koshkonong, Oakland, Jefferson Co., whose Constitution was reviewed by the committee.
7. The Ev. Lutheran John Congregation in Lomira, Dodge Co., since it, according to a letter from Carl Wollenburg and L. Zeidler, has adopted the Hon. synod's recommended congregational constitution as its own.

Respectfully, the committee:

Pastors F.W. Warnke, W. Hass, M. Ewert and Delegates C. Reichmann, M. Schuhmacher and H. Steinmann.

Resolved that the report be adopted and accordingly, that the named congregations be accepted as members of the synod.

Subsequently the following congregations were recommended by Pastors Waldmann and C. Wagner for acceptance into synod membership:

1. The Ev. Lutheran St. John Congregation in Wausau.
2. The Ev. Lutheran Congregation in Stettin.
3. The Ev. Lutheran Congregation in Berlin, Marathon Co., Wis.
4. The Ev. Lutheran St. John Congregation in Caledonia, Waupaca Co., Wis.

Resolved that these congregations likewise be accepted into the synod's membership.

Committee No. 7 handed in the following report:

The Committee on the Implementation of Last Year's Synodical Resolutions respectfully submits to the Hon. Synod the following report:

1. Concerning Bethel Congregation in Ashford, Fond du Lac Co., the committee recommends that the congregation be dropped from synod membership because it, through its council, has definitely declared that it wishes to retain its present Reformed pastor.

2. In regard to the incorporation of our synod, the committee recommends that the synod through its officers, or by means of a special, elected committee take the necessary steps to present, as recorded in the prepared copy, the incorporation papers to the coming fall session of the legislature of our state.

Pastors Stark, Boehner, Delegate C. Koepsel

Resolved, that this report be adopted.

In the discussion of No. 1 of the committee report, it was reported by Pastor Denninger that Bethel Congregation in Ashford has dismissed its Reformed pastor and is again open for the synod; also the previous peaceful conduct of the congregation was referred to by other members of the synod, yet it would be desirable that the congregation be contacted before it is taken in as a member of synod. Subsequently it was resolved that Bethel Congregation in Ashford be entrusted to Pastor Denninger with the instructions that he counsel the congregation as follows:

that it take a stronger position toward the Lutheran Confessions, and that it again

be served by a pastor of our synod.

During the discussion of No. 2 of the committee report concerning the incorporation of the synod, it was resolved that the matter be handled by the officers of the synod. Following this resolution it was announced by the president of the convention that in the course of the synodical year it was necessary for him to appoint three other members of the synod, besides the three officers, as trustees, because six trustees are required for the incorporation of the synod.

Thereupon it was resolved that these appointed trustees be ratified by the synod.

Committee No. 8 handed in its report:

The committee recommends to the synod that it ratify the suspension of Pastor Nietmann, along with the subsequent publication of the same in church periodicals, as justified by his entire past conduct.

Pastors W. Streissguth, Ph. Sprengling, J. Kilian and Delegate G. Meyer.

Resolved that this report be adopted, and that the suspension of Pastor Nietmann along with the publication of the same be ratified by the synod.

In connection with this report it was announced by the president of the synod that Mr. L. Nietmann, contrary to the promise he made in connection with his suspension, entered into the service of the Ev. Lutheran Congregation of Golden Lake, a member of our synod, and that the repeated attempts to rescue the congregation from the claws of this wolf were fruitless, because the congregation declared that it would rather have nothing to do with the synod than to dismiss Pastor L. Nietmann.

After hearing this it was resolved that the synodical membership of the congregation in Golden Lake be withdrawn.

At this time the proposed trip of our synodical president to Germany, and the matter of a substitute to take his place with the congregation in Watertown because of his departure was brought up for discussion. After this matter was clarified from various points of view, the synod recognized by means of a resolution the purpose and necessity of the president of the synod to travel to Germany in order to collect the necessary funds for the construction of the preacher-seminary.

Concerning the placing of a substitute for the president in his congregation in Watertown, the president himself suggested Pastors E. Moldehnke or A. Hoenecke, and expressed the wish that one of these two pastors take over as the substitute. In connection with the traveling preacher [*Reiseprediger*], Pastor E. Moldehnke, it was deemed necessary from various sides that the traveling preacher program were much too important and necessary, and that it would suffer if joined to the post of substitute, and it was therefore proposed that Pastor E. Moldehnke not be considered for the position of substitute so that his position as traveling preacher could remain undisturbed.

Committee No. 1 presented its report:

The Committee on the Hon. President's Report welcomes said report with joy and thanks to our Lord, and recommends the synod to express the proclamation of thanks:

1. to the Hon. president for conscientiously carrying out the duties of his office;
2. to the Hon. Senior Pastor Muehlhaeuser for his highly appreciated endeavors in Germany for the welfare of the synod;
3. to the Langenberg and Berlin Societies and their Hon. agents, Pastors Meyeringh and Eichler;

4. To the Hon. Mission-Institutions who have supported us by sending us preachers;
5. to the concerned men who devoted themselves to the development of our synodical library;
6. to the Hon. Synod of Pennsylvania, which also during the past year helped us advance our work with a most willing hand.

Pastors G. Fachtmann, C. Gausewitz, H. Sieker, C.F. Goldammer.

It was resolved that this report be adopted and that the expressions of thanks be proclaimed by the synod.

Pastors Stark, Hass, Ewert, Ebert and Strube organized a district-conference under the name of "Mississippi Conference" and asked the synod to give its approval of the same.

Resolved that the request be granted.

The revision of the synodical constitution was continued through §30.

Resolved that the convention be adjourned to 2 p.m.

Closed with prayer by Pastor A. Lange.

Fourth Session

Saturday, May 30, 2:00 p.m.

Opened with prayer by Pastor E. Moldehnke

The minutes were read and adopted by resolution.

The following delegates from the newly accepted congregations were accepted as voting members of the synodical convention:

Mr. Waegner of Ridgeville

Mr. Joh. Hechler of Germany,

Mr. Diedrich Twerstrat of Fountain City.

Also Pastor Phil. Brenner of Kenosha was accepted as a voting member of the synod.

The revision of the synodical constitution was taken up and completed through §45.

Resolved that the convention adjourn to Monday 9 a.m.

Closed with prayer by Pastor H. Sieker.

Fifth Session

Monday, June 1, 9:00 a.m.

Opened with the singing of Hymn 233 *Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word*, with the reading of Psalm 87 and a prayer by Pastor C. Gausewitz.

The minutes were read and approved.

The revision of the synodical constitution was taken up and completed.

Resolved that Pastor Th. Meumann be extended well deserved thanks by the synod for his efforts and work with the revision of the synodical constitution.

Resolved that the convention be adjourned to 2 p.m.

Closed with prayer by Pastor Titze.

Sixth Session

Monday, June 1, 2:00 p.m.

Opened with prayer by Pastor J. Ritter.

The minutes were read and approved by resolution.

The parochial reports were then handed in and read, indicating the following statistics:

[This report may be found at the end of this article]

Pastor Kern was presented to the synod and it was resolved that committee No. 2 would report on his request for membership in the synod.

Committee No. 6 presented the following report:

The Committee on the Seminary Matter has agreed on the following points:

1. that the need of such an institution cannot be emphasized strongly enough;
2. that the place and location must of necessity be left to the synod; the committee, however, takes the liberty to express its opinion, that in whatever is decided:
 - a. a well-populated country city is preferred;
 - b. that such a place be selected that is in the center of our synod, namely in the state of Wisconsin;
 - c. that Watertown offers significant preferences over other cities in the present opinion of the committee;
3. that the project be started as soon as possible with the least amount of expenditure possible;
4. that the most serious consideration and correct care by the synod be observed in finding the most qualified man to be the inspector; and
5. that the synod recognize it to be its sacred duty not only to work for this purpose, but also to pray for it.

Pastors Sieker, Quehl, Goldammer and Delegates D. Kusel and G. Meyer.

It was resolved to accept this report and that the seminary matter now be placed on the table for discussion. As a further introduction to this very important proposal, the reports of the Southern and Northern Conferences on the matter of the seminary were read as well as what is contained in the report of committee No. 5 in regard to this matter, which reads as follows:

Concerning the proposal of one of the conferences in regard to the seminary matter, that the seminary be built in or near Watertown, this committee agrees with it for the following reasons:

- a. Watertown is much nearer the central portion of the state than Milwaukee;
- b. land is cheaper there than in Milwaukee
- c. there are not as many opportunities for distractions in a smaller city to hinder the education and training of the students, as one keeps in mind the practices of the founding of similar institutions both here and abroad;
- d. the many prosperous country congregations in the Watertown area, which, with their contributions of food-stuffs, would ease the support of the seminary students, suggest Watertown as a more suitable location. To this the committee also makes note that the country congregations around Milwaukee will be asked to help the about-to-be hospital with provisions, and it recommends the synod consider all these reasons.

Pastors Moldehnke, Dammann and Delegates Theilig and Kitzerow.

Following the reading of the above report, the matter concerning the selection of the location where the seminary was to be erected was discussed in depth. Pastor Fachtmann stated that it was a matter of great importance that a correct location for the

seminary with its later to be added college be made. Pastor Moldehnke expressed the opinion that the synod must keep in mind when selecting a location, which location would be most interested in contributing financially for such an institution. Senior Muehlhaeuser said that he would have to select Milwaukee as the location, in that he firmly hopes that Milwaukee would produce the most for the institution, especially if a college is tied with the seminary, because a college is still lacking in Milwaukee, and is missed by many parents who would anxiously desire it for their children. Pastor Streissguth supported this, and Pastor Dammann added that Milwaukee does need a college, but that his preference for the seminary is Watertown. Pastor Bading likewise spoke in favor of Watertown and called especial attention to the fact that the cost of maintaining the seminary would indeed be less in Watertown than in Milwaukee. Delegate Daniel Kusel of Watertown believed that he could give the assurance, that the plot of land for the seminary would be donated if the seminary came to Watertown. Pastor Sicker showed that the selection of location for the seminary had something of greater importance to consider than money. He drew the attention of the synod to the corrupt influences to which the students would be subjected in a large industrial city like Milwaukee. He also supported the less costly maintenance of the seminary in a country city like Watertown. Pastor Reim supported this. Pastor Heyer referred to the Pennsylvania Synod where in the previous year it was given consideration to relocate the seminary from Gettysburg to Philadelphia for this reason, that thereby the students had an opportunity to become acquainted with the best pastors of the synod and learn from them. Pastor Streissguth then made reference to Germany where the preachers were usually educated in the larger cities. Pastor Hoenecke, however, countered by indicating how it was now felt in Germany, namely that the institution for training pastors should not be located in the large cities, but the opinion now was prevalent that these institutions should be relocated to smaller cities. Pastor Fachtmann brought to their attention the need of a well-rounded education for preachers, which would be difficult to achieve in a small city. Pastor Muehlhaeuser referred to the continuing support of a seminary, for which the outlook was better in Milwaukee than in Watertown. Pastor Meumann remarked that Milwaukee has already expressed its support for the establishment of a hospital, and it should be feared that the interest in the seminary would wane. Senior Muehlhaeuser believed he could give assurance that the interest in the hospital would not interfere with the interest in the seminary. Pastor Moldehnke stated that he felt it best if the seminary were begun on a small scale, and that a pastor of the synod should be sought who would be prepared to accept the students in his own house, and to teach them. Pastor Streissguth, however, urged that this matter not be put off any longer, but that it be begun with all seriousness, and that the preachers of the synod present a good example to their congregations with their own sacrifices for the establishment of the seminary.

At that point Pres. Bading deemed it indeed necessary that the founding of a seminary be established, so that he could have the courage and strength to collect for such a purpose in Germany. He then proposed that Pastor Moldehnke be released from the traveling preacher program, that he move to Watertown, and that he begin with educating the possible students at hand.

It was then moved that the location where the seminary and college be established be voted on by ballot. The result was: Milwaukee 19; Watertown 45. Pres. Bading again

stated that Pastor Moldehnke would be the ideal man to begin the instruction of young people for the preaching ministry.

Pastor Moldehnke declared himself prepared as long as he would be given an additional three months for his traveling-preacher duties. This proposal was adopted by the synod and it was resolved that the president name a committee which should interview applicants for the seminary. To this committee were named: Pastors Senior Muehlhaeuser, Fachtmann, G. Reim, Streissguth, Dammann and Koehler.

Resolved that the meeting be adjourned to Tuesday, 9:00 a.m.

Closed with prayer by Pastor Hoffmann

Seventh Session

Tuesday, June 2, 9:00 a.m.

Opened with hymn No. 237: *Wenn Christus seine Kirche schuetzt*, with the reading of Psalm 23 and prayer by Pastor Heyer.

The minutes were read and approved by resolution.

Pastor Habel from Kirchhayn was introduced to the convention and it was resolved that he be received as an advisory member.

Then Pastor Fachtman declared that a reconsideration of the seminary matter in regard to its location be necessary, since he believed that the financial matter was not wisely dealt with. Senior Muehlhaeuser supported this and declared the vote in regard to location as being rushed. Pastor Reim wished that the reconsideration of the matter be placed toward the close of the synodical convention.

It was then resolved that the matter be brought up again for discussion. The report of committee No.5 was read. It contained, in addition to the points already brought up in the seminary matter, the following points:

The committee, after examining the various reports of the several conferences offers the following proposals:

1. Regarding the draught of an Agenda [Service Book], it is necessary that a committee seriously sit down and present to the synod at the next synodical convention a draught of not more than 50 printed pages containing all of the necessary formulas.
2. In regard to information from one of the conferences that United [*Unirte*] Catechism is still being used by one of the synodical congregations, the committee proposes that the synod make it the duty of the respective pastor to correct this abuse immediately.
3. In regard to the information from one of the conferences that some congregations have adopted statutes rejecting private confession, the committee recommends that the synod, if this is found to be true, inform the respective congregations, that through possible misunderstanding of previously stated stipulations, they are in defiance of the Confessions and thus place into question the Lutheran character of a congregation, and that the synod cause the striking of such stipulations.

Pastor Meumann, Moldehnke, Dammann and Delegates Theilig and Kitzerow.

Resolved that this report be adopted.

