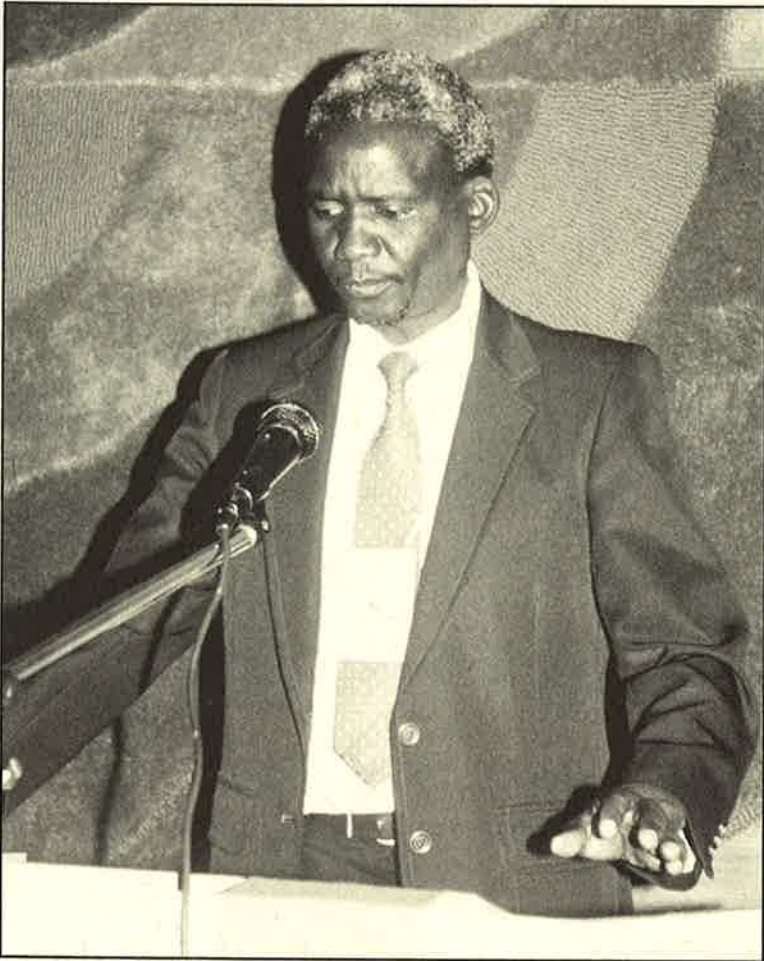


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WELS Historical Institute
Journal

Volume 12, Number 2
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Editorial Staff *Edward C. Fredrich*
 Naomi Plocher
 Armin W. Schuetze

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On the cover: Salimo Hachibamba, President, Seminary of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa, essayist at the constituting convention of the CELC.

**Proceedings of the Convention of the
Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin
Held in the Church of the
First Evangelical Lutheran Congregation
in Racine, Wisconsin
June 18 to 24, 1859 A.D.**

Milwaukee: Printed by P.V. Deuster, publisher of the *Seeboten*

In accordance with the resolution adopted at last year's convention in Milwaukee in May 1858 and with the special decision by the president the pastors and congregation delegates of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin met on Saturday, June 18, 1859 in the city of Racine, Wisconsin where they received a cordial welcome from the pastor and his congregation. That same evening a preparatory service for Holy Communion was held for the pastors, delegates, visitors and congregation members at which Pastor Muehlhaeuser gave the confessional address on I Cor. 11:26-32.

On Holy Trinity Sunday, June 19, Pastor Conrad conducted the festival liturgy and Pastor Streissguth preached the festival and synodical sermon on Matt. 16:26:

The great worth of the human soul:

1. evidenced by the work of the Triune God on it
2. laid on the heart of each Christian
3. especially upon the pastors [*Seelsorgers* = caretakers of the soul]

After the sermon Holy Communion was celebrated. In the afternoon Pastor Rueter preached on Luke 16:19-31.

TRANSACTIONS AND BUSINESS OF THE SYNOD

First Session, Monday, June 20, 8:30 a.m.

The members of the Ministerium together with the congregational delegates met at 8:30 a.m. in the Lutheran Church. The honorable president of the synod, Pastor Muehlhaeuser, opened the session with a liturgical service which included hymns and the reading of a portion of Scripture (I Cor. 2).

Present were the following eligible to vote:

- a) Pastors
 1. J. Muehlhaeuser from Milwaukee
 2. C. Goldammer from Burlington
 3. C. Koester from Davis, P.O.
 4. J. Conrad from Racine
 5. J. Bading from Theresa

6. D. Huber from Prospect Hill
7. E. Sauer from Herman, P.O.
8. Ph. Koehler from Manitowoc
9. W. Streissguth from Milwaukee
10. G. Reim from Helenville
11. Chr. Starck from Kenosha
12. Ph. Sprengling from Newtonburgh, P.O.
13. F.T.Hennicke from Niles, Cook Co., Illinois
14. G. Fachtmann from Fond du Lac
15. J.H. Roell from West Bend

To complete the list of regular pastors, the names of the pastors who were accepted during the time of the convention are added here, including Pastor Diehlmann, who was absent:

16. C. Diehlmann from Montello
17. Braun from Nenno, P.O.
18. J. Hoffmann from Station P.O., Cedar creek
19. F. Waldt from Menasha
20. A. Rueter from Columbus (now Maple Grove)
21. H. Duborg from Columbus

Pastor Diehlmann of Montello was absent. His private, delivered excuse was referred by resolution to the committee (No. 1) consisting of Pastors Koester, Reim and Starck.

- b) Congregation delegates: from the Evang. Lutheran
1. Mr. Mich. Ziemer Grace congregation, Milwaukee
 2. Mr. Ph. Hamm St. John congregation, Milwaukee
 3. Mr. J. Hess St. John congregation, Kilbourn Rd.
 4. Mr. A. Braun congregation of Racine

Also the following members who were eligible to vote after their congregations were accepted:

- Congregation delegates: from the Evangelical Lutheran
6. Mr. R. Waldt St. John congregation, Burlington
 7. Mr. C. Klutt St. Peter congregation, Town Addison
 8. Mr. G. Schuette St. Peter congregation, Jackson
 9. Mr. G. Meyer St. Michael congregation, Watertown
 10. Mr. G. Schmidt Immanuel congregation, Caledonia

The following were accepted as advisory members:

Pastors Braun, A. Rueter, J. Hoffmann, F. Waldt and Candidates Rector M. Ewert, L. Niedmann, H. Duborg.

After the synod had fully organized itself the Hon. president gave the following annual report:

Annual Report of the President

In the name of Jesus! The Lord has helped us hitherto!

My dear brothers in the ministry and esteemed delegates and congregations united with us!

For the ninth time we are assembled as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and for the second time in this church and congregation.

The recall to mind of the first synodical convention in Racine in 1852 is for us a sad one because it brings back the memory of the founder of the Lutheran church in Racine who was also the co-founder of our synod. He was the first of our synod to come to Wisconsin and is the first of us in heaven. He is now no longer a member of the church militant but of the church triumphant, and is standing there at the crystal sea together with the perfected army of witnesses who have come from great tribulation, and have had their clothes washed in the blood of the Lamb. If the sea would give forth its dead, then our blessed brother Weinmann, glorified into the likeness of Jesus, would also say: "Lord, your ways are just and true; yours be the glory forever. Amen!" – I would like to recommend to the synod that it pass a resolution in which we express our deepest sympathy to the bereaved widow and children of our departed brother Weinmann in their great loss and suffering.

Brothers, looking back to the past, looking forward to the future, looking at ourselves, our difficult profession, at our effectiveness and at the congregations entrusted to us – may we be justified to say with the apostle: – "we are perplexed, but not in despair." [KJV, II Cor. 4:8b]

Although in the past year we were misjudged by members of the Lutheran church, by men whom we respect and with whom we professed the confessions of the Lutheran church, and were branded as heretics [Rottirer] by those who speak about God's justice and covenant and yet hate discipline: we nevertheless do not despair when we carry out the work of the Lord here in Wisconsin; for up till now the Lord has gladly and richly blessed us. To him, the Triune God, be the honor and the praise for our success!

It is also true, Brothers, if we glance at ourselves, our weaknesses, unfaithfulness and often slothfulness we would again become perplexed. Because the work which is bestowed upon us to do is difficult, grave reckoning awaits us in the next life for those souls entrusted to us. Yet with all the feeling of our wretchedness we desire not to despair nor dare it, but we must feel driven to more prayer, to humility and faithfulness.

If we in our work see the fruits of our labor—are we then not perplexed? How difficult would it be for us if here and there it is reported that this or that congregation member has died about whom we know that he was not driven from death to life and he had not arrived at a living faith and the freedom of the children of God. What a feeling, what an indictment, if one knows that he has not spoken earnestly enough with the respective deceased about the perilous condition of his soul while he was still alive!

The same holds true in respect to our congregations. In general, does it not appear to be pitiful? What meager active, Christian, churchly life do we find there; how little is being done for the school, Sunday School, church, missions, educational matters and other functions of the church! What shortcomings, failures, often sins does the preacher call to their attention—to whom the Gospel is preached every Sunday, and to whom the Holy Communion is distributed. How difficult it is for some congregations to join a synod until they feel ready to do so; and how long does it take until they recognize the blessings of such a union not only for the preacher but also for the congregation itself; and how seldom do they bear witness to the recognition of these blessings through

voluntary contributions to send the preacher and delegates to the synodical convention! – Brothers, still much more could be said about the depraved conditions in our congregations, but can't those already given be enough to perplex us? Certainly, but also with our congregations we will not despair. – Things have indeed improved in many ways in the last nine years, and we must place our trust in the Head of the Church that it will get better with each passing year. Doesn't it often happen to us as it did to the servant of the Lord whom Isaiah 49:9 laments: "I have labored to no purpose, I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing." [NIV] Thus it gives us the confidence to know that the work which we are carrying out in our congregations is the work of our God.