Referring to No. 1 of the committee's report, the Agenda problem was brought up. Pastor Moldehnke made the convention aware of the need and purpose for synod to

have its own Agenda, so that uniformity in public worship be achieved in the synodical congregations. Pastor Sauer supported this, but added that he did not think it wise for the synod to draw up a new Agenda, but rather that it adopt for its use one of the good Lutheran Agendas already now available. Senior Muehlhaeuser made aware the lack in the Lutheran Agendas from the old fatherland of the American churchly situations and needs, in that the various ministerial acts, such as cornerstone laying and church dedication, had no formulas or orders of service, and hence it would be the best if a small Agenda were compiled by the synod for its own use. Pastor Streissguth also remarked that the synod could not require pastors and congregations to use this proposed Agenda, but that it could only recommend it as is the case with the synod-produced congregational constitution.

After the matter was elucidated from various angles, it was resolved that the synod adopt one of the good old Lutheran Agendas and that it be enlarged to include those items needed here which are lacking.

Resolved that a committee be named which should be instructed to select one of the good old Lutheran Agendas and to present that to the synod with the necessary additions.

Pastor Hoffmann informed the synod that in addition to the Synod of Pennsylvania edition he owned two other good Lutheran agendas, but that he could not use either of the latter two in his congregation without incurring objections. After hearing this it was brought up from various sides that the Agenda of the Synod of Pennsylvania was in many cases unLutheran and even rationalistic, and that it must be considered desirable that the synod must assume the responsibility of advising the congregations to use a good Lutheran Agenda instead of the Pennsylvania Agenda, and that it must show disapproval to its congregations if they use unLutheran or impure Lutheran Agendas.

Pastor Heyer remarked that the Synod of Pennsylvania had introduced a new Agenda. It was then resolved that the synod ask Pastor Hoffmann and his congregation, as well as to counsel them, to do away with the impure Lutheran Agenda and use a good Lutheran Agenda.

Resolved that the convention be adjourned to 2:00 p.m., and that a session of the pastoral conference be held immediately.

Closed with prayer by Pastor G. Reim.

Eighth Session

Tuesday, June 2, 2:00 p.m.

Opened with prayer by Pastor Waldt.

The minutes were read and adopted by resolution.

In the draught of the synodical constitution a section referring to the relationship of the congregation to the synod had been forgotten and therefore a committee consisting of Pastors G. Reim, H. Sieker, E. Moldehnke, A. Lange and Delegates H. Steinmann, D. Kusel and G. Meyer had been instructed to draw up the necessary paragraphs about the relationship of the congregations to the synod and to present that to the synod. The named committee now presented its report which was read, discussed and adopted by resolution with a few changes.

Resolved that 300 copies of the constitution be printed, and that a copy be sent to each congregation.

From the report of committee No. 5, No. 2 was brought up and read.

Pastor Huber was then asked if the United Catechism was used in his congregation (New Berlin). He affirmed that it was, then explained how it came about that the United catechism was brought into use in his congregation and why its use is continuing. He declared himself ready to do away with the United Catechism but added that this could be difficult and could cause a rift in the congregation since the congregation consist in part of Reformed members.

In consideration of that group of the congregation which consists of originally Lutheran families, and with the concern that this group hopefully would remain with the synod, it was resolved that Pastor Huber be given a period of six months to convince the congregation to do away with the United Catechism and to introduce the Lutheran Catechism, and that in case this does not occur in the given time, Pastor Huber would have to leave the congregation.

At this opportunity Pastor Hass stated that his congregation in Mormons Cooly consists of original Lutheran, Reformed and Catholic families, all of whom have united into a Lutheran congregation and have accepted Luther's Catechism, the Lutheran hymnal and the Lutheran congregational constitution. Since it appeared from Pastor Hass' report that he was giving too much attention to the Reformed and Catholic families in the carrying out of his official pastoral acts, a protest was brought up by several parties that such a practice was unLutheran, and it was resolved that a committee be named to deal with Pastor Hass. Named to the committee were Pastors A. Lange, E. Moldehnke, Ch. Stark and H. Bartelt.

Pastor Sauer complained at this opportunity that the synod treated him too harshly in a similar situation against him, especially since the synod sent him to a United congregation where he found the United Catechism being used, and he wished that on the part of the synod something could take place for his vindication in regard to the Lutheran church. Several members of the synod protested this accusation and Pastor Reim remarked that the synod could not have acted differently in this case since Pastor Sauer had given reason for this action thus causing the synod to act in this manner.

Resolved that the synod adjourn to Wednesday 9a.m.

Closed with prayer by Pastor Meumann

Ninth Session

Wednesday, June 3, 9:00 a.m.

Opened with the singing of hymn 211: *Erhalt uns deine Lehre*, with the reading of I John 5 and prayer by Pastor Hoenecke.

The minutes were read and adopted by resolution.

Pastor Sauer objected to the adoption of the minutes because he still had not received any vindication from the synod. Resolved that in this year's minutes it be reported that Pastor Sauer found the United Catechism in use (when he was assigned that congregation).

At the request of several congregational delegates it was resolved that before any thing else the matter of the seminary be brought to a conclusion.

Delegate Waegner expressed the opinion that the resolution locating the seminary and the college in Watertown remain in effect, and that this is the opinion of most of the delegates. Senior Muehlhaeuser in opposition declared the necessity of reconsidering

the matter and that the first resolution be withdrawn, so that Watertown be given the opportunity to show its interest in the institutions through positive self-sacrifices, in order that it not be feared that Watertown would not do much about this matter. It was then finally settled that the adopted resolution remain as is and the matter be committed to God's will, and that in any case it would be necessary at next year's synodical convention to deal with the matter some more. Pastor Fachtmann emphasized that as far as the college is concerned, Milwaukee has the advantage over Watertown. Pastor Streissguth showed how Milwaukee was in need of a college, and that it sees itself constrained to build its own college in case the synod's college will be located elsewhere. In opposition it was stated that it is not indeed desirable that the synod have such a full-fledged college as should be erected in Milwaukee, since under such circumstances many undesirable influences could creep into that kind of institution. Secondly, that the parents in their selection of a college for their children would look for the most capable instructors and for that reason and for more reasonable expenditures would select a college in a country city.

Then it was resolved that the adopted resolution concerning the location where the seminary and college are to be located remain, that the synod however await the reaction of Watertown and vicinity, whether it would fulfill obligations for the building of the institutions there, and bring up at least \$2000 for the project. If, however, Watertown is not inclined to give such support, the synod reserve the right to withdraw the resolution.

Pastor Streissguth recommended to the synod that it give Pastor Schladermundt the opportunity to speak about the erecting of a hospital in Milwaukee and to recommend that the members of synod express their approval for such a beneficial institution.

Pastor Schladermundt then took the floor and cordially recommended this beneficial institution.

Resolved that this plea and recommendation be published in the synodical Proceedings.

The committee assigned to deal with the matter concerning Pastor Hass presented the following report:

The committee which was instructed to look into the matter of Pastor Hass reports as follows:

That Pastor Hass declared that he is more properly informed and that he now, according to his better understanding, will take care of the matter, hence the committee recommends to give the matter over to Pastor Hass to examine the confessional position of his members and then act accordingly.

Pastors Lange, Starck, Moldehnke and Bartelt

Resolved that the report be adopted and ratified.

Resolved that the synod be adjourned to 2:00 p.m. and that immediately a pastoral conference be held.

Closed with prayer by Pastor Kilian.

Eleventh Session

Wednesday, June 3, 2:00 p.m.

Opened with prayer by Pastor Waldmann.

The minutes were read and adopted by resolution.

Committee No. 2 brought up its report concerning the acceptance of Pastor Kern. Resolved that the report be shelved.

From the report of committee No. 5, point No. 3 concerning the statutes rejecting private confession in constitutions of synodical congregations was read. Pastor Dammann then read from the congregational constitution of his congregation such a paragraph. It read as if he was doing away with private confession, but an explanation satisfying the synod was given by Senior Muehlhaeuser.

After this it was resolved that the synod declare such paragraphs to read that no pastor be required to force upon a congregation private confession, but that each congregational member be made to feel the desire for private confession and private absolution.

Resolved that a committee be appointed to draw up a proper letter of identification and introduction for the synod's president for his trip to Germany. To this committee were named Pastors Muehlhaeuser, Fachtmann and Hoenecke.

The following resolutions concerning the substitute for the synodical president for his Watertown congregation were read by Pastor Moldehnke:

1. that Pastor Hoenecke be the substitute for Pastor Bading and that he preach in Watertown every 14 days and that Pastor Hilpert substitute for him in his congregation;
2. that preachers living near Watertown take turns preaching there on the other Sundays;
3. that I, in the month of September, move to Watertown to take over as substitute for Pastor Bading and at that time begin the instruction in the seminary and college of those students at hand;
4. that in case no suitable person is found for the congregation in Germany (near Ft. Atkinson), that Pastor Hilpert [who was ordained in April and assigned to help Moldehnke when the latter was on his travels] be assigned to Germany as vicar and then be assigned to his own congregation when Germany has again received its own preacher.

Resolved that the resolutions be accepted and ratified by the synod. Pastor Boehner then informed the synod that the Ev. Lutheran Congregation in Eldorado, Fond du Lac Co., urgently desires Pastor Hilpert to be its preacher. In regard to this request it was resolved that the secretary of the synod inform said congregation that Pastor Hilpert would be willing to accept a call from them as soon as such could take place.

Resolved that the synodical president be given \$75.00 from the synodical treasury for his trip.

Resolved that the synod pay for the substitutes for Pastor Bading.

Election of a vice-president then took place and Pastor G. Reim was elected.

Named to the examination committee were Pastors Muehlhaeuser, Moldehnke, Stark, Fachtmann, C.G. Reim and Koehler.

Named to the Agenda committee were Pastors G. Reim, Dammann, Quehl, Waldt, Meumann and Strube.

Committee No. 10 handed in its report.

The undersigned committee received the report of the synodical librarian and takes the liberty to make the following remarks based on this report:

The report shows that participation in the program of the library is not indeed active.

In the past synodical year 52 volumes were borrowed from the library; of these 17 books, borrowed in 1862, were not returned, which the committee in the interest of the library believes must be brought to the attention of the Hon. Synod. We recommend to the Hon. Synod that it extend its sincere thanks to Senior Muehlhaeuser for his conscientious management of the library. May the program of the synodical library enjoy a more active use by synodical members in the future.

Respectfully, *Pastors H. Quehl, J. Sauer, J. Hoffmann.*

Resolved that this report be accepted.

Committee No. 11 brought in the following report:

The committee reports that the traveling preacher program proved itself to be overall necessary and by its results very advantageous, and therefore it is recommended to the synod that its continuance be most desirable.

Pastors Streissguth, Fachtmann and Meumann.

Resolved that this report be adopted with the addition that Pastor Moldehnke be sincerely thanked for all of his efforts.

Resolved that the president of the congregation in Milwaukee be extended his due thanks for his cordial reception of the synodical members, and likewise, that the (male) choir of Grace congregation and its director, Teacher Sievert, be thanked for its effort to enhance the worship services of the synod with inspiring music.

The synod was then invited by three different congregations to host the next year's convention in their midst:

1. the Ev. Lutheran Congregation in Platteville through Pastor Meumann;
2. the Ev. Lutheran Congregation on Kilbourn Road through its delegate, Mr. Zeise;
3. the Ev. Lutheran Congregation in Manitowoc through Pastor Koehler.

The synod decided by resolution to accept the last invitation, and therefore would meet next year in Manitowoc, Wis.

Committee No. 9 presented the following report:

The Committee on the Annual Report of the Treasurer finds his report, as far as it can tell, in good order, but recommends that there be a better way of setting up the transactions, and thereby not make the office of the treasurer so difficult.

The committee: *Pastors C.G. Reim, Fr. Waldt, E. Strube and Delegates Reichmann and Schuhmacher.*

Resolved that the report be accepted and ratified.

A committee consisting of Pastors G. Reim and C. Gausewitz, which, together with Pastors Hoenecke and Moldehnke, was asked to determine the stipend for substituting in Watertown suggests that Pastor Hoenecke receive \$8.00 a month in addition to his Farmington salary and that Pastor Hilpert receive \$12.00 a month, and that Pastor Moldehnke make arrangements with the synod in regard to his substituting in Watertown.

Resolved that these resolutions be ratified.

Resolved that the custodian of Grace Congregation in Milwaukee be paid \$6.00 from synodical treasury for his services during the convention.

Resolved that 700 copies of the Proceedings be printed.

Pastor Heyer, who attended the sessions as a delegate from the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Minnesota, took the floor and reported on the Lutheran population there and about the newly founded Lutheran synod, and that he desired to see a closer relationship of both synods.

It was then brought up as well as desired from various parties that a closer union of both named synods with the synods of Ohio and Michigan take place.

It was then moved that the officers of our synod be instructed to write to the presidents of the synods of Ohio, Michigan and Minnesota about a closer union with our synod, and that a copy of our published constitution be sent them.

Resolved that the president, Pastor Bading, be ratified as a delegate to the next convention of the Minnesota Synod, and that he, in case he is hindered from attending, select a substitute thereto.

Resolved that the convention be adjourned to Friday after Trinity, 9:00 a.m., 1864.

The minutes were read and by resolution adopted.

With a sincere offering of thanks for the support of grace by the Holy Spirit, and for the faithfulness and patience which we experienced at our this year's convention, and with the earnest plea that the Lord our God continue to rule over us with his good spirit and crown our work with his blessing, the Proceedings were closed by the Hon. President.

Our faithful and rich God, who has helped our synod up to the present time with great blessings and favor, may the discussions and resolutions be pleasing in His sight for the sake of His dear Son, Jesus Christ, and that He add His gracious approval thereto, so that they redound to the welfare of our congregations and to the furtherance of the kingdom of God, and that in all things God be praised through Jesus Christ, to whom be honor and power from eternity to eternity, Amen.

That the above was transacted as stated at the synodical convention of the German Evang. Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, held in Milwaukee, from May 29 to June 3, 1863 A.D. is attested to by the signature of

The secretary of the synod.

Phil. Koehler, pastor

From the statistical report the information on the following page is gleaned. The editor felt that it was probably of no use to publish the details of baptisms, burials, confirmations, weddings, and contributions. If anyone is interested, please write to the editor for a copy of the original version in the German Proceedings. What may be of interest are the number of congregations and preaching stations. The names of the pastors are in column 1, the congregations in column 2, the preaching stations in column 3, and the parochial schools in column 4.