The duties of my offices were many and varied in the past year—some very gratifying, others quite distressing. I shall now give to the Hon. synod a brief review.

Preacher Changes

Soon after the close of last year's synodical convention the congregation in Burlington sent Pastor Goldammer a call and he felt, since the call came to him unsolicited, that he must accept the call from the Lord. Pastor Goldammer's congregation in Manitowoc, thus being vacant, sent a call to Pastor Koehler which he accepted after careful consideration, and thus he became Pastor Goldammer's successor in Manitowoc.

God has heard our request for workers in his vineyard in Wisconsin in that the vacant congregations of Brother Koehler could be provided with a shepherd. Inspector Wallmann of Berlin sent a student who had been educated in the local Mission Seminary to America with the instructions to accept a position in the area served by our synod. Just at the right time Candidate Braun arrived. He, at the direction of the president, was examined by the Northwest Conference, ordained and then installed by Brother Koehler as his successor. – Correspondence No. 1 of those lying before me is a report of the examination and festive ordination of the said brother.

On the 11th Sunday after Trinity I installed Pastor Goldammer in his new congregation in Burlington.

Soon after last year's convention Pastor Fachtmann took up his call as traveling preacher [*Reiseprediger*], devoting at first three months to the task and then going out at repeated intervals. Correspondence No. 2 contains his many reports of the success of his arduous and extensive mission work. – The untiring efforts of our *Reiseprediger* had this result that a new congregation was founded in Fond du Lac and was organized as an Evangelical Lutheran body, which earnestly desired that Pastor Fachtmann settle permanently in Fond du Lac. – The president gave his approval, but not to be effective until a successor for him could be found. At this time a second student of the Berlin Mission Seminary arrived in the person of Candidate Julius Hoffmann, having been recommended by Inspector Wallmann. He was ordained into the holy preaching ministry by the Southern Conference in Kenosha on January 11 of this year after having taken the examination. In Kenosha at that same time a new church was dedicated, which was built as a result of Pastor Starck's labors there. Correspondence No. 3 contains the report of the above mentioned examination and ordination. As a result of Brother Streissguth's trip to Germany two young men were persuaded to serve the Lord in the

Lutheran Church in America. Friedrich Waldt had been a *Reiseprediger* in Alsace for several years, and we welcomed him as a co-worker whom we could use in Wisconsin. Urgent circumstances made it necessary that someone be placed in the very important area of Menasha and Neenah, which had been opened by our *Reiseprediger*. Consequently I charged the Northwestern Conference to examine Brother Waldt and to ordain him so that he could function as an ordained preacher in the congregation which had called him to be their pastor. Since I myself, in the interest of the synod, went to Fond du Lac for the conference—which, however, because of a misunderstanding was to be held at a time different from what I thought—it turned out that Candidate Waldt was examined and festively ordained on May 18 by me and Pastors Fachtmann and Hoffmann instead of by the Conference. Correspondence No. 4 contains the report of this last mentioned official act as well as a letter from him to the president.

Mr. Carl Wagner from Carlsruhe, who arrived here with Brother Waldt, likewise placed himself at the disposal of the synod. Consequently I, together with Brother Streissguth, examined him, found that he had promising gifts and knowledge, and felt it best to recommend him to the synod for further consideration. He is now serving in the school of St. John congregation, Milwaukee.

Last fall I felt it necessary in the interest of the synod to pay a visit to Brother Rueter in Columbus in order to settle some misunderstandings there. The correspondence with Brother Rueter is designated Correspondence No. 5.

I will return to other synodical business at the designated time.

Aspiring Candidates

Soon after the last convention, I, as directed by the synod, carried on correspondence with Dr. Schaeffer of Gettysburg in regard to student Heinrich Sieker. This continued till October because of a lack of funds. During the interim Pastor Reim was so kind as to accept Mr. Sieker into his home to help him get started with his studies. In October he went to Gettysburg and Prof. Schaeffer and he himself sent us reports on the progress of his studies. (No. 6)

Another previous aspiring candidate, Mr. Schwanz, is no longer connected with our synod. No. 7 is correspondence from him which gives further information about him.

A third aspiring candidate was Mr. Fack. Correspondence No. 7 [*sic*] is a letter from a congregation in North Prairie which disclosed Fack's tragic situation.

Other Various Matters

No. 8 is correspondence with the congregation in Lebanon and No. 9 with the congregation in Watertown, and No. 10 are letters from Pastor Bading concerning the situation in both congregations which will be presented to the synod at the appropriate time. No. 11 is a letter from Pastor Wagner [of St. John, Watertown] to the president and secretary and No. 12 is correspondence of our secretary and Pastor Fuerbringer concerning the church matter in Watertown.

No. 13 are letters from Inspector Wallmann of Berlin containing recommendations for both Braun and Hoffman sent here by him.

No. 14 is a letter from the congregation in Port Washington with 25 signatures pleading for a preacher, and a second letter with the urgent request for support to complete the construction of their church which has already been started.

No. 15 is a letter from the Hon. Schaeffer D.D. of Germantown [Pennsylvania] about money matters of the Pennsylvania Synod.

No. 16 Letters from the congregation in Town Polk and also from Pastor Hoffmann.

No. 17 A letter from New Holstein. Pastor Fachtmann will give us more information about this.

No. 18 A letter from Pastor Goldammer and also from Pastor Koehler about the congregation in Maple Grove.

No. 19 Letters from the congregations in and near La Crosse. I will give more information about this at the appropriate time.

No. 20 A letter from Pastor Ewert of Golden Lake. He is present at the convention and will present a request to join our synod.

No. 21 Two personal letters from Dr. Reynolds of Springfield, [Ill.], which will be referred to the synod for examination and discussion.

No. 22 A letter from the church council in Fond du Lac.

No. 23 A letter from Pastor Klein of Ohio, asking for a place in Wisconsin.

In my hand I hold requests from the following congregations to join our synod. I am placing them before you for further action:

1. From the Evangelical Lutheran St. Paul Congregation, Pastor Bading.
2. From the Evangelical Lutheran St. Peter Congregation, Helenville, Pastor Reim.
3. From the Evangelical Lutheran St. Matthew Congregation, Lebanon.
4. From the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Columbus, Pastor Rueter.
5. From the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Fond du Lac, Pastor Fachtmann.
6. From the Evangelical Lutheran St. John and Jacobus Congregation, Maple Grove.
7. From the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in La Crosse.
8. From the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Burr Oak.
9. From the Evangelical Lutheran St. Jakobus Congregation, Pastor Bading.

Candidates for the Preaching Ministry

Candidate Duborg is present at the convention and wishes to be ordained. Mr. L. Niedmann is also here for the same purpose. No. 24 consists of two sermons written by him as well as a concise biography. Mr. E. Vogel has applied to us for study under our guidance and his own expense. Since he could not be present the matter will be given further consideration in the Ministerial session.

Finally, I would like to make the Hon. synod aware of the following, and with my sincere recommendation: It should be made the obligation of every pastor of the synod, if there is a church cornerstone laying in one of his congregations or a church dedication, to inform the president of that celebration of a cornerstone laying or church dedication, the type and size of the church, which brothers participated in the festivities, etc., so that

at the annual synodical convention, under a separate classification, a summary of what took place in the previous year could be given.

I want to make the Hon. synod aware of the fact that vacancies in congregations which are without a preacher will be filled as soon as possible, depending on the number of pastors available. May Jesus Christ, the head of the church, direct us so that his will be done when preachers move elsewhere, and that vacancies in congregations be filled with new preachers.

Furthermore I would like to make our fellow pastoral brothers as well as the delegates of our congregations aware of the problem of getting young, devout men to study for the preaching ministry; that we arouse the interest in our congregations more and more for increased participation, so that we can with willing hearts support our students at Gettysburg as much as our strained resources can handle.

Finally, we do not want to forget our thanks to the Lord for not causing a vacancy through death in our circle of brothers; but for hearing our prayer and increasing the number of our workers. To add to this thanks comes the joyous report that two new workers designated for Wisconsin are on the way. I recommend to the synod that it resolve to express its thanks to the Hon. Langenberg as well as the Berlin Societies for having thought of us in such a friendly manner.

The Lord has helped us hitherto! Thus again, if we are perplexed when we look at ourselves, our work and pastoral office and congregations: we will not be perplexed, but will pray and work and labor as long as it is day before the night comes. We, in order to gain souls for the Lamb, will gladly die in his service. The Lord Sabaoth is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*. We are perplexed but we do not despair. Look, the arch-shepherd Jesus Christ is with us every day even to the end of the world. Amen!

Then Resolved by the Synod

That the report of the president be accepted and referred to a committee (No. 2) consisting of Pastors Streissguth, Koehler and Bading for implementation. For reporting on various current matters the following committees were appointed by the president:

No. 3. For accepting pastors who are self-registered, Pastors Goldammer, Huber, Koester and Streissguth.

No. 4. For examining registered candidates, Pastors Fachtmann, Reim, Koehler, Bading and Roell.