Pastor	Congregation	Preaching Station	Day School
Muehlhaeuser	1		
Goldammer	1		1
Koester	2		2
Conrad	2		
Bading	1		1
Huber	1	2	1
Koehler	1		1
Sauer	1	3	1
Streissguth	1		3
G. Reim	2		1
Sprengling	2	2	1
Roell	5		1
Fachtmann	3		1
Braun	1	2	
Boehner	1		1
Waldt	2	2	1
Hoffmann	2		1
Gausewitz	2	1	1
Dammann	1		1
Meumann	1		1
Stark	1		1
Ritter	1		1
Moldehnke		22	1
Kilian	2		1
Quehl	1		1
Wagner	3		1
Hass	3	2	1
Strube	2	1	
Ewert	2	2	1
Warnke	2	1	1
Sieker	2		
Denninger	4		1
C. G. Reim	1	2	
Bartelt	2		1
Meyer	2		2
Lange	1		1
Waltmann	3		1
Ebert	1		1
Leupp	3		1
Brenner	2		1
Hoenecke	1		1

48 congregations had a Sunday School.

Early WELS *Reiseprediger* On The Great Plains

by Martin O. Westerhaus

In the decades after the Civil War thousands of people moved to the Great Plains drawn by the hope of acquiring land of their own. They were encouraged by the provisions of the 1862 Homestead Act. By the provisions of this law the federal government offered up to 160 acres of unoccupied land to any settler for \$1.25 an acre.

And there was a lot of unoccupied land. From 1860 to 1890 eight large states, all or partially on the prairies, attained statehood: Minnesota in 1860; Kansas, 1861; Nebraska, 1867; Colorado, 1876; South Dakota, North Dakota and Montana, 1889; and Wyoming, 1890. The Union Pacific Railroad tracks were laid across Nebraska in 1867. Railroad tracks reached Yankton in southeastern South Dakota by 1871 and construction continued to extend it westward.

Trains helped to attract many more settlers. They offered easier access to the new land for the new settlers and access to markets for their products. The railroads also were very active in recruiting settlers and selling them land. They wanted more customers.

It is not surprising, then, that populations grew rapidly. Nebraska, for example, grew from 28,800 settlers in 1860 to almost 123,000 in 1870. The years 1879-1886 were called the years of the "Dakota boom" by people in Minnesota and the Dakotas. Already in 1861, with all the Indians moved west of the River, all Dakota land east of the Missouri was opened to settlers. Indians west of the Missouri were restricted to reservations by 1890 and the rest of the land in the Dakotas west of the River was opened to settlement. All these open lands on the prairies attracted settlers in great numbers from all over the eastern U.S. and in the case of the Dakotas, especially from northern Europe.

The spread of settlers and settlements was not uniform across the land, filling all the land more or less evenly as the frontier moved westward. Rather people settled along rivers and railroads first. Other areas were filled in gradually after that. People settled where they found a plot of land that appealed to them. As a result settlers were scattered here and there in the early years. This made the work of early missionaries more difficult.

Reiseprediger

Among the settlers who streamed out to the plains were many German Lutherans. Almost from its organization in 1860 the Minnesota Synod considered it a duty to look for these scattered Lutherans and serve them with Word and Sacrament. Each year at the synod convention the President's Report mentioned the growing numbers of settlers in the west and called on the pastors and congregations of the synod to minister to them, if possible, by providing a *Reiseprediger*.

What did they mean by a *Reiseprediger*? Literally translated the term means a traveling preacher or minister. The term often is translated as "circuit rider." But it should be mentioned that there were differences between a Lutheran *Reiseprediger* and a Methodist "circuit rider." The Methodist Church had coined the term "circuit rider."

Typically Methodist circuit riders were zealous and dedicated young Christian

men, but without a full theological education. Usually they were single and poor. They were expected and trained to live and support themselves by preaching. They lived with one or the other of the members they served. Their preaching emphasized the Methodist means for attaining a pious, Christian life-style. They traveled about on horseback to visit members of the Methodist churches, and any others who would listen to them, to admonish and encourage. They almost always were the first preachers to appear on the new edge of the frontier.

The typical Lutheran *Reiseprediger* was as well educated theologically as other pastors. Some were single, others were married and had families. This was a personal matter. They tended to be young, but some were middle aged, and some spent most of their ministry as a *Reiseprediger*. Their objective was to find the Lutherans scattered across the plains, and preach the gospel and administer the sacraments to them, and gather them into congregations where possible. Although they took no oath of poverty, since they worked on the frontier they expected to do without many of the customary material possessions, comforts and conveniences of life in more developed areas.

They were not just an imitation of the Methodist circuit riders. Although the term was not used at the time, Justus Falckner could have been called a *Reiseprediger*. He ministered to Lutherans up and down the Hudson Valley all the way from New York City to Albany from 1703 to 1723. William C. Berkenmeyer, his successor from 1725 to 1751, was one too. So was John Casper Stoever, Jr., who served on the frontier in Pennsylvania and western Maryland beginning from 1734 to 1743. All served before there were any Methodists. They became *Reiseprediger* in response to the need for such service on the frontier. And that is the case with the men we will consider here.

In this paper I will retain the German term, *Reiseprediger*, rather than the somewhat more cumbersome "traveling preacher" or the term "circuit rider" with its Methodist associations.

The calling and funding of a synod *Reiseprediger* was proposed and approved at the 1869 convention of the Minnesota Synod. Every year from 1870 to 1875 the synod delegates were informed that no one had as yet accepted the synod's call. Also, in 1870 only five congregations gathered the collection for the support of the *Reiseprediger* which the 1869 synod had requested each congregation to hold in order to fund the position. Their gifts totaled \$42.50, a long way from the \$300 promised in the *Reiseprediger's* call. That did improve year by year. But most members still had little cash.

The Minnesota Synod was still young and small at this point. The first Lutheran congregations in Minnesota were established in 1855. When the Minnesota Synod was organized in 1860 much of the state was still not settled. In 1864 Immanuel Lutheran Church in Town Acoma, McLeod County, near Hutchinson, and 70 miles west of St. Paul, was founded by Pastor Henry Braun. At the time it was the westernmost Minnesota Synod congregation. Pastor Braun is called the first *Reiseprediger* in this area, but he wasn't called or salaried by the synod. He soon gathered the Lutherans in the area and established five other congregations and preaching places, some over 30 miles distant. They became a self-supporting parish. We are told that many of the pastors organized additional congregations in surrounding regions in this way.



Pastor J.J. Hunziker

J. J. Hunziker

Hunziker, previously a Lutheran missionary in India, applied for membership in the synod in 1870 and requested a call to a congregation. He was asked to serve east of Redwood Falls in Renville County where some Lutherans who had been holding reading services in their homes had asked the synod for a pastor. He went there and by 1872 organized St. Matthew congregation in Town Flora. Bethany congregation in Town Emmett followed in 1875. He also worked in Sleepy Eye, helping gather a congregation there.

In 1876 the Minnesota Synod extended a call to Hunziker to be the synod's *Reiseprediger*. He accepted and extended his work toward the west. In 1878 he reported that he was serving eight congregations in Renville, Lyons, and Lincoln Counties. This included areas around Redwood Falls and Marshall, and the land west to the state line. The synod voted to call some other pastor to serve the congregations which Hunziker had organized east of Redwood Falls in Renville County as a self-supporting parish. Hunziker was asked to explore farther south in Minnesota and also to the west in the

adjacent areas of eastern South Dakota. In the fall of 1878 he reported to the synod president that, because of the size of the field the *Reiseprediger* now was asked to serve, he no longer felt capable of doing the work adequately and asked to be relieved of his duties. Hunziker then received the call to serve several congregations in Redwood County. He served there until retiring in 1896.

Christian Boettcher

The Lord provided a replacement for Hunziker almost at once. Christian Boettcher accepted the call to be the next synod *Reiseprediger*. We know nothing of his youth except that he was the first son of the Minnesota Synod to enter the ministry. He received his theological training at the Missouri Synod's practical seminary. His first call in 1875 was to Zion in Eitzen in the extreme southeast corner of Minnesota. After accepting the call as *Reiseprediger* he decided to make his home and base in Marshall, 135 miles west of St. Paul. He arrived there just before Christmas, 1878.

His reception was hardly enthusiastic. He went around to the German families and invited them to the first service to be held on Christmas Day. No one came. Later he did gather some families and form a congregation, but Boettcher was disappointed by their lack of enthusiasm in responding to the gospel.

After some time he decided that Marshall was too expensive a place for him to live. So he presented a proposal to the 1879 synod convention that he live near the village of Minneota about seven miles northwest of Marshall. The fifteen families there were more zealous.

Boettcher proposed to the synod that he acquire an 80 acre piece of homestead land still available in the area and build himself a house there. He asked that the synod lend him the money to do so. Before the synod had decided what to do, a layman got up and offered to lend the money without interest. Boettcher accepted, bought the land, built a house, and lived there till 1891 when he accepted a call to St. John's at Alma City.

Boettcher bought a horse and buggy early in 1879 and, as soon as possible, set out to get acquainted with the eight congregations Hunziker had served. That done, he began to expand his work. Boettcher proved to be a most zealous, energetic and effective missionary. At the synod convention in June, 1879, he reported that in the intervening half year he had worked in seven counties in Minnesota and six in Dakota Territory. He now had 27 preaching places, 19 in Minnesota, eight in Dakota. He also mentioned other counties in which he intended to work in the future. He reported that there were at least seven or eight Methodist circuit riders at work in the area he had covered. They were working zealously to convert the Lutheran immigrants who were without a Lutheran pastor.

Boettcher experienced plenty of the hardships that could confront the *Reiseprediger*. Some time between the 1880 and 1881 conventions his buggy broke down. It was too worn to repair. He walked home. At the 1881 convention he asked the synod for money to buy another buggy since he himself could not afford to. The synod provided the necessary funds.

The winter of 1880-81 was unusually long and hard. Numerous blizzards and severe cold continued through much of March. Almost all transportation, even the railroads, came to a halt. Coal and wood ran out. Boettcher and his wife had to walk a mile to get straw to heat their cabin. With only straw for fuel it was impossible to keep



Pastor Christian Boettcher

the cabin really warm. He and his wife suffered frostbite several times that winter. Because the constantly drifting snow made it dangerous for the six children in his instruction class to walk to his house, he and his wife kept them all at the parsonage till the danger ended. It must have been a problem to feed them under the circumstances.

Discomforts in summer included hot winds, violent thunderstorms and hail on the prairie. The buggy provided only minimal shelter. His long absences from home visiting the various congregations also must have been a continuing hardship for him and his family.

Boettcher reported to the 1881 convention that he had found a very promising field in Dakota. He requested that a second *Reiseprediger* be called to serve it. The synod approved, but it took three years till the call was accepted. Boettcher found that German Lutherans were settling as far west as the James River (which flows north to south, east of Aberdeen, Huron and Mitchell), and even beyond. He found the Methodist and German Methodist (*Albrechtsbrueder*) circuit riders were working there, too.

Boettcher himself did exploratory work as far as Redfield, 72 miles west of Watertown. He covered an area of about 140 miles by 100 miles. It took him six weeks to make the rounds of all his congregations and preaching places. His main effort was

directed toward finding the scattered Lutherans and gathering them for worship services. He gathered over 25 congregations in western Minnesota and eastern Dakota. He can rightly be called the "father of the Eastern Conference of the Dakota-Montana District."

In 1884 Boettcher accepted a permanent call from the seven congregations he served around Marshall. But with their approval he continued serving the larger field another year. That same year a Pastor Franz Johl from the Missouri Synod accepted the call as the second *Reiseprediger*. He planned to make Redfield his base and work westward from there. In 1886 Rudolph Polzin, who had just graduated from the seminary in New Ulm, was assigned to be a *Reiseprediger*. He made Ward, South Dakota his base. In 1885 Pastor Boettcher felt constrained to give up his longer trips as *Reiseprediger* because of health problems. He now restricted his ministry to the congregations around Marshall that had called him—by then seven congregations and two preaching places. In 1891 he left the Marshall area and accepted a call to Alma City, a small village southeast of Mankato.

Unfortunately, we have no obituary of Boettcher. Considering all he contributed to the early history of the Minnesota Synod in southwestern Minnesota and eastern Dakota, some notice of his life and work surely was called for. He gave himself unsparingly for six years to the work of *Reiseprediger*, work that on the frontier was very wearing.

Boettcher's Successors

Pastor Boettcher was succeeded by a series of *Reiseprediger*: Pastors Franz Johl (1884) and Rudolph Polzin, as already noted, Candidates Emil L. Luebbert and George Lahme (1887), Candidate H. Volkert (1890), and Pastors G. Fritzke and Julius Engel (1892). None of these worked over as large an area as Boettcher. Self-supporting parishes were established in the Watertown and Elkton-Ward South Dakota areas. For a time Pastor Johl seems to have made Redfield the base of his ministry. But Redfield proved to be even less receptive to a Lutheran pastor than Marshall. Johl moved to Watertown. He served a parish consisting of the congregations at Watertown, Rauville, Germantown and Mazeppa. Rudolph Polzin served the Elkton-Ward South Dakota area. Johl was succeeded in the west by George Lahme.

The focus of the *Reiseprediger* work shifted to the area just east of the Missouri River and took a northerly direction. Congregations were established at Town Gale (1887) on the South Dakota-North Dakota border., Zeeland and Hazelton, North Dakota, (both 1888), Bowdle (1891), Mound City, and Roscoe South Dakota (both 1893).

In 1909 Congress passed the Enlarged Homestead Act. This permitted a homesteader to acquire 320 acres of land. After the Milwaukee Road built a bridge across the Missouri River, a congregation was started at the new town of Mobridge (1912.) Church work then moved west along the railroad. Exploratory work was done in fourteen towns toward the west-northwest in South and North Dakota. Today there are resulting congregations in McIntosh, Morrystown, and Hettinger (North Dakota), and one in Lemmon, now in the Church of the Lutheran Confession. A bit to the south work began in Trail City, Timber Lake and later in Isabel. Eventually congregations also were organized in Bison, Dupree and Faith. Pastor Max Cowalsky served this area for



Pastor George Lahme

many years, beginning in 1917. In one report the mission board announced that it was saving considerable money. Since Cowalsky was a bachelor and satisfied to room with members they didn't have to buy him a parsonage.