No. 5. For the treasurer's report, Pastors Huber, Sauer, and Delegate Hamm.

No. 6. Concerning the congregation in Town Polk, Pastors Roell, Conrad, Sauer, and Delegates Schuette and Klutt.

No. 7. Congregations in Watertown and Lebanon, Pastors Koehler, Goldammer, Fachtmann and Delegates Ziemer and Baum.

No. 8. Concerning education, Pastors Sauer, Huber, Sprengling and Delegate Meyer.

No. 9. Concerning the correspondence with the Hon. Prof. Reynolds D.D. of Springfield, Pastors Streissguth, Fachtmann, Starck, Koester, Goldammer and Delegates Meyer and Ziemer.

No. 10. Concerning pastorate changes, Pastors Starck, Koester, Goldammer and Delegates Meyer and Ziemer.

No. 11. Concerning the request of congregations for acceptance [into the synod], Pastors Conrad, Sprengling and Delegate Harlis.

Then by resolution Norwegian Pastor Ole Anderson was inducted as an advisory member.

Resolved: The pastors recommended to the congregation delegates that during the Ministerial sessions they have discussions of their congregational situations and other practical matters.

After this the meeting was adjourned and Pastor Starck spoke a prayer.

Second Session, Monday, 2:00 p.m.

Opened with prayer by Pastor Reim.

The reports of the preachers of their official acts during the past synodical year were handed in and showed the following result:

[Con=congregation, Bap=baptisms, Conf=confirmations, Com=Communion, Wed=weddings, F=funerals, PS=parochial school, SS=Sunday school, OM=outer missions, HM=home missions, ST=synodical treasury]

	Con	Bap	Conf	Com	Wed	F	PS	SS	OM	HM	ST
Muehlhaeuser	1	180	25	615	36	7	1	1	\$50.00	\$27.00	\$4.48
Goldammer	3	38	20	216	-	5	1	1	14.00	5.00	3.72
Koester	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.75
Conrad	2	62	22	280	11	15	1	1	25.00	9.00	2.50
Koehler	1	125	16	200	-	-	1	-	-	2.00	2.90
Bading	2	48	19	225	-	5	1	1	14.00	10.58	6.00
Sauer	3	34	4	237	-	3	2	-	7.30	3.10	2.00
Starck	2	20	-	(50)	-	4	-	1	-	+2.00	1.00
Huber	1	30	-	186	-	9	1	1	-	8.21	2.00
Reim	1	34	28	128	-	-	4	1	-	**7.00	2.08
Streissguth	1	84	21	393	21	16	1	1	9.33	5.84	2.00
Sprengling	3	30	16	175	-	8	1	-	5.77	1.07	1.67
Diehlmann	2	103	15	550	-	36	1	2	-	*	2.00
Roell	7	141	42	487	-	31	3	4	-	2.00	1.00
Fachtmann	2	47	30	220	-	5	-	2	-	-	3.00
Fachtmann											
Reisepredigt	-	113	-	500	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hennicke	2	50	10	(52)	6	6	-	-	-	-	3.30
Braun	4	40	20	107	4	4	2	1	-	3.22	1.07

+ \$200.00 gathered in the congregation for its own church

* built church and parsonage

** \$400.00 gathered in the congregation for its own church

Report of Committee 3

The committee for reporting on the acceptance of registered preachers reports respectively: that it recommends happily to the Hon. synod the acceptance of Pastors Braun, J. Hoffmann and F. Waldt as members based on the testimonies which it has

received from credible persons and societies as well as on reports from our own conferences concerning the named brothers. Furthermore, the committee recommends acceptance of Pastor A. Rueter under the condition that a release from the Hon. Evan. Luth. Synod of Ohio is forthcoming.

C.F. Goldammer, C. Koester, D. Huber, W. Streissguth

The report was accepted and thus Pastors Braun, Hoffmann, Waldt and Rueter were accepted as regular members of the Ministerium of the synod.

Report of Committee No. 1

The undersigned committee commissioned to report on the excuse of Pastor Diehlmann for his absence from the synodical convention takes the liberty to express its decision that the alleged excuse for his absence sent in a private letter cannot be considered valid by the synod in that he is intermingling and exchanging synodical with personal matters.

C. Koester, G. Reim, Chr. Starck

The report was accepted by the synod and Pastor Diehlmann was not excused.

Report of Committee No. 6

The report concerning the congregational matter in Town Polk was presented but not accepted. Instead, it was resolved that a committee consisting of Pastors Bading, Sauer and Roell visit the congregation in question and try to resolve the unfortunate present situation peacefully and in a Christian manner.

The following Evangelical Lutheran congregations who have applied for membership into the synod and whose congregational constitutions were made known to the synod were accepted into the synod by resolution:

1. The Congregation in Fond du Lac, Pastor Fachtmann.
2. St. John and Jakobus Congregation, Maple Grove, recommended by Pastors Goldammer, Koehler, Sprengling.

The following Evangelical Lutheran congregations who have applied for membership but who failed to send in the congregation's constitutions are being accepted into the synod under the assumption and condition that each of them will send in to our president the original or a copy of the constitution as accepted by the respective congregations, and furthermore, the assumption that each congregational constitution contains nothing contrary to the principles of this synod.

4. St. Paul Congregation in Lomira, Pastor Bading.
5. Immanuel Congregation in Caledonia, Pastor Conrad.
6. The Congregation in Columbus, Pastor Rueter.
7. The Congregation in Burr Oak, La Crosse Co., recommended by Pastor Muehlhaeuser

Resolved: that the request of the congregation in Helenville for acceptance be referred to the proper committee (No. 11) and that it give its report concerning this tomorrow; likewise: that Pastor Starck hand into the same committee the constitution of his congregation in Kenosha which is seeking acceptance and that the committee report on this matter early tomorrow morning.

The synod adjourned the meeting with a prayer by Pastor Goldammer in which thanks were given to the Lord who has visibly and kindly blessed us up till now. In the evening Pastor Braun preached on 1 Cor. 3:9-15.

Third Session, Thursday, 8:30 a.m.

In the absence of Pres. Muehlhaeuser Pastor Goldammer was named temporary chairman, after which the session was opened with a hymn, a reading of Phil. 2:1-18 and a spoken prayer by Pastor Fachtmann. Pres. Muehlhaeuser then assumed the chairmanship again. Then it was:

Resolved: that no member of the synod speak more than twice on the same topic unless given special permission by the synod. Adopted.

Report of Committee No. 2

The committee which was assigned to review the president's report has the honor of reporting the following: that we have examined the annual report of the Hon. president with joyful acknowledgment and we recommend the most earnest attention of the Hon. synod to each section of the same. From it we are taking several points for special consideration and we recommend the following resolutions to the Hon. synod:

1. Resolved: since the Lord in his wisdom took a beloved co-worker in his vineyard, Pastor Weinmann, through sudden death from this temporal life into eternity, we humble ourselves under his powerful hand in the knowledge that he leads indeed on strange paths to glorious goals. To the widow and children of our beloved brother we herewith extend our sincerest sympathy.

2. Resolved: that we urge all of the congregations in our synod to feel obliged to send delegates to our annual synodical conventions so that they assume a greater participation in the matters of God's kingdom, that the bond of love be more firmly tied and that the current mistrust of synod be evermore set aside.

3. Resolved: that we express our thanks and appreciation to Pastor Fachtmann for his untiring and unselfish zeal in carrying out the office of *Reiseprediger* which was conferred upon him, and we ask the Lord to advance this work begun by him for his glory and that he permit his servant to see the rich fruits of his labor.

4. Recalling the apostolic admonition to be thankful at all times for all things, Resolved: that the synod express its sincere thanks not only to God, the Lord, the giver of all good gifts, but also

a) to the Committee on Missions of the Hon. Synod of Pennsylvania for their many years of pledged support which alone made it possible for many of our preachers with their families to find sufficient means of livelihood, and to have made it possible for so many congregations to be established and developed;

b) to the Hon. Prof. Schaeffer, D.D. of Gettysburg, as well as to the Board of Directors of Pennsylvania College, for the courteous concern and willing support shown our student, H. Siecker, in Gettysburg;

c) to Inspector Wallmann of Berlin in that he took an active part in the building of God's kingdom in Wisconsin by recommending and sending workers for our synod; likewise to the Hon. Society "for the Protestant Germans in America" in Langenberg, Barmen and Elberfeld, and to the Hon. "Evangelical Society in Berlin for North

America"—along with the request to the named societies and persons for a continuation of such participation;

d) to the brothers Victor, ship owners in Bremen, in that they have since almost the founding of our synod brought many workers of the synod and their spouses across the ocean with self-sacrificing willingness, for which may he, to whom such sacrifice is pleasing, remember them in the eternity.

The secretary of synod is to send copies of the contents of this resolution to the secretaries of the above named societies and to the named persons.

5. Resolved: that it be made the duty of each of our pastors to implement the recommendation of our president by sending him reports of cornerstone-laying, church dedication and similar church celebrations.

Finally, the committee recommends to ask our president to complete the history of the synod requested last year, and to present it at the next year's convention; likewise may the resolution of last year concerning the histories of each individual congregation be again brought to the attention of members of the synod and the implementation of the same. Respectfully,

W. Streissguth, J. Bading, Ph. Koehler

The report of the committee along with the resolutions and recommendations, and also the president's report were accepted unchanged and the official matters referred to in the last item were ratified.

Report of Committee No. 8

The committee on education reports to the Hon. synod: that it is not only desirable but very urgent to recommend that student Sieker be given as much support as possible in the future as he has been given in the past.

E. Sauer, Ph. Sprengling, D. Huber, G. Meyer

The report along with the recommendation was accepted. At this time, a collection for our student was taken from the assembly amounting to \$8.07; in addition members of the synod discussed the question of the current education matter from a variety of angles.

Report of Committee No. 11

The committee on accepting congregations into the synod reported orally about Kenosha and Helenville. A discussion took place about requests on hand for joining synod and it was resolved that the following Evangelical Lutheran congregations be accepted into synod membership:

8. Peace [Friedens] Congregation, Kenosha, Pastor Stark

9. St. Peter Congregation, Town Addison, Pastor Roell

10. Immanuel Congregation, Town Trenton, Pastor Roell

11. St. John Congregation, West Bend, Pastor Roell

12. St. John Congregation, Burlington, Pastor Goldammer

And the following Evangelical Lutheran congregations were likewise accepted, but with the condition as above, namely, that they send in the congregation constitutions immediately to the president for examination.

13. The congregation in Helenville, Pastor Reim

14. St. Jacobi Congregation, Theresa, Pastor Bading
 15. St. Matthew Congregation in Town Lebanon. The president is instructed to send a letter to the congregation in reference to the circumstances there.
- The meeting was adjourned. Prayer by Pastor Sprengling

Fourth Session, 2:00 p.m.

Pastor Bading opened with prayer. Pastor Hoffmann is granted permission to leave the convention because of a necessary trip to New York. In regard to the congregation in Watertown the pertinent correspondence was placed before the synod, and after thorough examination, and after expressed approval of the principles contained therein as explained by the secretary and of the way the president handled the matter:

Resolved: 16, that the Evangelical Lutheran Michael Congregation in Watertown (under the above mentioned condition) be accepted into synod membership.

Considering the situation in one of the congregations of Pastor Braun, Resolved: that Pastor Koehler in the place of a committee attempt to find out what the current situation in the congregation is, and then report back to the president; that the latter, based on this report, give instructions to the Northwest Conference how the named Conference should counsel Pastor Braun. Adjournment with prayer by Pastor Hennicke.

In the evening Pastor Waldt preached on Psalm 133.

Fifth Session, Wednesday, June 22, 8:30 a.m.

The session was opened with a hymn, a reading of 1 Cor. 4, and a prayer by Pastor Binner.

Upon a proposal by Pastor Koehler,

Resolved: that Pastor Koehler be relieved of the committee work in Pastor Braun's congregation assigned him yesterday and that this matter be given over to the Northwest Conference.

Delegate Meyer of Watertown was given permission to go home.

Report of Committee No. 9

The committee to report on the correspondence between the Hon. Prof. Reynolds, D.D. and Pres. Muehlhaeuser takes the liberty to recommend to the Hon. synod:

1. A committee of five should be elected by the synod, chaired by the president, which should handle further correspondence in regard to the matter presented by Dr. Reynolds as well as any future developments thereof.
2. The synod should instruct such a committee to sit down with the Northern Illinois Synod and with the Synod of Illinois in official capacity in order to ascertain if they will permit us access to their university.
3. The committee is to ascertain under what conditions such access would be granted us.
4. They should seek further to ascertain officially the confessional stand of both synods.
5. The president is instructed to attend the convention of the Northern Synod of Illinois in Chicago later this year for the purpose of pursuing this matter, keeping in mind the above four suggested recommendations.

Respectfully,

W. Streissguth, G. Fachtmann, Chr. Starck, J. Bading, G. Reim

For better consideration and understanding of this matter the correspondence in question was read to the synod, attentively listened to by all and thoroughly discussed under the following guidelines:

1. What is the opinion of the synod about the urgency and necessity of an educational institution for preachers in Wisconsin?
2. What is our confessional stand and that of both Illinois synods?
3. What are the means which we are able to offer and bring up for attaining the goal either independently or in conjunction with the two named synods?
4. What conditions might we set forth and might be set forth by them for us?

The committee report was repeated and accepted and the five recommended proposals were made into resolutions, and it was finally resolved:

If the committee should consider it purposeful to call a special convention of the synod in order to make a final decision of this matter, the secretary of the committee should inform each individual preacher of the synod of the time, place and purpose of the meeting at least four weeks before such a convention is to be held, and each congregation of synod should hold a meeting to discuss this matter, and the adopted, certified minutes of that meeting be sent along either with the preacher or with an elected delegate to such a special convention of the synod.

The committee referred to in the above resolutions was elected by ballot and the result showed that it consists of Pastors Streissguth, Bading, Fachtmann and Goldammer in addition to the president.

After this important matter was settled the synod had sufficient reason to adjourn the meeting with thanksgiving and prayer spoken by Pastor Roell.

Sixth Session, 2:00 p.m.

After Pastor Streissguth, secretary of the synod, was permitted to go home on his request because of an unexpected family matter, Pastor Fachtmann, by resolution of the synod, temporarily took over the position of secretary of the synod.

Pastor Roell opened the session with prayer. The committee report on vacant congregations and pastorate changes was presented. This resulted in a careful and thorough examination of the situations of congregations and preachers in question. Of the former the congregations to come up for discussion were those in Maple Grove, Columbus, La Crosse, Fond du Lac and Calumet. Although the synod has no right and also no intention to propose changes of pastor positions, yet it in the fear of God and with prayer gives desired advice in order to give support to the Brothers seeking to do God's will especially in complicated circumstances.

It is hoped that the deliberations carried on during the entire synodical convention will be implemented finally to the glory of God and the benefit of the church. After Delegates Harlis from Kenosha, Hess from Kilbournroad, Hamm and Ziemer from Milwaukee were given permission to go home at their requests, Pastor Koehler closed the session with prayer.

Seventh Session, Thursday, June 23, 8:30 a.m.

The morning session was opened with the chorale *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* and with the Scripture reading of 2 Timothy 2.

A committee was named to give a report on a book sent to the synod by Pastor Vogelbach for critical review.

The auditing committee gave its report, namely that this year's receipts for the synodical treasury amounted to \$62.25, the expenditures for printing costs, trips, postage, etc. amounted to \$35.12. This leaves a balance of \$27.13, so that with last year's balance the cash on hand in the treasury amounts to \$123.79. For support of the student \$67.48 was taken in, and during the convention \$8.07 was gathered, so that after the deduction of a payment in the amount of \$31.25, there remains in the hands of the treasurer for disposal the sum of \$44.30.

The discussion begun yesterday concerning vacant congregations was continued in regard to the congregation in Theresa and New Holstein. Finally, §6 of the committee's report was accepted unchanged: "that the vacancies caused by changes in pastorates be filled according to the best judgment of the synod's officials."

The plan for establishing a synodical pastor's widow's fund, presented to the synod three years ago, was again recommended for discussion by the synod and as a result:

Resolved: that a committee of three be named to complete the necessary preliminary work for the establishment of such a pastor's widow's fund as soon as possible so that at the next synodical convention this important and necessary program can be set in motion. Named to this committee were Pastors Streissguth, Bading and Huber, with Pres. Muehlhaeuser as an advisory member. The meeting was adjourned with a prayer by Pastor Goldammer.

Eighth Session, 2:00 p.m.

Opened with a hymn and prayer by Preacher Ewert.

The committee named yesterday to give a report on Pastor Vogelbach's book on Luther reports as follows:

The undersigned committee named to report on the booklet, *The Life of Dr. Martin Luther for Sunday Schools and Families* sent to the synod by Pastor J. Vogelbach for an official critique presents herewith respectfully its critique:

1. The booklet is short and concise, encompassing the most essential phases of the reformer's life;
2. It is well written and easily understandable for the people and youth.
3. It is written in a sincere and warm style.

The committee finds the booklet worthy of recommendation and proposes to the synod that it be publicized in their respective congregations.

Chr. Starck, J. Bading, C. Goldammer

The report and recommendation were accepted.

Resolved: that the Lutheran Church in Racine be sincerely thanked by our president after the close of the service this evening for the cordial reception of members and guests of the synod.

Resolved: that 450 copies of the Proceedings of this year's convention be printed.

After this the synod began the revision of the synod's constitution. The preparatory work of the Southern Conference was discussed paragraph by paragraph and accepted provisionally up to Article V, §2, at which time the meeting was adjourned with prayer by Pastor Huber.

Ninth Session, Friday, June 24, 8:30 a.m.

In this necessary post-session it was:

Resolved: that Pastor H. Duborg, who was ordained last evening, be accepted into the Ministerium of the synod.

With regard to the place for next year's convention, the invitation of the Watertown congregation was presented. The synod sends its thanks to the congregation for the invitation, and it was tentatively accepted unless hindrances would prevent it.

After certain paragraphs in the revision of the Constitution were discussed it was Resolved: that the Constitution be referred to the individual conferences for review and examination, and that it be completed at next year's convention for publication.

Resolved: that next year the synod convene on the Thursday after Pentecost and that the first order of business be the revision of the Constitution.

The convention was then adjourned with prayer and words of thanksgiving.

MINISTERIAL SESSIONS

The times before and after the synodical sessions were in part put to good use by the committees for their duties, and in part for the ministerial sessions in which the preachers sought to strengthen themselves by means of sharing information of personal and official concerns, by requests and giving of advice in difficult cases, and by earnest prayer to the Lord and Head of the Church. In these sessions the same spirit of love and truth reigned as in the synodical sessions, and the hearts were united again more firmly through the bond of peace.