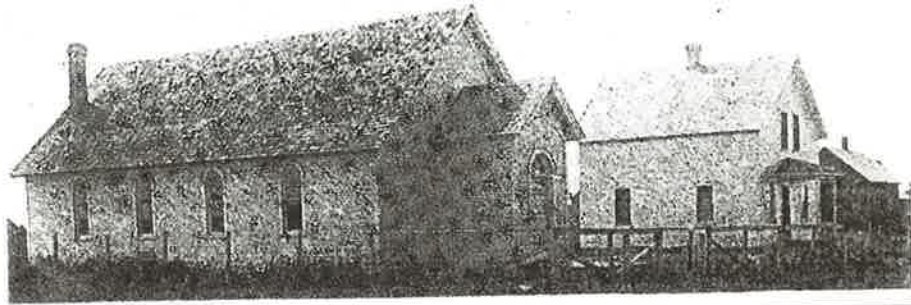
Frank Wittfaut

In 1908 the Minnesota Mission Board called Pastor Frank Wittfaut to serve as *Reiseprediger* west of the Missouri in North Dakota. An 1898 graduate of Wauwatosa, he had served in Bloomfield, Michigan, Caledonia, Minnesota, and from 1904 to 1908, a congregation at Reese, Michigan in the Missouri Synod.

In North Dakota he established a string of congregations and preaching places along what is now North Dakota Highway 21, which runs east and west about 25-30 miles north of the South Dakota border. He did exploratory work in almost every town and village along or somewhere "near" (Dakota definition) the road: Almont, Noel, Flasher, Raleigh, Lark, Carson, Paradise, Leith, Elgin, Leipzig, Bentley, Burt and Edgar. Today there are congregations in Flasher, Carson, Paradise and Elgin. The

drougths and low farm prices of the 1930's, the ever larger farm machinery and ever larger farms in the decades since led to a decline in population and hence a decline in the number and size of our congregations, especially on the land west of the Missouri.

Wittfaut traveled faithfully back and forth to his congregations in western North Dakota from 1908 to 1919. Those were good times for farmers. Prices were high and there were a number of seasons with good rains and crops. The future looked bright for the farmers in the western Dakotas. Farmers were plowing former range land and fanning ever farther west in Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, the Dakotas and Montana.



Late 19th century church and parsonage of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Roscoe, South Dakota

In 1920 Wittfaut followed the settlers west. He moved to the high plains of eastern Montana where the climate is drier, and the population, if anything, smaller. Here, according to the mission board reports, he conducted services in the following years in places such as Crow Rock, Cohagen, Ismay, Knowlton, Olanda, DeGrand, Watkins, Pine Water, Mildred, Terry, Circle, and Wolf Point (12). Today only the Wittfaut congregations in Terry, Circle, and Wolf Point remain. In addition he stopped at smaller or less promising places that were his "personal endeavors" according to Pastor Birner.

In his 50th anniversary history of the Dakota-Montana District Professor K.G. Sievert described Wittfaut's ministry. We are told he was a bachelor who spent little on himself. He was completely impractical around cars. He never traded in his first car, a Model T Ford. He drove it until his death in 1934. He carried flour, sugar and other staples in the back seat in addition to his personal luggage. As he made the rounds of his preaching stations preaching the Gospel, he distributed this food to remote farms and ranches where they were needed. Those able to do so paid for them. Where people couldn't pay, he left the supplies as a gift.

In his fifteen years in Montana he never held services in a real church. The small groups he served didn't have the resources to build in the drought and depression years. The first WELS church building in Montana was built at Circle after he died. When Pastor Alfred Walthers came to Terry, Circle and Wolf Point in 1945 fresh out of the

Seminary the members there still spoke with love and respect for Pastor Wittfaut. His loving concern for and devotion to Christ's flock under his care had been very evident to them.

William Fettinger

We turn next to another man who served as a *Reiseprediger* in Dakota. But this man along with the congregations he founded ended up belonging to the Nebraska District. William Fettinger was born in 1863 in Austria. Some time after his confirmation his uncle encouraged him to study theology. He agreed and to begin his preparations attended a secondary school in Passau, Bavaria. After completion of his studies there he attended the seminary in Wittenberg. In the summer of 1886 he traveled to New Ulm, Minnesota to enroll in the seminary of the Minnesota Synod.

Upon graduation in 1888 he was assigned to Zion Lutheran Church in West Albany, Minnesota about ten miles southwest of Lake City and the Mississippi River. From Zion he also served St. John's, a mission congregation, in Lake City. Today Zion no longer exists. Today St. John's is a congregation of 1600 souls. From 1889 to 1892 Pastor Fettinger served Trinity Lutheran Church in the village of Bremen about seven miles west of West Albany. Trinity has 385 souls today.

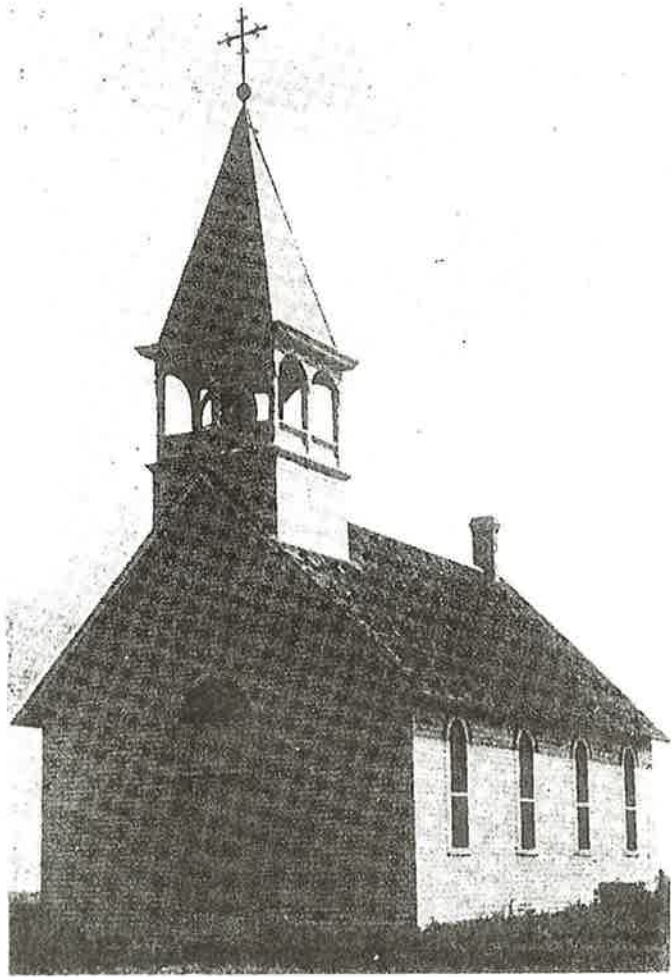
He served Immanuel Lutheran Church in Town Eden, Brown County, west-northwest of New Ulm, together with Zion at Morgan from 1892 to 1900. Then he accepted a call to Friedens Lutheran Church in New Prague, Minnesota about 45 miles southwest of the Twin Cities. After ten years at New Prague he was forced to resign because of illness.

He moved with his family to Lynch, Nebraska, a small village near the border with South Dakota, where the Missouri River flowing south first touches Nebraska. When his health improved he looked for an opportunity to serve his Lord and the church again. He began to do mission work across the state line in Tripp County, South Dakota. About this time Congress passed a law opening some of the Indian reservation land to white purchase and settlement, The Rosebud Reservation in southern South Dakota was among them. Fettinger established preaching places in McNeely, Jordan, and Brunson Townships, in the village of Harnill, and in the towns of Winner, Witten, and Mission. All are on or near what is US Highway 18 today.

Today only the churches in Winner, Witten, and Mission remain. Winner has 442 souls, Witten, 113 and Mission 78. But in addition there are other younger congregations forming a string of twelve WELS congregations with 1,800 members along or near US 18 in Nebraska and South Dakota. These constitute the bulk of the congregations of the Nebraska District's Rosebud Conference. Fettinger's work as *Reiseprediger* from 1911 to 1917 on the South Dakota plains had a significant part in the development of this conference.

A. C. Bauman

Alvin C. Bauman was born in 1885 in rural Cedarburg, Wisconsin where his father was a Missouri Synod pastor. After confirmation he attended Northwestern Preparatory Department and College at Watertown, Wisconsin. Upon completion of his studies there he enrolled at Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois. As a vicar he did exploratory work in the Arkansas River Valley, east of Pueblo, Colorado. Upon



Late 19th century Trinity Lutheran Church in Theodore, South Dakota

graduating from the Seminary in 1907 he was assigned to a congregation at Poole in southern Nebraska. From Poole he started a mission in Kearney, Nebraska. For a year he taught at a small Lutheran academy in Deshler, Nebraska.

In 1918 he accepted a call to a congregation of the Minnesota Synod, St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Prescott, Wisconsin, near the Twin Cities. He also served missions in Hastings, Minnesota and River Falls, Wisconsin.

In 1922 he resigned this call because of health problems in the family. He returned with his family to Colorado. From 1923 to 1930, according to a family history, he traveled extensively in Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming doing exploratory mission work. We have no records of this work. In 1930 he returned with his family to the Arkansas Valley and Crowley County, Colorado. There he did exploratory work and in time he organized St. Paul's and Grace Congregations at Sugar City; Messiah in

Ordway, and St. Paul's in Rocky Ford.

In 1933 it was reported in the Wisconsin Synod Proceedings that a convention committee assigned to evaluate this matter had declared that the objection of the Missouri Synod to A.C. Bauman's mission work in the Arkansas Valley was not valid. His application for membership in Nebraska District of the Wisconsin Synod was therefore accepted.

As a result his small congregations were received into the WELS Nebraska District in 1934. That year he applied for and was granted assistance in his work in the Arkansas Valley in the form of two seminary graduates who had not received a call. Because of the difficulty in assigning seminary graduates at the time, district mission boards could call graduates for mission work at the salary of \$25.00 a month.

Some time earlier a dam had been built on the Arkansas River between Las Animas and Lamar which provided water for irrigation. Apparently quite a few people were settling in the valley to take up irrigation farming. It was among these people that Bauman did mission work. Additional congregations were organized at Crowley, La Junta, Las Animas and Lamar.

In time the effects of farm mechanization gradually also reduced the farm population in the Arkansas Valley. Today WELS congregations organized by Bauman are found in Las Animas, Ordway and Lamar. The Lamar congregation is now a member of CLC.

With the assistance of several candidates at hand, Bauman also began to explore the cities of Pueblo and Colorado Springs, beginning at last a shift away from the strong focus on rural and small town work.

The Wisconsin Synod recognized that Colorado was a field with real potential. Several memorials to the 1937 Synod called for district status for WELS churches in Colorado and for those in Arizona. In response Synod passed a resolution calling for the exploration of the mission possibilities in both states. Pastor Immanuel P. Frey, secretary of the Nebraska District, and Pastor John Gauss, from the Michigan District, were appointed to carry out this exploration. Pastor Bauman assisted the committee in Colorado. On the basis of the committee's ensuing report the synod approved a district missionary for each state. Pastor Frey was called as exploratory missionary for Colorado and began work in Denver. WELS work in Colorado expanded rapidly. By 1942 there were 12 Wisconsin missionaries in the state. Colorado pastors and churches became the Colorado Mission District with its own mission board. Today there are 27 congregations in the Colorado Conference with almost 4300 members. A.C. Bauman initiated WELS work in Colorado.

We have examined the work of several *Reiseprediger* or traveling preachers. Except for the first, the fruits of their work may strike us as disappointing. But it is God who "gives the increase." They could not foresee what great changes those new contraptions called "tractors" would bring to the Great Plains. Mid the prosperity of World War I and the early Twenties they could not foresee the Dustbowl and the Great Depression.

These men had several notable characteristics in common. All felt compelled to action by the command: "Preach the good news to all creation." In spite of difficult and at times discouraging circumstances they continued to serve their Savior as his messengers on the plains. They were not profound theologians or highly eloquent and

compelling preachers as far as we know. They weren't outstanding organizers and leaders in the church. They didn't establish large congregations in flourishing cities. They were humble, self-effacing and self-denying. Calls took them out onto the plains among the pioneers, among the widely scattered believers of the wide open spaces, among small villages and to many farms. And there they carried on their ministry faithfully. To each one's labors the Lord gave an increase as he saw fit. And the kingdom of God was built in new areas. Our synod expanded to new territories.

The efforts and accomplishments of these *Reiseprediger*, often under most difficult and wearing circumstances, deserve the admiration and remembrance of our synod.

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The First History of the Wisconsin Synod

Arnold Lehmann

When Prof. John Ph. Koehler took up the task of writing a history of the Wisconsin Synod in the late 1890s, he searched through the attics and other rooms of the parsonages of Grace and St. John congregations of Milwaukee, the congregations of Presidents Muehlhaeuser and Bading, and collected official correspondence, minutes of meetings and conventions and other documents. All this material plus material from other sources was tabulated by Koehler and filed chronologically in manila envelopes. Just how this collection of material was placed into the Northwestern College archives is obscure. Since most of this material is in the old German hand script, very little research was carried on in this collection.

This writer, in the process of gathering material for the history of Wisconsin Synod hymnody, learned of the Koehler collection and received permission to work with this often delicate material. A large ledger which was used by the founders of the synod, and which contains the original minutes of the first eight conventions of the synod, was used by Koehler to catalogue each collected item and indicate with a sentence or so, the content of each entry. Virtually "hidden" amongst the several thousand items is this history by Muehlhaeuser. A few prefatory remarks taken from the minutes of the early conventions sketch the background of this first history of the Wisconsin Synod. The first entry in the ledger reads as follows:

Organization of the Evang. Luth. Synod of Wisconsin

On December 8, 1849, Pastors Muehlhaeuser, Wrede, Weinmann and Meiss met in Milwaukee in the church building of the Evangelical Lutheran congregation to mutually deliberate upon and discuss the important subject of the establishment of a synod in Wisconsin. This meeting was opened with a hymn and prayer, and immediately the subject lying before them was presented for deliberation. After much discussion on all sides it was desired unanimously by the above named pastors and deemed necessary to establish a synod in Wisconsin now, and it was resolved:

1) that the established synod be named "The First German Ev. Luth. Synod of Wisconsin" and carry on as such, and under this particular name and appellation have a never-ending future.

2) that the officers of said synod be elected at this time for two years. At this election the following persons were elected as officers: Pastor Muehlhaeuser as president, Pastor Weinmann as secretary, Pastor Wrede as treasurer.

President Pastor Muehlhaeuser was then given the authority to write for the synod as soon as possible a constitution which would incorporate the confession of the synod. Then it was finally resolved that the next year's synod convention be held on May 27, 1850 in Granville, Wisconsin, at which the members of the same should bring along their annual reports. The events took place thus on December 8, 1849 in Milwaukee.

John Weinmann

In the succeeding annual conventions many items of interest are recorded which obviously cannot be included here. The 1858 convention resolved to have Muehlhaeuser compile a history of the synod which was then to be added to by the secretary every year. The 1859 convention again resolved to ask Muehlhaeuser to kindly prepare a history of the synod for the next year's convention. The 1860 convention proceedings contain the following:

The synod listened with great interest to the history of the synod from its inception, its further development and growth up to the present time.

The secretary made a brief comment about God's help in this development. It was then moved:

that the synod receive this presentation of its historical development and thank the honorable Senior [the honorary title given to Muehlhaeuser] for his tireless effort and care in this presentation.

In the following translation of Muehlhaeuser's history the words are spelled as Muehlhaeuser spelled them in his own handwriting. Hence there are some errors in spelling, especially with English or other foreign words which Muehlhaeuser undoubtedly tried to spell from the sound of the word, for example, Needmann instead of the correct Nietmann (endnote 10).

In the Name of Jesus The Founding and History of the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Neighboring States

Towards the end of the year 1846 Johannes Weinmann from Bernhagen in the kingdom of Wuerttemberg¹, who studied at Barmen and who was sent out by the Langenberger Society, came to America, specifically for a congregation on Kilbourn Road, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Brother Weinmann was ordained by Pastor F. Schmied [F. Schmid?] in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on his way to the west. Pastor Weinmann served the congregation on Kilbourn Rd. and preached to the German settlers in Caledonia Center, Greenfield and New Berlin.

On October 4, 1837, this writer, Johannes Muehlhaeuser, from Notzingen in the kingdom of Wuerttemberg, came to America. He studied at the Barmen Mission House and was the first one to be sent out to America by "the Langenberger Society for the Protestant Germans in America." He came together with the apostate Oertel² at that time a candidate of the Lutheran church of Bavaria. Oertel had been ordained in Erlangen before his trip to America.

After a delay of seven months in New York (where I did mission work among the Germans and where Oertel preached in the vicinity of Houston Street in the upper part of the city), I was [verb missing] by the Ev. Lutheran Ministerium of the New York Synod, received a license from Pres. Dr. Wackerhaegen,³ and was sent as missionary to

Rochester where I arrived on May 12, 1838. The fall of that same year I was ordained at the synod convention.

I served the Ev. Lutheran congregation in Rochester for ten years. Since the congregation was well organized and in a position to support a pastor properly, and since I still felt healthy and strong, indeed, especially encouraged by Pastor Weinmann, I decided to move with my family to Wisconsin in order to carry on mission work for a few more years.

On June 27, 1848, I arrived in Milwaukee where I soon began to found a new congregation. At this time there were in Milwaukee Pastor Keil of the Missouri Synod, Pastor Mueller of the Buffalo Synod and Pastor L. Dulitz who was also sent out by the Langenberger Society. Pastor Dulitz was serving a United congregation from which he resigned, and in the same year founded the Ev. Lutheran St. John congregation in Milwaukee.

In the year 1849 Pastor W. Wrede, a theologian from Saxony, who had already served as preacher in the state of New York for several years, came to Milwaukee and was called by the Ev. Lutheran and Reformed congregation in Granville as its preacher.

Pastor Weinmann and Wrede recognized with me the need of a joint effort to spread the kingdom of God for the Lutheran church in Wisconsin, and we met for this purpose on December 8, 1849 in Milwaukee, at which time the founding of an Ev. Lutheran synod was agreed upon and resolved.

Just as the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, so also was the very small beginning of our synod.

Pastor Muehlhaeuser was elected president, Pastor Wrede treasurer, and Pastor Weinmann secretary. The first named was asked to draw up a synod constitution by the time of the next convention which was to take place in Granville on May 26.

During the time up to the first convention three candidates for the preaching ministry arrived on the scene.

F. Beckel was preparing himself for the preaching ministry under the guidance of Pastor Keil. Beckel separated himself from Pastor Keil under the pretext that Keil was too strict and narrow a Lutheran. After mature deliberation and examination we arrived at the resolution to accept Beckel into our small circle, because we were in dire need of workers. Beckel received a license and was sent to Schlesingerville [Slinger] as preacher. In the course of the first half year Beckel married a young girl who came from an old Lutheran family, with the result that Beckel, as he personally felt, returned to the old Lutheran church, but was not able to become a member of the Missouri or Buffalo Synods, and as a result he is up to this day an independent, preaching and administering the sacraments according to his own conscience. Beckel is still carrying on this ill-practice in Town Hermann on the basis of our license which was invalid on the day when he left us.

A young man by the name of Paulus Meiss, recommended by Pastor Schmidt of Albany, came to Milwaukee in 1848. For a while Meiss had been a student at a poorly endowed teachers' seminary in Germany. He had learned shoemaking earlier. Meiss was to study under Pastor Dulitz and at the same time earn his board, which he did for a while. All of a sudden Meiss disappeared and made himself a pastor in the congregation at Granville. Meiss had gifts for public speaking, and this brought about a revival in Granville. Quite a few older persons among the former residents of Pennsyl-

vania were baptized. Finally the council of the congregation and Meiss himself came and confessed their error, and asked that we accept them, and that Meiss be authorized to administer the sacraments. Finally the following took place. Meiss was sent as Beckel's successor to Schlesingerville where he soon was married, and lived a very ill-fated married life. Through his life-style Meiss brought shame upon the preaching ministry, to the effect tht we had to release him. Meiss joined the Reformed Church, which also had to release him at a later date. He had two wives, both still living, and separated from both, he for a while spent a life roving from place to place. Corrupted physically and spiritually he died in the south in 1859 from yellow fever.

The third candidate was Casper Pluess, a dismissed Basel student, whom we gave a license after a scheduled examination, and whom we sent to a congregation in Sheboygan. Pluess was in the synod for better than two years. After he was ordained, indeed he left us in a disgraceful manner without a word, and joined the Reformed Church.

These three miserable subjects made our beginning very difficult, and gave us much sorrow, shame, anxiety and distress.

First synod convention

On May 26, 1850, we met in Granville. Pastor Wrede was the preacher of the congregation.

The three officeholders were also the entire ministerium. The two candidates, Pluess and Meiss were present. The synodical constitution proposed by the president was presented, discussed and with necessary changes was adopted.

The first congregation was accepted into the synod. *Resolved:* that the Ev. Lutheran congregation in Milwaukee (now Grace congregation) served by Pastor Muehlhaeuser be accepted into synod membership.

Resolved that a synodical seal be procured.

Mr. Jacob Conrad of Rochester N.Y., working for the American Tract Association, presented himself as a candidate for the preaching ministry.

Resolved that J. Conrad should study privately with Pastor Wrede in Granville and prepare himself for the preaching ministry.

According to the parochial reports there were

Children baptized	90
Confirmed	55
Communicants ⁴	671
Buried	15

II

Synod convention 1851

The second synod convention took place on June 21, 1851, in the church auditorium of the Ev. Lutheran congregation of Pastor Muehlhaeuser, corner of Chestnut and West Water Street.

On October 18, 1850, Brother Goldammer of Ursprung in the kingdom of Saxony, who studied at Barmen and was sent out by the Langenberger Society, came to Wisconsin and took charge of a field of labor in Manitowoc County, with Manitowoc

Village as his preaching station.

Candidate C. Pluess and Goldammer were examined and ordained.

Candidate Conrad, who studied with Wrede, was examined and found qualified to be given a license; he took charge of a field in Town Hermann.

III

Synod convention

On June 6, 1852, we met in the Ev. Lutheran congregation in Racine. Pastor Weinmann was preacher of the congregation.

Election of officers: Pastor Muehlhaeuser was elected president, Pastor Goldammer secretary and Pastor Wrede treasurer.

Candidate Koester was introduced by Pastor Weinmann. Candidate Koester came from Buchholz, District of Stolzenau in Hanover, and had been a student at Barmen.

The congregation in Racine and the congregation in Granville were accepted into synod membership.

Candidate Koester was ordained and became Pastor Weinmann's successor at Kilbourn Road, Greenfield and Caledonia Center.

Pastor Weinmann built the Lutheran church in Racine for which he had collected about \$3000 from Lutheran churches in the east.

Wilhelm Buehren, formerly a Methodist preacher, was introduced. He presented himself for acceptance into the synod. After lengthy discussion and examination he was given a license and assigned to a field in New Berlin.

Baptized	180 children
Total Confirmed	28 children
Communicants	649 persons
Buried	27
Parochial Schools	1
Heathen Missions	\$11.34
Synod Treasury	\$2

IV

Synod Convention 1853

On May 22 the synod met in the united Grace congregation in Town Hermann. Pastor Conrad was preacher of the congregation.

St. John congregation of Greenfield and Grace congregation of Town Hermann were accepted into synod membership.

Candidate J. Conrad and W. Buehren were ordained.

V

Synod convention in Granville, June 11, 1854

During the course of the past year Pastor Weinmann accepted a call from the Ev. Lutheran Trinity congregation in Baltimore, Maryland, which he served until 1858. In that year Pastor Weinmann made a trip to Europe where he visited with his elderly mother in Bernhausen. On his return trip his death came in the water with the burning of the steamship Austria. He leaves a mourning widow, born Strongmann,⁵ and a

six-year-old daughter.

Brother J. Bading from Rixdorf near Berlin, who was a student in Pastor Harm's Hermansburg Mission school and who was sent out by the Langenberger Society, came to Milwaukee in July 1853. He took charge of a congregation in Calumet, where he was ordained and installed by the president.

Candidate J. E. Sauer presented himself to the president for acceptance into the synod. He had a license and was assigned Schlessingerville as his work place.

Pastor G. Weitbrecht, a theologian from Wuerttemberg, came from the Western Church Society⁶ and desired a place in our synod. The president assigned him a work place in Sheboygan. While there he unfortunately joined the Methodist Church. After a year he returned repentant, acknowledging his error, and asked for admittance into the synod. The synod forgave him for his error, and assigned him a place in Port Washington, from which he was called to a congregation in Bridgeport, Michigan. Weitbrecht was not the man for our American situation and therefore went back to his former fatherland.

Election of officers took place.

Pastor Muehlhaeuser was elected president, Pastor Goldammer secretary, and Pastor Buehren treasurer.

Pastor Wrede became Pastor Weinmann's successor in Racine, and Pastor Buehren became Wrede's successor in Granville.

Pastor W. Streissguth was introduced by Pastor Wrede, and was accepted as advisory delegate.

Pastor Conrad presented to synod Pastor D. Huber, a Catholic cleric from the Canton of St. Gall, who declared that according to his convictions he could no longer serve the Roman church, because he had, by the grace of God, recognized its errors. After considerable discussion and examination, Pastor D. Huber was recognized as a member and servant of the Lutheran Church.

Before his departure from the Roman Church Pastor Huber served a Catholic congregation in Kenosha, and according to his request, was sent to Kenosha as preacher of the Lutheran Church, in order to serve the Lutheran congregation there.

Candidate E. Sauer's license was renewed.

The Ev. Lutheran Immanuel congregation in Town Hermann served by Pastor Conrad, and the Ev. Lutheran St. John congregation in Newtonburg served by Pastor Goldammer were accepted into synod membership.

VI

Synod convention 1855

The synod met on June 3, 1855, in the Ev. Lutheran Grace church in Milwaukee. Pastor Muehlhaeuser is preacher of the congregation.

The church building of Grace congregation was built in 1851 with the help of Pastor Muehlhaeuser. For it he collected more than \$3000 in New England and in Lutheran churches in the east, and about \$500 from various English congregations in Milwaukee.

Pastor Streissguth, from Baden, came to the convention with the intention of giving up his congregation in New Glarus, and of accepting a place in our synod. Newtonburg was recommended for him which he visited, and they called him as preacher, to which

place he moved in the fall of this past year. Pastor Goldammer moved to Manitowoc to serve the Lutheran congregation there as a main congregation, which had been a branch congregation up till then.

Candidate Philip Koehler, from Neuwied, Prussia, who had been a Barmen student and who was sent out from Langenberg, came during the past year in May and took over the congregations in Wayne and Barton and Addison.

Candidates Ph. Koehler and J. E. Sauer were ordained.

In the past synodical year there were

Baptized	417 children
Confirmed	121 children
Attending the Lord's Supper	1513 souls
Married	40 couples
Funerals	167
Synod Treasury	\$14
Entire Balance on Hand	\$32
For Heathen Missions	\$64

VII

Synod convention

On May 16, 1856, the synod met in the Ev. Lutheran congregation in Manitowoc. Pastor Goldammer is preacher of the congregation.

At this location the new church, which was built with Pastor Goldammer's help, was dedicated. He had collected several hundred (about \$400 or so) in the east.

Election of officers.

Pastor Muehlhaeuser was elected president, Pastor Bading secretary and Buehren treasurer.

During the course of the past year Pastor G. Reim, from Ober-Tuerkheim, kingdom of Wuerttemberg, arrived and served a Reformed congregation in Ashford, and assembled two other Lutheran congregations in the area. He had been a student at Basel, and was ordained in the established church of Wuerttemberg.

Pastor Streissguth and Pastor Reim were received into synod membership. Pastor Wrede had gone to Germany in the fall of 1855. Pastor Conrad was his successor in Racine, and Pastor Sauer was Conrad's successor in Town Hermann.

Candidate Christian Stark, from Erfurt, Saxony, who had spent some time at the Basel Mission Institute, came from Indiana and sought a place in our synod. The president pointed out a place in Port Washington. Candidate Ch. Stark was ordained.

Candidate Hennicke, recommended by Pastor Dumser, wished to be ordained. He was told to study further under Pastor Dumser's guidance.

Pastors Koehler, Bading, Reim and Sauer were appointed as a committee to draw up a plan for a church order⁷ for about-to-be founded congregations and to present it to the next synod convention.

The Ev. Lutheran St. John congregation in Town Addison and the Ev. Lutheran St. Paul congregation in Wayne, Pastor Koehler is preacher for both congregations, were accepted into synod membership, also the Friedens congregation in Port Washington whose preacher was Pastor Stark.