Of the matters handled in the ministerial sessions are the following as they were presented chronologically.

In the Monday morning ministerial session a serious discussion about the pastors and candidates who sought membership or examination took place. Necessary information was presented and each was referred to specific committees for examination and for a report back to the synod.

Adjourned with a prayer by Pastor Streissguth.

The evening session began with prayer by Pastor Fachtmann. The discussion begun in the morning was continued. The session ended with prayer by Pastor Roell.

Tuesday Morning Session

Prayer by Pastor Koester. After Pastors Braun, Hoffmann, Waldt and Rueter were accepted as members of the Ministerium in the second synodical session, the report of the second examining committee about pastor-candidate Hans Duborg was now presented, reading as follows:

"that he passed his colloquy satisfactorily, and that the committee on the basis of this fact and of the exam previously taken before the Southern Conference and with reliance on his theological training which also his written testimonies support -

recommended the said H. Duborg to the Hon. synod for ordination." As a result: Resolved: that Candidate Duborg be festively ordained on Thursday evening. The committee furthermore gave a very favorable report on Teacher C. Wagner, with the result:

Resolved: that he in preparation for the holy preaching office [*Predigtamt*] be encouraged to proceed under the tutelage of Pastor Streissguth until it seems to the president that he is ready to be recommended to the committee or conference for further direction.

Closed with prayer by Pastor Huber.

In the Wednesday morning session which was opened with prayer by Pastor Conrad and closed with prayer by Pastor Waldt, Rector Ewert gave a short address to the Ministerium on 1 Cor. 1:30; likewise Teacher Niedmann on John 11:25-26.

Wednesday Afternoon Session

Opened with prayer by Pastor Muehlhaeuser. The reports of the oral and written examinations of the candidates were presented for discussion. The Ministerium agreed that Preacher Ewert, still to some degree a member of another Lutheran Synod, receive provisionally from the president a suitable working area.

Concerning Mr. Niedmann the Ministerium resolved that he conduct the school of the Greenfield congregation as they requested, and on Sundays lead the services there. In addition, that he be placed under the special supervision of the Southern Conference, and that his sermons which he preaches be handed in to the president. The named Conference is to arrange for the celebration of the sacraments in the congregation until Mr. Niedmann is found ready and worthy of ordination.

Prayer by Pastor Huber.

Thursday Afternoon Session

Opened with prayer by Pastor Reim.

The following motion was discussed and then:

Resolved: A committee of five is to be named by the president including the president and the secretary of the synod to draw up a formal request directed to the friendly societies in Germany concerning:

1. The procurement of a synodical library.
2. The establishment of a *Reiseprediger* [traveling preacher] program and
3. The sending of new workers to Wisconsin.

Named to the committee (besides the president and the secretary of the synod) were Pastors Koehler, Starck and Goldammer.

After a motion was made by the president,

Resolved: that 100 ordination certificates in the English language be printed for the synod, the form of which to be determined by the president and secretary of the synod. Finally,

Resolved: the president and the host preacher of the place where the convention is to be held determine beforehand and in good time the themes of the sermons to be presented, and that each year a mission sermon should be preached during the convention.

A fitting close to this year's convention was the festive ordination of Candidate H. Duborg to the office of evangelical shepherd and teacher in the congregation of Jesus Christ, which took place this evening, June 23, in the church following Pastor Koehler's sermon on John 21:15-17. The ordination was performed by Pastor Muehlhaeuser, followed by the laying of hands by the members of the Ministerium.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, our most praiseworthy Head and true Arch-shepherd of his redeemed sheep, richly and daily grant our new under-shepherd and indeed us all including our dear congregations his favor, wisdom, light and strength for carrying out our responsible pastoral duties and for each obtaining his own soul's salvation. Amen!

The above minutes of the synodical and ministerial convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, held in Racine from June 18 to June 24, 1859 A.D. are certified to be correct as witnessed by my signature.

W. Streissguth, secretary of the synod

The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference How It Came to Be

by Armin Schuetze

In 1872 the Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America came into existence. Its purpose was to give Lutheran synods which agreed in doctrine and practice an opportunity actively to express this unity and to preserve it.

Ninety years later, when it became evident that the Conference no longer served this purpose, its two remaining synods recognized its usefulness had ended. Two of the member synods, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) in 1955 and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) in 1961, broke fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) because the latter was no longer holding to the doctrine and practice that was the basis of their fellowship and of their joint membership in the Synodical Conference. These two synods then withdrew from the Synodical Conference. In 1967 the two remaining synods, the LCMS and the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (SELC-Slovak), dissolved the Synodical Conference.¹ The SELC followed the suggestion to merge with the LCMS.

PROPOSALS FOR AN INTERNATIONAL SYNODICAL CONFERENCE

Even before its demise, voices within the Synodical Conference proposed that its membership should be expanded beyond North America.² It was felt that the time for an international organization had come. But for the WELS and the ELS to become part of an international organization with a synod whose doctrine and practice had forced them to end a long cherished fellowship would have contradicted the confessional action they had taken.

Very soon, however, the urgent need for an international organization or federation holding to the confessional position of the former Synodical Conference was drawn to the attention of the WELS. Individuals and groups promoted the idea.

Prominent and forceful was the voice of Pastor Edgar Hoenecke. Already in 1967 as Executive Secretary of the Board for World Missions he called for a "New Alignment." In his report to the synod he wrote:

It is unthinkable that our Wisconsin Synod should fail to fulfil its God-given destiny and to discharge its debt of gratitude to God for the preservation of sound teaching by helping to gather into a world-wide Lutheran fellowship all those who still hold fast their Reformation heritage without concession or compromise.

In that effort we will do well to encourage and enlist every voice, every pen, and every talent which our Lord provides, if we would prevail.³

The synod passed a resolution to "continue to exert its God-given strength to encourage and support conservative Lutheran groups throughout the world."⁴ No reference, however, is made to the executive secretary's urgent call for a world-wide organization of confessional Lutherans.

Beginning in 1967 representatives of the WELS and ELS had been meeting in what was organized as the Forum to give them opportunity for mutual encouragement and strengthening in their common faith. Already the following year the Forum joined Pastor Hoenecke in encouraging the formation of a "formal, hopefully world-wide organization of church bodies in confessional agreement." Its purpose would be "1) to manifest in a tangible and practical way the unity of faith and confession which exists between these bodies, 2) to strengthen each other in an endeavor to remain faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, and 3) to extend a strengthening hand to others who share these Scriptural convictions."⁵ Although this discussion was briefly reported to the synod at its next convention,⁶ this did not result in any synodical resolution. Again in 1970 the Forum made proposals for a preliminary meeting to consider the doctrinal basis for an international confessional organization. This was reported to the next WELS convention.

At that convention (1971) in his report to the synod, (WELS) President Oscar Naumann added his encouragement and made a suggestion. He reminded the convention that 1972 marked the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Lutheran Synodical Conference. He went on to say:

1972 might be the year during which our Synod together with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the two synods that still uphold the confessional platform of the former Synodical Conference, should initiate consultations with orthodox Lutheran synods around the world aimed at the formation of a world-wide synodical conference on the same confessional principles on which the former Synodical Conference was founded.⁷

Drawing attention to the discussions of such an undertaking in the Forum, he asked the synod floor committee to present the convention with a pertinent resolution. On the basis of the Forum's proposal and President Naumann's report, the synod resolved "that we encourage the Commission on Doctrinal Matters to arrange such a meeting as soon as favorable conditions permit."⁸

In subsequent meetings the Forum continued to encourage the WELS and ELS presidents and their respective doctrinal commissions "to arrange for exploratory meetings of other confessionally minded Lutheran churches to discuss a doctrinal basis for the possible establishment of a federation similar to the former Synodical Conference."⁹

The Board for World Missions with its Executive Secretary Hoenecke also continued to press for such a world-wide new synodical conference. As a result of WELS world missions, new churches were forming on the missions. There was an urgent need for fellowship, not only on the part of the missionaries sent by the synod, but on the part of the members of these young churches with their mother church in America and with one another. In his report to the synod in 1977 Pastor Hoenecke wrote:

There is need for further contact between our spiritual children and their mother church . . . Some organized form of expression of the fellowship of the mission churches with the mother church in the United States would be the answer. This is so much more important in view of the absence of any orthodox associations available to our mission churches in their areas.

Let us not think that the mission church will not be led to find fellowship with other Christian churches near at hand, if we must one day leave their countries and have not made provision for active contact with them in some definite framework of fellowship. We ought to plan ahead and provide this before it is too late!¹⁰

The convention responded to this urgent plea. The synod resolved to encourage the Board for World Missions "to make every effort to begin a program which would bring together representatives of the various WELS world mission national churches and others with whom we are in fellowship."¹¹

In 1978 in his final report as executive secretary Pastor Hoenecke once more drew attention to the "mutual strengthening of faith and friendly, brotherly vigilance and correction" the Synodical Conference had at one time provided. He again gave a word of encouragement: "To establish such a federation would present certain problems, but these are not insuperable in view of the blessings."¹²

The Board for World Missions continued to pursue the formation of a world-wide conference of churches in fellowship with the WELS. The new executive secretary, Pastor Theodore Sauer, reported in the following year that the world board had appointed an ad hoc committee "to study the question of the establishment of a conference of church bodies with whom WELS is in fellowship for purposes of mutual encouragement."¹³ The world board expected to share the results of this study with the Commission on Inter-Church Relations. But conditions were not as yet favorable.