In this year children were baptized	371
Confirmed	140
Communicants	1583
Married Couples	122
Funerals	50
Inner Missions	\$10
Heathen Missions	\$50
Synod Treasury	\$13
Day Schools	5
Sunday Schools	5

VIII

Synod convention 1857

The synod met on June 5, 1857, on Kilbourn Road in the Ev. Lutheran congregation, Pastor Koester's.

During the course of the past year Pastor W. Streissguth was called to Milwaukee to the Ev. Lutheran St. John congregation in place of Pastor Dulitz, who was removed.

Candidate Philip Sprengling from Weinansheim, Hessen, who was a student at Barmen and who was sent out by the Langenberger Society, came to America and after an agreed-upon delay at Pastor Koehler's, was ordained by the Northwest Conference and was Pastor Streissguth's successor in the congregation at Newtonburg.

Candidate Henicke was ordained.

The Ev. Lutheran St. John congregation of Milwaukee was accepted into synod membership.

The Ev. Lutheran church on Kilbourn Road was dedicated and the congregation was accepted into synod membership.

The Ev. Lutheran church in Caledonia was dedicated at the close of the convention, and the congregation was accepted into synod membership.

Pastor Diehlmann was accepted into synod membership. Diehlmann came from the Missouri Synod. He served several congregations in and around Princeton, Marquette County.

Candidate Henicke served a congregation near Niles, Ill.

In this session the license system was done away with by a majority vote of synod members as being not Lutheran.

A committee was appointed to revise the constitution of the synod.

Pastor Buehren left the synod and Pastor Streissguth became treasurer in his place.

Parochial report - three preachers did not hand in a report.

Baptized	1596 [sic!]
Confirmed	118
Communicants	1612
Buried	97
Heathen Missions	\$112
Church Building Collection	\$15
Synod Treasury	\$18.18
Education	\$7.60

Tract Society	\$1
Day Schools	5
Sunday Schools	5

IX 1858

The Ev. Lutheran Synod met on May 24, 1858, in the Ev. Lutheran St. John congregation in Milwaukee. Pastor Streissguth is preacher of the congregation.

Election of officers.

Pastor Muehlhaeuser president, Pastor Streissguth secretary, Pastor Conrad treasurer.

During the course of the past year Pastor Heinrich Roell came from New York state. The president referred him to several congregations in Washington County, West Bend and surrounding area. Pastor Roell came from Hasbergen, Prussia. Pastor H. Roell brought an honorable release from Dr. Pohlmann, the president of the New York Synod, and was accepted into synod membership.

Pastor G. Fachtmann from Hanover brought a recommendation to the president from Pastor Wall, the president of the Association of Churches in the West, and was accepted into synod membership.

Pastor Adalbert Rueter, a member of the Ohio Synod, sought a position in Wisconsin. The president in conjunction with Pastors Bading and Streissguth referred him to Columbus as a field of labor. Rueter was told to come to the synod convention and bring along an honorable release from the Ohio Synod. Hindered by circumstances, Rueter asked to be excused. Rueter came the following year to the synod convention in Racine, where it turned out that he could not get an honorable release.

Rueter affirmed his innocence, and he was accepted only conditionally. The president was to try to get such [a release] from Ohio. Because Rueter understood so well the art of deception, he thoroughly deceived us and we did not hesitate to give him a larger field of labor. He was recommended for the congregation in Maple Grove by the president, and Pastor Koehler proposed him to the congregation, where he was then selected.

Rueter moved with his family to Maple Grove in the month of July, where Pastor Koehler installed him.

Soon after his departure from Columbus, the congregation there desired an investigation into several matters lying before them. The president felt that under the circumstances their petition should be heard. Pastor Streissguth went to Columbus where a congregation meeting was held. Through this investigation it turned out that Rueter was a man unworthy of the office [of pastor].

Rueter let himself be used by a speculator, in that he caused 10 to 12 families in the congregation to buy from the speculator land that was some distance away. For his Judas-payment Rueter received 40 acres of land. Aside from this there were many other complaints against him in respect to money matters. The president urged Rueter to go to Columbus and defend himself against the accusations against him. Rueter refused to go, and so the president went to Maple Grove where together with Pastor Koehler he reiterated his request. Since Rueter in agreement with his wife steadfastly refused, the president was forced to suspend him from his preaching office.

In the course of the previous year Pastor Reim received a call from the Ev. Lutheran congregation in Helenville which he accepted.

The Ev. Lutheran St. Paul congregation of Lomira and the Ev. Lutheran Emmanuel congregation of Theresa served by Pastor Bading were accepted into synod membership.

Heinrich Sieker, from Newtonburg, a promising young man, was presented to the synod for the purpose of preparing him for the preaching ministry. The president was authorized to see if he could possibly study with Dr. Schaeffer in Gettysburg. For the intervening time Pastor Reim had the goodness of heart to take him along to Helenville in order to give him further necessary instruction. Goldammer himself had done this earlier.

According to the parochial reports

Children baptized	804
Confirmed	176
Communicants	2327
Buried	112
Heathen Missions	\$105
Inner Missions	\$59
Synod Treasury	\$21.13
Parochial Schools	16
Sunday Schools	7

Pastor Muehlhaeuser's congregation bought a new organ which cost \$900 of which \$700 has been paid.

X

The Ev. Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin met on June 18, 1859 in Racine, Pastor Conrad's congregation.

During the course of the past synodical year the Lord again sent us new workers for his vineyard.

Candidate C. Braun from Coadjuthen in Prussian Lithuania, a student from the Berlin Mission House, came to Wisconsin, recommended by Inspector Wallmann.

Since Brother Goldammer accepted the call from the congregation in

Burlington, and Brother Koehler became his successor in Manitowoc, Brother Braun was therefore ordained by the Northwest Conference and took over the former territory of Pastor Koehler.

Pastor Fachtmann was a traveling missionary for four months and founded a new Ev. Lutheran congregation in Fond du Lac.

About this time Candidate J. Hoffmann from Tomaskow Russian Posten,⁸ a student from the Berlin Mission House also recommended by Inspector Wallmann, arrived. Candidate Hoffmann was ordained by the Southern Conference and was Pastor Fachtmann's successor in his two congregations in Town of Polk and Richfield.

Brother Wald,⁹ who was a traveling missionary in Alsace, (prevailed upon by Pastor Streissguth who had this year made a trip to Germany) came to America and was ordained by the Northwest Conference in Fond du Lac. He was called to be the preacher

by the congregation in Menasha and Neenah.

Candidate Duborg from Holstein was ordained and was called as preacher by the congregation in Columbus to succeed Rueter.

Heinrich Sieker was sent to Gettysburg by the president to study with Dr. Schaeffer. The synod promised to contribute \$50 a year for him.

Candidate L. Needmann¹⁰ from Hardeggen, Hanover, presented himself to be ordained. Needmann was referred to the Southern Conference and to the president for supervision and for further advancement.

L. Needmann in the meantime should teach school in the congregation in Greenfield, should read the sermons, and should further educate himself through study. His sermons, which he himself writes, should be given to the president for review.

The Pastors Braun, Hoffmann and Waldt were accepted as members of the synod. A. Rueter was conditionally accepted, if he receives an honorable testimony.

Congregations were accepted into the synod:

Friedens congregation in Kenosha, Pastor Stark

St. Peter congregation in Town Addison, Pastor Roell

Emmanuel congregation in Town Trenton, Pastor Roell

St. John congregation in West Bend

St. John congregation in Burlington, Pastor Goldammer

The Ev. Lutheran congregation in Helenville, Pastor Reim

St. Jacobi congregation in Theresa, Pastor Bading

St. Matthew congregation in Town Lebanon

A committee of five preachers was appointed to draw up a letter of request to the friendly societies in Germany, relating to

I A synodical library

II Ways and means to establish a traveling missionary

III The further sending of workers for Wisconsin

Caused by the request of Dr. Reynolds that our synod possibly attach itself to the State University in Springfield, Ill., a committee of five preachers was appointed to pursue the matter further. The president was authorized to visit the Hon. Synod of Illinois, which holds its session in Chicago in order to gather better information, namely in respect to the confessional position

and also about the relationship under which conditions we could unite ourselves with the seminary.

More congregations were accepted into membership: The Ev. Lutheran congregation in Fond du Lac, Pastor Fachtmann

St. John and St. James congregation in Maple Grove without a preacher

The Ev. Lutheran congregation in La Crosse without a preacher

Ev. Lutheran Emmanuel congregation in Caledonia

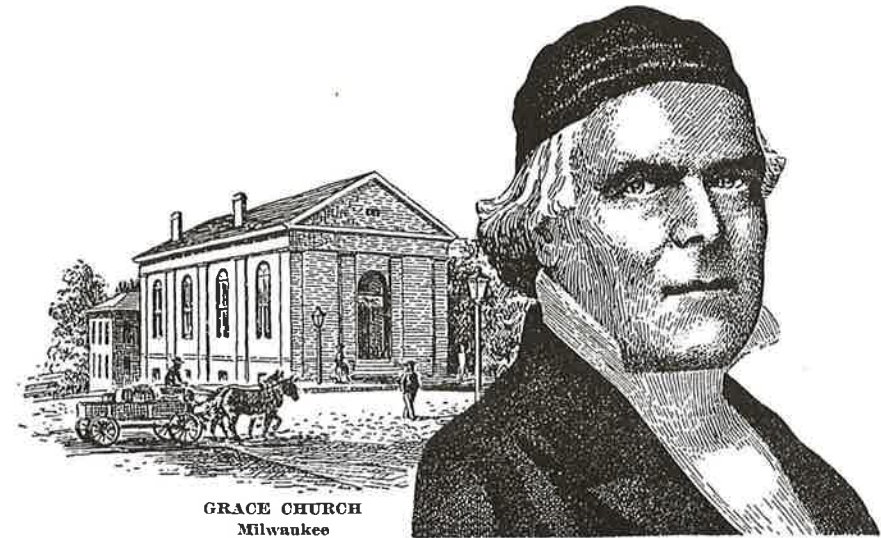
The Ev. Lutheran congregation in Burr Oak without a preacher

Parochial reports:

Baptized	1179
Confirmed	287
Communicants	4709
All-day Schools	17
Sunday Schools	16
Inner Missions	\$85.82
Outer Missions	\$125.40
Synod Treasury	\$ 45.47

ENDNOTES

1. Wuerttemberg is usually spelled by Muehlhaeuser with an "n" instead of an "m".
2. Oertel is called an "apostate" because he later turned Roman Catholic.
3. Wackerhaegen is spelled Wackerhagen in Koehler's *History*. Muehlhaeuser however has the umlaut over the second "a".
4. In the reports of the congregations, the word "communicants" should be understood as the number of persons attending the Lord's Supper and not the total communicant membership of the synod.
5. The name could also be Strangmann – "a" instead of "o".
6. Western Church Society's full correct name was *Evangelischer Kirchenverein des Westens*. Muehlhaeuser has shortened or corrupted the name whenever it is used in his history.
7. Church order = church regulations. This translation of the word can only be determined when looking at the minutes of the next year's convention, at which time two paragraphs were added to the synod constitution concerning the matter.
8. The meaning of "russisch Posten" is obscure.
9. "Wald" was later spelled correctly "*Waldt*."
10. "Needmann" is spelled incorrectly according to synod records. It should be "Nietmann."



GRACE CHURCH
Milwaukee

JOHN MUEHLHAEUSER

The Pastor Who Possessed an All-consuming Love

Johannes Muehlhaeuser
1803 - 1867

Edwin A. Lehmann

A determined figure walked the streets of Basel, Switzerland 156 [today 172] years ago. It was the young Johannes Muehlhaeuser, barely 26 years old, bent on taking up an important task. It was not a task that would gain worldwide recognition for him, nor was it a task that would bring him much wealth. It was a task, though, that would drastically change the direction of his life.

And that is why on a February day in 1829, Johannes Muehlhaeuser was returning home to Notzingen, Wuerttemberg, in Germany. He had visited home many times before for short visits, but this time was different. He was about to start out on his life's work. That life was not to end until 40 years and thousands upon thousands of miles had intervened. It would not end in his hometown but in a small frontier city over 5000 miles away from his birthplace. It would end in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where his mission work finally took him.

Johannes Muehlhaeuser was born in 1803 at Notzingen, Wuerttemberg. As a young man, he had apparently dabbled in the shoemaker trade, since documents at one time

designated him as a journeyman shoemaker. However, from his own accounts it appears that baking was more in his line of business.

It was while working as a baker in the shop of Frau Baeckermeisterin Bueng in Schmaeriken, Canton St. Gallen, Switzerland that Johannes felt the Lord had other plans for him. He had heard that a fellow baker of his from Wuerttemberg, Johann Jacob Weitbrecht, was being ordained for mission work in India after completing studies at a mission house in Basel. An exchange of letters followed between Muehlhaeuser and Weitbrecht concerning the difficulties of mission work, the result being that Muehlhaeuser was bent upon pursuing studies to prepare him for this work. A letter from Weitbrecht to Muehlhaeuser dated April 12, 1827 indicates that Muehlhaeuser desired "also to devote himself to the service of the Lord, if the Lord so wills."¹

Most likely at the encouragement of Weitbrecht, Muehlhaeuser came into the association of Christian Friedrich Spittler, the founder of the *Baseler Missionsgesellschaft*. Spittler had organized a new training school that sought to make use of young craftsmen as missionaries. In his contacts with Christian societies, it had crossed his mind that common craftsmen on their occupational journeys would have greater opportunities to talk religion with fellow workers than the trained theologian would. Thereupon, he organized the *Pilgermission* which trained young men for just such mission service. He would send them off with these instructions:

Endeavor, by faithful work in your trade, to penetrate into the dark spots of Christendom and do what you can to revive the lost faith in Jesus Christ among the people. Report off and on as to this work of yours in the Lord Zion's every pilgrim is a missionary, and vice versa.²

It is into this man's hands and specific training that the young Muehlhaeuser placed himself.

It is extremely vital that the twentieth century Wisconsin Synod historian understand this period of Muehlhaeuser's life. The individual who notes the type of training the young Muehlhaeuser received will be able to understand, although probably not agree with, the actions of the elder Muehlhaeuser in founding the *Gnadengemeinde* (Grace Church) in Milwaukee a quarter of a century later. These years of training, 1827-1829, greatly influenced Muehlhaeuser's later theological practice. The specific method of training deserves a closer examination.