Problems

In spite of the urgency with which the Board for World Missions and the Forum called for the formation of a world-wide synodical conference, nearly 20 years passed before the Commission on Inter-Church Relations actively pursued such a proposal. What were the problems? Why was it seemingly dragging its feet?

The break in fellowship in 1961 applied only to the LCMS. In its resolution, the WELS specifically stated that "the suspension does not apply to our fellowship relations" with any other bodies within or outside the Synodical Conference with whom the WELS was in fellowship.¹⁴ Another resolution encouraged "all who are of a like mind with us in this matter to identify themselves with us in supporting the Scriptural, historical position of the Synodical Conference."¹⁵

The ELS had all along held the same position as the WELS. The SELC (Slovak) identified with the LCMS. Those were the former Synodical Conference synods. The division in America was less clear. But what about the many "overseas" churches that were less directly involved and less informed of the issues? These were churches in Australia, Germany, France and Belgium, and South Africa, to name the chief ones.

Besides there was the mission church in Nigeria, the result of the Synodical Conference's fruitful work in that country. What was the position of these churches regarding church fellowship? Would they identify with the WELS and ELS or would they continue their fellowship with the LCMS. These were urgent questions that needed answering. These answers were needed before a new world-wide "synodical conference" could come into existence. To receive answers from these churches was now a major assignment of the WELS Commission on Doctrinal Matters.¹⁶

The doctrinal issue that fractured the Synodical Conference was disagreement on the doctrine of church fellowship and its application. In their meetings with the LCMS, the WELS had defined church fellowship as "every joint expression, manifestation, and demonstration of the common faith in which Christians on the basis of their confession find themselves united with one another."¹⁷ This agreed with the long held position of the Synodical Conference.

The most frequently referred to joint expressions of church fellowship were altar, pulpit, and prayer fellowship. The LCMS, however, changed by limiting church fellowship to altar and pulpit fellowship and no longer considered joint prayer an expression of church fellowship. As a result the LCMS practiced limited forms of religious fellowship with groups with whom they were not in doctrinal agreement. This was a considerable change from the practice of the former Synodical Conference.

The question now was: What is the position of the "overseas" churches? There had been a number of meetings of theological leaders of the synods in the Synodical Conference and the overseas churches. This was an effort on the part of theologians from these sister churches throughout the world to help solve the differences within the Synodical Conference. The first conference of theologians was held in 1959 in Oakland, California. Subsequent meetings were held in 1960 and 1962 at the WELS Mequon seminary, and in 1963 at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota. From these meetings it was not clear to what extent there was agreement with each of the overseas churches in the doctrine of church fellowship. They did not seem to recognize the extent or seriousness of the differences between WELS/ELS and the LCMS. Direct contact with these various churches was necessary.

Direct contact was necessary for another reason. The WELS and ELS resolutions suspending fellowship with the LCMS resulted in triangular fellowship relations. By way of example, the WELS was in fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany, the latter was in fellowship with the LCMS, while the LCMS and WELS were not in fellowship. That such confusing, triangular relationships needed to be resolved was immediately recognized. Would the various overseas churches recognize that the errors of Missouri were divisive and draw the necessary conclusions? Only with those who also suspended their fellowship with the LCMS could the WELS continue its fellowship. Otherwise its doctrine was compromised by its practice. To resolve these ambiguous fellowships direct contact with the various churches was necessary.

Under these conditions the time was not favorable for organizing a new world-wide confessional organization. It was not clear which churches could join to form such an

organization. It was not clear which churches were confessionally united. There were questions that needed to be answered, doctrinal, confessional questions.

Efforts of the Commission on Doctrinal Matters

The next years saw members of the WELS Commission on Doctrinal Matters travel thousands of miles and attend many days of meetings especially in Australia, Germany, Nigeria, and South Africa. This entailed also voluminous correspondence, much of it in the German language. Synod President Oscar Naumann and Prof. Carl Lawrenz, chairman of the doctrinal commission and president of the seminary, provided leadership. At times they were joined in their travels by Prof. Oscar Siegler, the commission's secretary, or by Prof. Gerald Hoenecke or Pastor Harold Wicke, also members of the commission. Pastor Edgar Hoenecke attended some of the meetings on behalf of the Board for World Missions. There was an important and urgent assignment.

It is impossible here to tell the full story of their travels and meetings. We shall concentrate on the most significant contacts and developments, particularly as they affected the formation of a new world-wide conference of those united in doctrine.

An early visit was made in Australia. However, fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran church of Australia came to an end when in 1965 it merged with the United Ev. Lutheran Church of Australia, which had been in fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. With the merger, all previous international ties of church fellowship were terminated. There were some contacts with the president of the new body, but none led to any promise of establishing fellowship with the merged church. From among those who disagreed with the merger a small church was formed that renewed its confessional ties with the ELS and the WELS. This at present is the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia.

Early communication with Nigeria was considered essential. Now that the synods of the Synodical Conference who together were the mother of the church in Nigeria were no longer united, a decision on the part of the Nigerians was required. They gave Naumann, Lawrenz, and Siegler an opportunity to present the concerns of the WELS. In the end, however, they continued their relationship with the LCMS. Later a segment broke away and sought the fellowship of the WELS and ELS. This church is known as Christ the King Lutheran Synod.

The situation in Germany was more complex. What happened there affected also churches in other countries.

Since the Reformation the Lutheran church in Germany continued as territorial churches, supported by the state and in many ways under the direction of the state. Because of doctrinal deterioration and unionistic practices in these churches, in the 1800s smaller groups broke away, freed themselves from state support and direction, and established independent or free churches.

The oldest of these was the Evangelical Lutheran (Old Lutheran) Church, also known as the Breslau Synod. Later in 1876 a group of pastors and congregations who had left the state church formed the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church, often simply known as the Saxon Free Church. From its beginning it had strong ties to the Missouri Synod and was in fellowship with the synods of the Synodical Conference. Other free

churches were established, but none of them was in full doctrinal agreement with the Saxons.

Since 1924 the WELS had supported the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Poland as its Poland mission. This consisted of German Lutherans living in Poland. When in 1945 toward the end of World War II its pastors and members had to flee to Germany, this church of refugees finally became known as the Ev. Lutheran Confessional Church in the Dispersion. The WELS continued to provide support since in fleeing the people had lost everything.

After the end of World War II there was an urgent desire for all free churches in Germany to enter into fellowship. This was strongly encouraged by the LCMS and its president, John Behnken. By 1948 the Saxons and Breslauers were able to establish church fellowship on the basis of Articles of Agreement (*Einigungssatze*), which settled previous doctrinal differences. Having studied these articles, the Wisconsin Synod also established fellowship with the Breslau Synod.

Within a year the five remaining Lutheran free churches in Germany, having merged into the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church, on the basis of the *Einigungssatze* also entered into pulpit and altar fellowship with the above two churches. These three free churches, now in church fellowship, entered into a working relationship, in which they jointly supported a seminary at Oberursel and mission work in South Africa.

After nearly 20 years of working together, the three federated churches decided to merge into one church body. Between 1965 and 1972 a constitution was prepared and among other questions the binding nature of the 1947 Articles of Agreement, which had come into question, was seemingly settled. On June 25, 1972 the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK), taking the same name as one of the three merging bodies, was established.

The WELS had a special interest in this merger. It was thought the Confessional Lutheran Church, which the WELS was still supporting, might also become a part of the merger. But there were problems. The WELS had not been able to declare itself in fellowship with the former Independent Ev. Lutheran Church. There was uncertainty about the Independent church's doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, about its fellowship practices, and its view on ordination. Fellowship questions had to be settled, especially the merged church's relationship to the LCMS. It was high time to come to grips with this triangular relationship, especially since in 1969 the Missouri Synod had entered into church fellowship with the American Lutheran Church.

After the merger, efforts were made to come to agreement on the various issues, so that the WELS might declare itself in fellowship with the new SELK. First there was a meeting in Bleckmar. The discussions were then continued in 1973 in Mequon. These included also representatives of the Ev. Lutheran Confessional Church and of the Ev. Lutheran Church-Synod of France and Belgium. There was great joy when after four days of meetings the representatives could declare that they had come to agreement on the doctrine of "the inerrancy and external clarity of the Scriptures with particular reference to the creation days" and on Church Fellowship and Ordination. The newly-formed SELK had already concurred in the protest which the Ev. Lutheran Free Church

Left to Right: Back Row—Oto Rodrigues, George M. Orvick, Carl H. Mischeke, Christer Hango
 Front Row—Peter Chikarada, Dederson Niambo, Fukairachi Oshino, Gerhard Wille, Jukka Soderstrom



Presidents of the Synods of the CELC

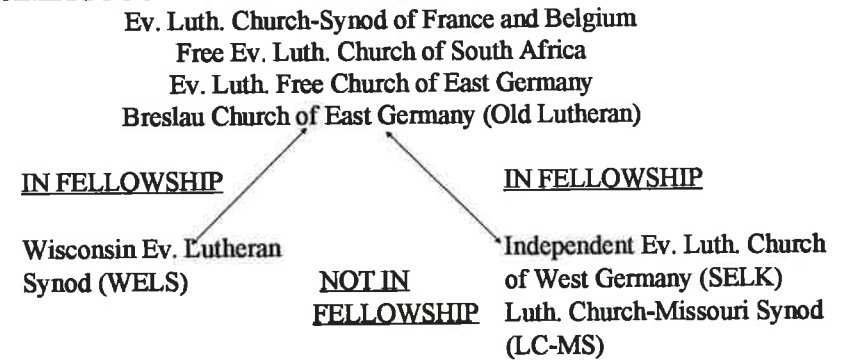
had made to the LCMS in regard to Missouri's declaration of fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. A first step in settling the Missouri fellowship question had been taken. Several weeks later the WELS in convention expressed its joy and thanks to God over the favorable outcome of the discussions with the SELK representatives and resolved that the Synod Presidium should "initiate the practice of church Fellowship with the SELK upon formal endorsement by the SELK *Kirchenleitung* [Administrative Council] of the doctrinal agreement reached at Mequon."¹⁸