Two qualities of Christian Spittler dominated the spirit of the training the men in the *Pilgermission* received. Although his colleagues apparently leveled occasional criticism at his practice, they never ceased in crediting Spittler as the one with the driving force behind the *Baseler Missionsgesellschaft*. That driving force was born of an all-consuming love for his Savior, a love that found outward expression in his care for all those who were in spiritual or physical want. Spittler was a man who not only knew the gospel's "Golden Rule," but he lived by it to his old age. Together with this all-consuming love for God went a complete trust in the Lord to provide for all financial concerns.

This spirit readily pervaded the philosophy of training outlined in the organization's charter. It was to be an institute in which well reputed, religiously-minded

young men of every creed and station might receive suitable instruction in foreign languages and simple Bible doctrine in order to go forth after several years as useful missionaries to the unnumbered heathen in foreign places and preach to them the saving gospel according to Christ's commission, Mt. 28:19.³

The training in such mission societies was not to be an exhaustive instruction in every facet of theology, but it was intended to be an intensive, practical training in mission work. The students' work, therefore, centered on a working knowledge of Scripture dealing in interpretation from the historical-grammatical sense of the text which brought out the doctrinal and moral teaching. Along with this were studies in German and English, homiletics and rhetoric, science with a stress on geography, church history which centered on mission endeavors, administrative practices, and an introductory course in medicine.

As can be seen from the course of studies and the purpose of the institute itself, no emphasis was placed upon the importance of the Lutheran confessions as being a clear exposition of Scripture. Whatever training in exegesis and dogmatics that was received was taught in what seems to have been an isagogical study of Scripture.

It is not difficult to 'see why there was a void of sound Lutheran exegetical-dogmatical training in the students' instruction. Although every effort was made to give these men a thorough education with a broad base of knowledge, the purpose of the mission society was very simply "to get the Word out as quickly as possible." Together with this, the fact must be added that the Lutherans in the southern parts of Germany and the Calvinists in Switzerland were more tolerant in their practice.

These are important facts in Muehlhaeuser's training. Knowing them helps the individual to understand more clearly the tolerant theological attitude which characterized the *Gnadengemeinde's* early years. Lina Mayer, a daughter of one of the first families to belong to *Gnadengemeinde* alludes to this prevailing tolerance when she writes concerning the makeup of those first founders, "There was a contingent of Germans who came from Middle and South Germany who were used to the ritual of the Reformed and United Church of Hanover, Baden, Wuerttemberg, Saxony, and the Rhinelands."⁴ The *Gnadengemeinde's* first articles of incorporation filed April 21, 1851 also allude to this departure from traditional Lutheran practice:

*Beschlossen: Das sich unsere Gemeinde, auf den Grund der Apostel und Propheten, wovon Jesus Christus der Eckstein ist, gegruendet, zur Augsburgischen Confession und Luthers kleinen Katechismus bekennt, dass aber nie ein Prediger derselben, weder bei Taufe noch Abendmahl, den Ritus der Alt-Lutherischen Kirche gebrauchen darf und Soll.*⁵ (Be it resolved that our congregation, founded on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, whereon Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, makes confession to the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism. However, never may or shall a preacher of the said congregation use the rite of the Old Lutheran Church, whether in Baptism or the Lord's Supper.)

This apparent tolerance in the *Gnadengemeinde's* early years might best be evaluated if one goes back to those early years of Muehlhaeuser's training in Basel. The

spirit imparted there stressed an all-consuming love towards the Savior, evidenced by a love toward people that sought in every way to alleviate their spiritual and physical need as quickly as possible.

To finish the account of Muehlhaeuser's early years in Europe, the determined figure who walked the streets of Basel as a missionary student left those streets located near the *Pilgermission* in 1829 at the age of 26. During the ensuing years, he spent time in Munich, Austria, Hungary, and Bohemia. Much of his work was done in distributing Christian literature among the "rationalistic infidels" of the day. He made his livelihood by working at his baker's trade, thus fulfilling Spittler's idea that his students should seek to spread Christianity by utilizing the opportunities which arose in their occupations to talk religion with fellow workers.

During these years Muehlhaeuser also spent several months in prison because the rationalistic governments and police frequently stopped those engaged in evangelism efforts. Due to such opposition and the rise of cholera epidemics, mission work was not an easy task in the 1830s. However, Johannes Muehlhaeuser resolutely stuck to his task with an evangelical spirit that pointed many towards Christ with his simple testimony that reflected Spittler's personal training. Finally, in 1832 he returned to his parental home in Notzingen.

Commissioning by the *Langenberger Verein* to America

Muehlhaeuser did not remain long in Notzingen, and soon again took up his work as *Pilgermission*. By 1835 his journeys carried him to the Rhenish mission house in Barmen, a city located along the Rhein. Barmen was a part of the *Langenberger Verein* which had mission houses in several other cities. Previously, this mission society had been named the *Evangelische Gesellschaft fuer Nordamerika*. This name underscored its purpose. It was at the Barmen mission house that Muehlhaeuser devoted his study now towards overseas mission work.

Since Muehlhaeuser already had much practice working among the different Germanic people, the *Langenberger Verein* extended this call to him:

... it has been proposed to us that we designate from among our small number of seminarians a student who as a catechete and teacher will help the ordained theologian, likewise to be commissioned, to break the ground.

Gladly are we acceding to this wish and rejoice that our brother Joh.

Muehlhaeuser from Notzingen is heartily willing to accept the proposal. This dear brother has spent about two years in our mission seminary....

Because Muehlhaeuser was to represent the *Langenberger Verein*, it would do well to note the spiritual influence this organization exerted on him as a student at Barmen. Again we note a great influence concerning tolerance in doctrinal confessions and practice upon the 32-year-old Muehlhaeuser.

The members of the board of the *Langenberger Verein* belonged to a variety of Evangelical church bodies, not necessarily Lutheran. In fact, this board stipulated that its representatives were

to remain unrestricted as to their Reformed or Lutheran or United-evangelical con-

fession, and that every congregation founded by them was to be free to join the evangelical church of its choice. The aim of the evangelical society was solely to save the distant brethren and sisters from falling away, to lead the erring in the way of truth and instruct them with the Word of Life, so as to gather them into congregations and assure them and their posterity the possession of the treasures of evangelical doctrine.⁷

Clearly, this was not an organization whose doctrinal practice was based on the Lutheran Confessions. In fact, they would probably have rejected any missionary who sought to promote the particular confessional stand of his previous schooling. Here again Muehlhaeuser was exposed to the basic motto, "Get the gospel out as quickly as possible."

The influence of this evangelical tolerance on the part of the *Langenberger Verein* becomes evident later in Muehlhaeuser's own historical account of the founding of the *Gnadengemeinde* in Milwaukee. Muehlhaeuser wrote on September 24, 1849 concerning his aim upon arrival in Milwaukee: "*Meine Absicht war zuerst eine evangelische Gemeinde zu gruenden, hatte beim Beginn 40 bis 50 Zuhoerer.*"⁸ [My aim at first was to establish an evangelical congregation, having at its beginning between 40 and 50 people in attendance]. It would seem that Muehlhaeuser viewed a strict adherence to his Lutheran Confessions as a barrier to serving the spiritual needs of all people.

On August 17, 1837 Muehlhaeuser boarded ship at Bremen as one of the two first missionary representatives of the *Langenberger Verein* to America. On October 3 he landed in New York. The other missionary, whose name was Oertel, was to do the pastoral work. Muehlhaeuser was to teach and act as the practical spiritual advisor. However, Muehlhaeuser's teaching attempts did not make much headway in New York City mainly because parents wanted their children to learn English in the public school system. As a result after a colloquy with the representatives of the New York Ministerium, Muehlhaeuser was licensed as the head of a Lutheran congregation in Rochester, New York. The church belonged to the General Synod and was composed of both Lutheran and Reformed members. One year later he was ordained.

Muehlhaeuser remained at this pastorate in Rochester for ten years. At the end of this ten year stay, he received word from Johann Weinmann that conditions in Wisconsin cried out for pastors to come immediately to that state. Weinmann also had been educated at Barmen under the auspices of the *Langenberger Verein*. He had been sent to New York in 1846 to work with Muehlhaeuser. A close relationship between the two was formed at that time. Weinmann had shortly thereafter been sent on to the town of Oakwood near Milwaukee. Due to this urgent plea from his friend, Muehlhaeuser gave up his ten year pastorate in Rochester, temporarily returned to his earlier vocation as a *Pilger* missionary, and came to Milwaukee on June 27, 1848.

Founding of the *Gnadengemeinde* in Milwaukee

Muehlhaeuser came to Milwaukee primarily to establish a congregation. At the same time he was to act as colporteur in the service of the A. *Trakt Gesellschaft* based in New York. However, according to his own brief history, a sickness in the family prevented him from undertaking the necessary travel into the backwoods of Wisconsin required of the colporteur. He resigned his post as colporteur and devoted his time to

establishing a congregation in Milwaukee. It is interesting to hear how Muehlhaeuser described the spiritual condition of the people at this time:

*Da das kirchliche Verhaeltniss in diese Zeit in Milwaukee ein sehr zerreißenes und trauriges war denn neben den 5 alt luth. Gemeinden, und der Vereinigten Kirche, die im Zerfall war, bestand noch eine Albrechtskirche und Methodisten Kirche, und die hier wohnende sogenannt gebildete Klasse, meist Rationalisten, und ein andere Theil keinen kirchlichen Sinn hatte.*⁹ [The religious condition at this time in Milwaukee was one very distressed and sad condition. Next to the five old Lutheran congregations and the United Church, which was falling apart, there existed an Albrechts Church and a Methodist Church. The so-called cultured class living here was for the most part rationalistic, and another part had no religious sense whatsoever].

Due to this sad state of the spiritual life of the people, Muehlhaeuser notes that the Rev. L. Shapin, pastor of the English Presbyterian Church, and the Rev. J. Miter, pastor of the Congregational Church, invited him to establish a new congregation in Milwaukee. These two English churches rented out a hall in the "Hustis Brickblock" on the corner of Third and Chestnut Streets. They passed on the use of this hall for services free of charge to Muehlhaeuser. On May 13, 1849, the congregation organized itself under the name *Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Dreieinigkeits Kirche* [German Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church].¹⁰

If the recently organized congregation was to survive and grow, Muehlhaeuser realized that it must have its own house of worship. However, instead of waiting until the congregation could fully support itself and raise enough money from among its own membership to build a church, Muehlhaeuser undertook a journey back to New York to raise the necessary funds. He left on June 3, 1850. This was to be a typical practice of Muehlhaeuser, to return to the East or to Germany when funds were needed either for his church or for the young Synod now known as the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, of which he was the first president.

After a six month absence, he returned with \$2106.17. An additional \$1655 was contributed by the English churches in Milwaukee, the Presbyterian and the Congregational Churches in particular. On April 21, 1851 the articles of incorporation previously referred to were drawn up. Since there already existed a *Dreieinigkeits Kirche* in Milwaukee, the congregation decided to take the name "*Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Gnaden Kirche*" instead [German Evangelical Lutheran Grace Church].¹¹

Construction was soon underway. The building proceeded so rapidly that by July 15, 1851 the cornerstone was ready to be laid. A very interesting dedication service followed. Present at the cornerstone laying were the English preachers J. Miter, R. Buchanan, W. H. Spencer, W. L. Parson, S. N. Steel, Th. Griffith, the German preacher Barth, and the Methodist preacher S. Conrad. Into the cornerstone were placed some rather curious articles along with the standard ones: the church letter, *The Lutheran Herald*, *The Jugendfreund*, *The Puritan Recorder*, *The English Temperance Journal*, the different English and German daily newspapers, *Luther's Small Catechism* with the Augsburg Confession, a New Testament, and a three-cent piece. According to Muehlhaeuser's account, "Theodore Blech, the contractor, gave an address, I followed him (Text: 1 Peter 2:6), Pastor Spencer and Pastor Miter gave addresses in English, and

Jacob Conrad gave the closing prayer."¹² After the cornerstone laying, Muehlhaeuser returned once more to the East to raise additional funds.

On Christmas Day 1851 the new building was dedicated as "Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church to the glory of the Triune God."¹³ This time fellow Lutheran pastors presided over the festivities, at least during the morning services. Pastor Weinmann from Oakwood preached the dedication sermon on Zechariah 6:12. Pastor J. Wrede from Granville presided over the act of dedication. Muehlhaeuser spoke the prayer and notes that *die Kirche war voll Menschen* (the church was filled with people).¹⁴ In the afternoon an English service was held. Again the Congregational Pastor J. Miter preached on Ps. 84:1. Pastor Spencer spoke the prayer.

Finally, in the evening service Pastor Wrede of Granville preached on 1 Kgs. 8:29. Muehlhaeuser closes his account with these words:

*Es war fuer mich und die Gemeinde ein Tag des Danks und der Freude gegen Gott, der aus lauter and freier Gnade, um Jesu willen, uns dieses Haus geschenkt hatte.*¹⁵ [It was for me and the congregation a day of thanks and joy towards God who, out of his pure and free grace for Jesus' sake, has bestowed this house upon us].

Lina Mayer comments about the pride and activity of the young congregation:

The new organization was named Evangelical Lutheran Grace Church, but hardly a member knew the name of the church because it was called "Our Church" and popularly "Muehlhaeuser's Church." They were an enthusiastic people and shortly organized a singing society at the church.¹⁶

Not only was a singing group organized, but Grace Church, under the leadership of Muehlhaeuser, was active in establishing a parochial day school and a Sunday school which often had over 200 children in attendance. From the beginning it was very active in helping other churches in Wisconsin to establish themselves. The church minutes available beginning in 1860 report that over 20 churches were directly aided by Grace. In the community the congregation was instrumental in starting such projects as the Protestant Orphan Asylum, the Sick Man's Aid Society, Passavant Hospital (now part of the Good Samaritan Medical Center), and other charitable organizations. If this list of early accomplishments is any indication of the charitable, religious fervor of the *Gnadengemeinde's* members, Muehlhaeuser did well in passing along the gospel spirit of his former teacher in the *Pilgermission* in Basel, Christian Spittler.