The joy was short-lived. Dr. G. Rost, Bishop of the SELK, wrote in behalf of the Administrative Council and the Conference of Superintendents. The endorsement was not clear and to the point. There were questions about the meaning of certain statements. The result was a lengthy exchange of letters that continued into 1977 and never resulted in a declaration of fellowship. It was evident that in the doctrines of Scriptural inerrancy and church fellowship the SELK and WELS were not agreed.¹⁹

At its 1974 convention the Ev. Lutheran Confessional Church of Germany decided to seek a merger with the SELK. On January 1, 1976 the merger went into effect. The 1977 WELS convention noted with sadness that with its merging with the SELK this church that had been supported by the WELS since the 1920s had "severed its confessional fellowship with our Synod."²⁰

The Wisconsin Synod, however, was still involved in numerous ambiguous triangular fellowship relationships. The following chart pictured them to the 1979 synod convention.²¹

AMBIGUOUS TRIANGULAR FELLOWSHIP RELATIONSHIP



Not included on the chart is the ELS. Its situation was the same as that of the WELS. Also not listed are the WELS mission churches. These were in fellowship only with the WELS and ELS.

Also not shown on the chart is The Lutheran Confessional Church of Sweden. This church was organized in 1975 by pastors and members who for confessional reasons had left the Swedish state church.²² Dr. Siegbert Becker of the WELS CICR had been a frequent visitor and lecturer and a source of encouragement among these struggling Lutherans in Sweden. The new church immediately declared itself in confessional fellowship with the WELS. It, however, did not become entangled in the ambiguous

fellowship relations with other churches shown on the chart. When its work expanded into Norway, the name was changed to Lutheran Confessional Church (Sweden and Norway). Since one of the pastors was serving a small group in Finland, a sister church called the Lutheran Confessional Church of Finland was organized.

A resolution in 1979 encouraged the CICR "to pursue a course which will, in a God-pleasing way, soon resolve the ambiguous relationship" between the WELS and the churches listed on the top of the chart.²³ Already in August of the same year Prof. C. Lawrenz, Dr. S. Becker, and Pastor H. Wicke held discussions in Europe and Africa with these churches.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church-Synod of France and Belgium was in protesting fellowship with the LCMS. It had also testified against the doctrinal aberrations of the SELK. Nevertheless, it clearly stated that it did not intend to terminate fellowship with either of these churches. This resulted in a resolution at the 1981 convention which said that the WELS "can no longer continue its fellowship with that church body."²⁴ The time had come to terminate this triangular relationship.

The 1979 visit in South Africa with representatives of The Free Ev. Lutheran Synod in South Africa and of the Lutheran Church in South Africa (a mission church supported jointly by the former with the SELK) resulted in their desire to study the matter further, also regarding the triangular fellowships. In subsequent correspondence they asked some questions about the WELS statement on fellowship and later about some of the WELS fellowship decisions. Further discussions were called for. They promised to send representatives from both churches to America.

For various reasons the meetings had to be delayed until September 1985. Five representatives from the two synods in South Africa met for four days with the WELS commission members. The primary subject for discussion was the scriptural doctrine of church or confessional fellowship. Considerable time was given also to discuss the triangular fellowship relations in which the South African synods and the WELS were involved. As questions were asked and answered it became apparent that "we and the South Africans were agreed in substance with respect to the doctrine of church fellowship, as well as the doctrine of scriptural inerrancy."²⁵ All conferees also agreed that triangular fellowship relations were untenable. The South Africans, however, did "not agree with us in our evaluation of the SELK in West Germany, the Ev. Lutheran Church - Synod of France and Belgium, and the LCMS."²⁶ The South Africans indicated they would give further study to the WELS position. By 1987 they, however, had taken steps which confirmed their fellowship with the church bodies with whom the WELS was not in fellowship. Regretfully the WELS commission recommended that the synod inform the two South African synods that it could not longer acknowledge them as church bodies with whom it was in confessional fellowship.²⁷ The convention accepted the recommendation. This terminated a deeply cherished relationship.

Because since World War II Germany was divided and the iron curtain made communication and travel between its two parts extremely difficult, the merger of the three Lutheran free churches applied only to West Germany. There were also smaller segments of the Ev. Lutheran Free Church (Saxon) and of the Ev. Lutheran (Old-Lutheran) Church (Breslau) in East Germany. Also a small group from the former Poland

mission was associated with the Saxons as the Diaspora Conference. These churches were in fellowship with the free churches of the West and received assistance from their more prosperous and numerous western brothers. They, however, functioned as independent organizations, cooperating in the support of a seminary in Leipzig.

They expected to follow the lead of their western brothers, planning to merge in 1978. In the meantime, however, the doctrine of scriptural inspiration and inerrancy became a serious issue between the two churches. The Breslauers no longer insisted on a confession to the complete inerrancy of Scripture, allowing for the historical-critical method of interpretation. They also held to a looser fellowship practice. The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church consequently decided to postpone the proposed merger until there would be consensus on the issues in dispute. The WELS through its Commission on Inter-Church Relations expressed its support of this decision and gave encouragement when Lawrenz, Becker, and Wicke met with them in their 1979 overseas visit. Because of the iron curtain, continued contact and communication were often difficult. Representatives, however, of the Lutheran Confessional Church (Scandinavia), as it was now called, were able at times to make a visit to East Germany.

After more than five years of discussions between the two German churches in East Germany, the Ev. Lutheran Free Church in 1984 declared the fellowship with the Ev. Lutheran (Old Lutheran) Church suspended.²⁸ During these years the Saxons had studied the WELS position on church fellowship and expressed full agreement with it. They also recognized that their relations, especially with the SELK, called for serious attention. The 1985 WELS convention commended the Ev. Lutheran Free Church for its confessional stand.

The same convention also encouraged the CICR to send a delegation to meet with the two churches in order to gain first hand information about discussions that were still being carried on after the suspension of fellowship. Efforts to meet with the Ev. Lutheran (Old Lutheran) Church failed when the latter insisted that the WELS first withdraw its support of the suspension declared by the Ev. Lutheran Free Church in 1984. In view of the fact that the Ev. Lutheran (Old Lutheran) Church was in full agreement with the SELK of West Germany, also in regard to its unscriptural position in the doctrine of Holy Scripture and of church fellowship, this ended any further fellowship with the Old Lutherans in East Germany and was recognized in a resolution in 1987.²⁹

A delegation of the CICR did meet, however, with the pastors of the Ev. Lutheran Free Church in the spring of 1986 in Leipzig. More will be said about this meeting in the next part.

The years since 1961 had been busy years for the CICR. Every effort was made to retain fellowship relations with the churches that had been in fellowship with the Synodical Conference. By the mid 1980s most of the triangular relationships had been resolved, frequently not in the way the WELS would have hoped.

The CICR Plans a New "Synodical Conference"

The conditions now seemed favorable to begin planning a new world-wide organization of churches that were in confessional agreement on the basis of the Holy Scriptures. This also meant that they were not involved in ambiguous triangular

fellowship relationships. Most of these had been cleared up. Also the Ev. Lutheran Free Church was moving closer to resolving its fellowship problems. But the stand they were taking would isolate them in Germany and estrange them from churches with whom they had been in fellowship for many years. Under these conditions a world-wide organization of Christians who had the same confessional concerns and position might be welcome.

As encouraged in the 1985 synod resolution, three representatives of the CICR (Lawrenz, Janke, Schuetze) met April 8 and 9, 1986, in Leipzig with the pastors of the Ev. Lutheran Free Church. Among the items discussed was also a proposal for a new international synodical conference which the CICR had prepared and was including in its 1986 report to the 12 districts of the WELS and would present to the synod at its 1987 convention. The response of the Germans was very favorable. The same was true of a Swedish representative who attended this meeting.

By this time the WELS world mission program had progressed to the point where in some fields national church bodies were taking shape. For these, too, participation in a larger fellowship which such an organization could provide might add to their maturation and doctrinal stability.

In its report to the districts the CICR cited a number of factors that led it to conclude that the time has come for those who continue to uphold the confessional positions in doctrine and practice of the former Synodical Conference of North America to again establish such a federation. It would, however, be international in scope. The position taken by the Ev. Lutheran Free Church in East Germany, the isolation of the Lutheran Confessional Church (Scandinavia) and the needs of other churches that are concerned about upholding the sound confessional position of the former Synodical Conference are among these factors. The Board for World Missions of the synod likewise has been advocating for some time the formation of such a conference which could include in its membership the more organized of the WELS mission churches.³⁰

The CICR report expressed some preliminary thoughts as to the purpose, confessional basis, membership, and activity of such an organization. Quite naturally, this proposal was sent also to the ELS for its consideration and input.