Before leaving this subject, proper credit is due the man whose benevolent spirit did much to influence the activity of this young congregation in the 1850s. Perhaps the best tribute which can be paid Johannes Muehlhaeuser was made in an article printed by the *Milwaukee Journal* on March 16, 1963. A portion of that article follows:

A determined figure walked the streets of Milwaukee 110 years ago, a cane over his shoulder and a wooden washstand hanging from the crook end.

It was "Papa" Muehlhaeuser. He had begged the washstand from a furniture dealer and was delivering it to a needy family. "Papa" was the popular name that was given for years to the Rev. John Muehlhaeuser, a German missionary who founded

Grace Lutheran Church in 1849. Among Milwaukee's early clergymen, there was perhaps none more colorful.

A stern face hid a warm and hospitable heart. . . .¹⁷

Lina Mayer recalls that during the cholera epidemic of 1852 Muehlhaeuser was a father to all the poor. He helped them in finding homes, work, and in caring for their sick. Mayer supplies us with this anecdote from his life:

I remember that he went to a butcher, Mr. Nunemacher on Market Place and just said, "Give me a piece off that quarter and give me that piece of meat; it is good for soup." He would take the package, wrap it up, and take it to the poor, and the same way with groceries and the bakery. He provided for the unemployed, and the care of the children was quite a task. One family arrived, the father and mother died, so Rev. Muehlhaeuser adopted the girl, who must have been six or seven years old.¹⁸

Finally, J. P. Koehler remembers him with these words:

At the 1855 Synod meeting in Grace Church, Milwaukee, the assembly, first of all, offered thanks and praise to the Lord for his protection in the cholera epidemic that had swept Milwaukee and vicinity during the year. In this trying period Muehlhaeuser, Synod's founder, had nobly acquitted himself in not, like many, fleeing the city, but fearlessly and with untiring devotion taking care of the sick and dying and ministering to their bodily as well as spiritual needs. The whole city at that time tendered him its grateful recognition and long after kept his memory green.¹⁹

Truly, Johannes Muehlhaeuser learned his lessons well from his Baseler teacher. He strove to pass that charitable, evangelical spirit on to the young *Gnadengemeinde* in Milwaukee. One can surely look to him as a model of a man whose all-consuming love for his Savior and all those in physical and spiritual want motivated him in all his work.

An Evaluation Of Muehlhaeuser's Theological Practice

A question that is frequently raised when evaluating the work of Johannes Muehlhaeuser regards the soundness of his confessional stand. It is vital when considering such a question to remember that he was bound by the theological climate of the eighteenth-century, a century in which rationalism rose to the fore. However, he was not tied to rationalism. On the contrary, he was its staunch opponent. Muehlhaeuser may not have had a firm, thoroughly Lutheran theological training, but he was sound in regard to justification. For example, after hearing a Lutheran pastor in New York preach a sermon, Muehlhaeuser remarked that the preacher appeared "unclear and inexperienced in the main matter of the gospel, namely, the righteousness of God which is granted to men by grace through faith."²⁰

He obviously lacked a thorough scholastic foundation. It has previously been noted what his training in the *Pilgermission* entailed. It should be noted that this training in the *Pilgermission* was not directly influenced by the Prussian Union. His ease at mixing with Reformed-based churches arose from a brand of relaxed Swabian Lutheranism. His

way was the way of Spittler, also a Swabian, whose chief characteristic was a good-hearted, untiring, unselfish concern for others. If a designation must be given to Muehlhaeuser describing his particular theological discipline, one would not be inclined to call him a dogmatician, nor an exegete, nor a church historian, but a practical theologian. This helps to explain his unionistic tendencies. In his practice he always remained a *Pilger* missionary in heart, soul, and mind.

This evaluation in no way seeks to deprecate Muehlhaeuser's character nor cast doubt on his religious sincerity. Muehlhaeuser always meant to be a Lutheran, even though he was filled with strong distaste of the "Old Lutherans." This distaste was born from his South German heritage with its emphasis on practical mission work. To him doctrinal controversies were fostered by the contentious spirit of people like the "Old Lutherans." Such controversies were nothing more than futile battles about words. They accomplished nothing but the hindering of the work at hand. Perhaps that is why he writes concerning his aim for the new congregation in Milwaukee to be this: "My aim was first to found an *evangelical* congregational."²¹ However, he in no way intended to do away with Lutheranism in favor of a liberal, indifferent spirit. No, he writes few lines later:

*Bei reiferem Ueberlegen, dachte ich mit dem groessern Theil der Gemeinde, dass es zweckmaesiger sein wurde, eine ev. luth. Gemeinde zu gruenden.*²²

[After mature consideration, I thought, along with the greater part of the congregation, that it would be more appropriate to establish an evangelical Lutheran congregation].

Muehlhaeuser never intended to be anything but a Lutheran. Koehler speaks of his fervor: "He was a simple hearted Lutheran from his youth and the idea of surrendering anything of his Lutheran faith would have filled him with consternation."²³ On the other hand, the front against unbelief was the all-compelling reason which convinced Muehlhaeuser that he must, if need be, unite with the Reformed, true to the unionistic practice of the time in Germany. It seems that to Muehlhaeuser a misunderstanding of Scripture's teachings was tolerable, since that could be corrected; acceptance of Rationalism was not. As a result, we see that on occasion he practiced fellowship with the English churches in Milwaukee up until the dedication of the *Gnadengemeinde's* new church building in 1851. After that there is no extant record in present day Grace Church's archives which has been found that indicates he continued such unionistic practices after 1851.

Unselfishly, Muehlhaeuser dedicated himself to the cause of spreading the Gospel to the unbelieving and of alleviating the wants of the needy. He provided for them wherever he could in the congregation, in the synod, or in the city. Yet, it might have been better if he had concentrated more on teaching each of these, the congregation in particular, to attend to its own needs. Once the congregation goes outside of its confessional bounds, trouble may ensue. The danger is that help may soon be secured wherever it is available. A congregation needs to foster responsible stewardship practices within its own membership. Hence, instead of turning to churches in the East and to the English churches in Milwaukee for money and assistance, the congregation would have been better advised to draw upon its own resources. Thereby flirtation with unionistic practices might have been avoided in Grace Church's early history.

By and large, it is not difficult to see that the *Gnadengemeinde's* and Muehlhaeuser's practice did not follow the lines of strict confessional development as did the other midwest churches and pastors who belonged to such strongly confessional church bodies as the Missouri Synod. Koehler notes that Muehlhaeuser once referred to the Lutheran Confessions as "paper fences."²⁴ He aimed toward gathering souls and not toward obstructing them with confessional stands. Yet, Muehlhaeuser never opposed those pastors who were more intent on keeping the precise lines of Lutheranism intact.

No one can claim Muehlhaeuser as the founder of true Lutheran confessionalism within the Wisconsin Synod. He was not even instrumental in developing it. However, the first pastor of the *Gnadengemeinde* did much to shape a congregation that has for over 133 [today 149] years always taken an active role in living its scriptural, its Lutheran beliefs. Koehler sums up Muehlhaeuser's contribution to the congregation and the Synod with this tribute:

So Muehlhaeuser was not the founder of the Wisconsin Synod's confessionalism, nor did he organize it as it developed. But what he represented was no less great: a personal living faith, a childlike trust in his Savior, and a burning zeal to build his kingdom and spend himself in the work. Like a father he provided in his congregation and beyond its bounds for all who were in need and infused the same spirit into his parishioners.²⁵

Muehlhaeuser's Influence on the *Gnadengemeinde*

Finally, a brief summary of Muehlhaeuser's influence on the congregation is in order. Much of his influence on the character and growth of the congregation has already been discussed. As Muehlhaeuser lived his beliefs, so he imparted that same spirit to the congregation. The *Gnadengemeinde* was wholeheartedly dedicated to mission work. Church Council minutes between January 23, 1860 and October 14, 1895 list 24 mission churches aided by Grace Church, and this may be only a partial listing. Furthermore, a parochial school was begun almost immediately so that not only would the members' children be educated in a Christian setting, but also the neighborhood immigrant children. Up until its closing in 1935, the school was always considered a strong mission arm of the church.

Since in those early times there were no organized charities, it fell upon the churches to perform much of the work of philanthropy. Here again, Muehlhaeuser instilled his spirit into the congregation. The *Gnadengemeinde* always took an active role in the organization of many community projects, such as the establishment of orphanages, hospitals, war relief facilities.

It has been noted that Muehlhaeuser's confessional stand was weak at times. An example of that as it affected the congregation is evidenced by the wording of the constitution which downplayed the stand of the more conservative *Alt Lutheraner*. Although the confessional stand may not have been as strong as we would desire that it should have been, no evidence up until this time has been found that indicates the congregation ever gave in to those who deliberately watered down scriptural dogma. In fact, Muehlhaeuser and the *Gnadengemeinde* in particular grew more confessional as the years passed. The following accounts provide interesting examples of this. In the minutes of the quarterly congregational meeting held April 8, 1867 the following is

recorded:

The fact that some of our members belong to lodges was discussed. The disadvantage of this were brought up according to the Word of God. These members were urged to leave the lodges.²⁶

Later, after Muehlhaeuser's death, on March 4, 1868 a resolution was passed prohibiting any member from belonging to a "secret organization."

This matter came to a head in 1869 as several members were released from membership. Also released were those who were in favor of practicing unionism with other church bodies. In the March 1, 1869 council meeting minutes we read:

Several members were absent during the debate about fellowship with other church bodies and asked for their release. They were Fried. Mayer, Poppert and son, Aug. Brush, Theo. Wettstein, Paul Binner, John Bush and son. These men were granted their release.²⁷

Interestingly enough the names Friedrich Mayer and Paul Binner appear on the roster of members who founded the Friedens Evangelical Church on February 28, 1869. According to that church's centennial booklet of 1969:

Friedens was the first congregation established in Milwaukee by the German Evangelical Synod of North America which denomination later merged with the Reformed Church of America and was called the Evangelical and Reformed Church and in 1962 joined with the Congregational Christian Churches to form the United Church of Christ.²⁸

We can see by these accounts that the *Gnadengemeinde* was not about to tolerate any member belonging to a lodge, nor would they tolerate any who sympathized with Reformed teaching. Although Muehlhaeuser and the *Gnadengemeinde* verbally denied the necessity of an orthodox Lutheran confessional stand, in practice they adhered to it, at least in these recorded cases.

Johannes Muehlhaeuser was dearly loved by his congregation for his strong Christian leadership during its infant years. Lina Mayer, summarizing their loss at his death, supplied a fitting closing tribute to "Papa Muehlhaeuser" as she described his last days in 1867:

The winter's work, then the Lenten services, and Easter, and confirmation following, absorbed all his strength. He was an invalid after that, and took to his bed during the summer. My parents asked me to go to visit him because they knew he could not live much longer. He received me kindly and after a short visit I said, "Goodbye," when he pressed my hand and said; "Lina, live so that we will meet again at the throne of God in white robes with palms in our hands." That was the last I heard of him, for shortly after, in September, he died. It was a great loss to our church, and he was mourned throughout the city²⁹

So ended the life of Johannes Muehlhaeuser. He died in a new land thousands of miles away from his hometown at the age of 64. He may not be long remembered for his

staunch confessional stand nor for his fiery oratory. However, to those who know of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church's history, he will be remembered as its founder whose all-consuming love for his Savior guided the congregation in living according to the gospel's "Golden Rule."

ENDNOTES

1. John Philipp Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, (St. Cloud, Minnesota: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970), p. 29.
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3. J. P. Koehler, p. 21.
4. Lina Mayer, "An Historical Sketch of the Earliest Years of the Evangelical Lutheran Grace Church," (personal recollections), 1932, p. 3.
5. *Kirchen-Ordnung der Deutschen Evangelische Lutherische Gnaden-Gemeinde in Milwaukee*, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Druck der Germania Publ. Co., 1851), p. 1.
6. J. P. Koehler, p. 29.
7. J. P. Koehler, p. 28.
8. Johannes Muehlhaeuser, *Geschichtliche Entstehung und Gruendung der Deutschen Evangelischlutherischen Dreieinigkeitskirche in Milwaukee*, (personal recollections), September 24, 1849, p. 1.
9. J. Muehlhaeuser, p. 1.
10. J. Muehlhaeuser, p. 1.
11. Johannes Muehlhaeuser, *Nachschrift*, 1851, p. 2.
12. J. Muehlhaeuser, 1851, p. 2.
13. J. Muehlhaeuser, 1851, p. 3.
14. J. Muehlhaeuser, 1851, p. 3.
15. J. Muehlhaeuser, 1851, p. 3.
16. L. Mayer, p. 3.
17. David A. Runge, "Pastor Begged Food, Cash to Help Needy," *The Milwaukee Journal*, Saturday, March 16, 1963.
18. L. Mayer, p. 5.
19. J. P. Koehler, p. 48-49.
20. J. P. Koehler, p. 35.
21. J. Muehlhaeuser, 1849, p. 1.
22. J. Muehlhaeuser, 1849, p. 1.
23. J. P. Koehler, p. 72.
24. J. P. Koehler, p. 45.
25. J. P. Koehler, p. 72.
26. Minutes of Congregational Meeting, April 8, 1867.
27. Minutes of Council Meeting, March 1, 1869, Julius Andrae, Sec.
28. Friedens, (Centennial History Booklet) 1969, p. 3.
29. L. Mayer, p. 32.

This paper was Pastor Lehmann's senior history thesis at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin. He is currently serving Zion Lutheran Church in Springfield, Missouri.

from the editor . . .

by Arnold O. Lehmann

Special thanks to Professor Martin Westerhaus for his article, and for his research work from the original manuscripts dating back more than a century.

The 150th anniversary of the founding of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, originally called simply the Wisconsin Synod, will be observed during the last half of this year and through the first part of 2001. The editor thought it worthy to repeat two articles from two early editions of this *Journal* which have a close relationship to the material concerned with the founding of the synod. The Muehlhaeuser article appeared in Vol. 1 No. 1 and the ten year history of the synod appeared in Vol. 3 No. 2.

During this anniversary period of the synod, it would be a good time for a visit to the museum – Salem Landmark Lutheran Church. It is located at 6840 N. 107th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 53224. For information about visiting the exhibits, contact Professor Alan Siggelkow, Committee Chairman for the museum. His address is 11805 N. Seminary Drive, Mequon, Wisconsin 53092. His telephone number is (414) 257-8847. The museum may be visited by appointment; it is not open daily. Exhibits relating to the early years of the synod have been and are being prepared. Admission is free.