Since the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the ELS districts reacted favorably to this proposal, a meeting of the WELS CICR and the ELS Doctrine Committee was held in January 1987. Jointly they resolved

that the Doctrine Committee of the Ev. Lutheran Synod and the CICR of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod seek approval from their respective synods in 1987 for the appointment of a committee of six (three to be appointed by the ELS Doctrine Committee and three by the WELS CICR) to begin preliminary planning for a new synodical conference and to present its recommendations to the ELS Doctrine Committee and to the WELS CICR.³¹

Both synods approved the appointment of this planning committee. Serving from the WELS were Professors Wilbert Gawrisch, Lyle Lange, and Armin Panning. The



WELS Delegation to the Convention

Left to Right: Back Row—Duane Tomhave, Daniel Balge, Daniel Schmeling, Carl Mischke, Armin Schuetze,

Eugene Schulz, Richard Lauersdorf

Left to Right: Front Row—Dennis Smith, Wilbert Gawrisch, Armin Panning, Lyle Lange, John Sullivan

ELS appointed Pastor Gaylin Schmeling, and Professors Wilhelm Petersen and Juul Madson. The committee's initial meeting was held on October 18, 1988 in connection with the meeting of the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum.

At this same Forum Pastor Duane Tomhave, administrator of the Board for World Missions, read an essay entitled *Synods of Mission-minded Confessional Lutherans*. The third part, *Toward a New Worldwide Gathering*, discussed the CICR proposal. He quoted a resolution of the WELS Mission Coordinating Committee which "encourages the CICR planning committee to include as a major concern and objective of the proposed new Synodical Conference the cooperation in and coordination of Gospel outreach by the constituent church bodies."³² Thus the recognition that the objective of Gospel outreach goes hand in hand with the objective of preserving the truth of Scripture was assured. Consequently representatives of the WELS and ELS mission boards were invited to meetings of the planning committee.

In his essay Pastor Tomhave pointed out that "there is currently a strong encouragement for mission fields to organize a national entity as soon as feasible," and that "there is an expressed need of these daughter churches to be affiliated officially in an equal partnership with the sending church and other sister churches around the world." His list of 16 potential member churches for the new organization included mission churches of the WELS and ELS in Africa, South America, and the far east.³³

With Professor Gawrisch as chairman and Professor Madson as secretary the planning committee went about its work deliberately, but also with urgency. Many questions had to be considered and resolved. What should be the name, purpose, and structure of the organization? There were questions about meetings and representation, about the organization's activities, with both doctrinal and mission emphases, the joint production of doctrinal statements, and the programs for meetings. The committee not only had to plan the form and structure of the organization, but also serve as planning committee for its first meeting. The constitution of eleven articles that was finally proposed for tentative adoption presents the results of careful discussion and deliberation on these various subjects, including suggestions made by the CICR and the Doctrinal Committee of the ELS and by the WELS and ELS conventions.³⁴

Article I assigns the name, **The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference** (CELC), to "this federation of church bodies." In choosing this name the committee had also unanimously agreed that this organization should not replace the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum. The Forum meetings between the ELS and WELS begun in 1967 should continue.

The article on the Confession of Faith (II) is simple and to the point. In its first section the conference "accepts the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God," and in the second section "also accepts the Confessions . . . contained in the *Book of Concord* of 1580, not in so far as, but because they are a correct exposition of the pure doctrine of the Word of God."

In Article III the committee spelled out the purpose of the conference. This is to give outward expression to the unity of faith and confession that unites the conference members, to provide opportunity for mutual encouragement and spiritual growth, and to promote and strengthen this unity and remove what might threaten or disturb it. These

were serious doctrinal concerns. Item 4 under Purpose expresses a like concern for mission outreach, "to encourage the members of the Conference to be zealous in sharing their Lutheran heritage . . . with those who do not yet know and believe in Jesus as their Savior." The fifth point is somewhat related to this. The conference has as its purpose "to give clear, firm, and united testimony to the world concerning all that the Bible . . . teaches." A final point shows one of the ways the conference may make its testimony. It is "to encourage and undertake the preparation of clear Scripture-based confessional statements on issues that confront the church from time to time . . ."

Who is qualified for membership? How may a church body become a member? The committee answered these questions in Article IV. Agreement with Article II is required of all member bodies. They also must not be in fellowship with any body that deviates from this confessional standard. A church body may be received by a two thirds affirmative vote at any convention of the Conference. This is subject to the ratification of all member churches at their next meeting. Clearly this article rules out any triangular fellowship relations.

In Article V, Authority, the Conference is given only advisory authority unless the member churches have specifically given it power to act. Any member church which enters into fellowship with another church body is required to submit this to the Conference for ratification. This too will avoid ambiguous fellowship relations.

The committee agreed in Article VI, Representation, that each member church is to be represented at the regular meetings by two voting delegates: the president or leader and another chosen by the church. In addition, each member church may send up to another four advisory, non-voting representatives. Although not stated directly in the constitution, it was agreed that mission churches should be represented by native pastors and members rather than ex-patriot American missionaries.

How often should the conference meet? Article VII, Meetings, calls for triennial meetings. Time and place would be recommended to the voters three years in advance by the Planning Committee, provided for in Article X.

The committee in Article VIII kept the organizational structure simple, with only three officers, a president, vice president, and secretary. The method of election, term of office, and replacement in case of a vacancy are also spelled out in this article.

With the conference assembling only every three years, it was considered advisable to provide for regional meetings between the plenary meetings. This would provide for participation on the part of more members of the various churches. Article IV divides the Conference into five regions for this purpose.

Who will make the arrangements and plans for the conference's meetings? The committee answered this question in Article X with a Planning Committee. This consists of the three officers together with two additional representatives elected by the plenary assembly. Its duties include planning the program, making all arrangements, disseminating information regarding the meetings and work of the Conference.

According to Article XI, Expenses, "each member church shall pay the expenses of its own delegates to meetings of the Conference." Members of the CELC churches are invited to contribute to a special fund administered by the Planning Committee through a person it appoints. Member churches which need help in paying their

delegates' expenses may apply for help from this CELC fund. The fund also provides for the Planning committee's expenses.

Originally the planning committee was targeting 1992 as the year for the constituting convention of this new organization. However, it soon realized that this would not be possible. One of the reasons was that there were still triangular fellowships that needed to be cleared up. After terminating fellowship with the Ev. Lutheran (Old-Lutheran) Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of East Germany, under the firm leadership of its president, Pastor Gerhard Wilde, and its doctrinal committee, was continuing its clear testimony against the aberrations of the SELK. At its convention in 1988 it declared itself to be in protesting fellowship with the SELK. Since the SELK rejected the protests of the Free Church against the SELK's false doctrine and practice, fellowship was suspended at the convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church the following year.

This action did not automatically terminate fellowship relations with the other churches in Europe and Africa and the LCMS with whom the Saxons were still in fellowship. There was still hope that one or the other might also take decisive action against the errors of the SELK. The Saxons communicated with all of them. By 1992 it was evident that none of them would follow the Saxons in their testimony and action. They did not consider the errors as divisive. In its convention of that year the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church passed resolutions stating they could no longer continue in fellowship with those remaining churches. This included also the LCMS. Thus all triangular fellowships were terminated. Now also the Scandinavians, whose relationship with the Germans was a cordial one and who had encouraged them in their firm position, could declare their two churches to be united in faith and confession.

The time had come to call the first meeting of a new synodical conference.

The Constituting Convention

Besides planning the structure and purpose of the organization and drafting a tentative constitution, the WELS/ELS planning committee was responsible for making all plans for the initial meeting of what would become the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference. Direct planning for this meeting began in 1991.

Should the first be a planning meeting or should the assembly already adopt the proposed constitution and begin to function under it? The latter course was recommended, with the proposal that it be considered a provisional constitution, subject to amendment and final ratification at the next triennial meeting. The first meeting would organize itself as the constituting convention of the CELC.

When should this first meeting be held? Recognizing that 1992 would not be feasible, the committee settled on April 27-29, 1993.

Where should the meeting be held? In the USA? Or in one of the mission churches like Central Africa? The committee finally agreed on Germany, the land of the Reformation. Three WELS pastors, John Sullivan, WELS missionary in Germany, and Daniel Balge and Dennis Smith, civilian chaplains, were appointed as arrangements committee to find and arrange for the place of the meeting. They secured the excellent facilities of the Deutsches Jugend Herbergs Werk, a youth hostel, beautifully situated

high on the west bank of the Rhine next to an old castle about an hour's drive north of Frankfurt. The hostel would provide comfortable sleeping quarters, good meals, and a pleasant meeting room at a reasonable price.

Who should be invited? Those churches that were in fellowship with one another because they agreed with the proposed conference's confession of faith. This included the WELS and ELS mission churches. Some of them, especially those in SE Asia and in South America did not consider themselves ready for active participation at this time. The invitation was accepted by the following 13 churches:

- Christ the King Lutheran Church of Nigeria
- Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church (Mexico)
- Evangelical Lutheran Confessional (Finland)
- Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church (Puerto Rico)
- Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (Germany)
- Evangelical Lutheran Synod (USA)
- Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia
- Lutheran Church of Cameroon
- Lutheran Church of Central Africa (Malawi Synod)
- Lutheran Church of Central Africa (Zambia Synod)
- Lutheran Confessional Church (Sweden and Norway)
- Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church (Japan)
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (USA)

These became the founding churches of the CELC. Unfortunately, because of political and other problems the churches of Nigeria and Cameroon did not succeed in sending delegates to the constituting convention.

The planning committee chose an appropriate theme for this initial convention of confessional Lutheran churches: *God's Word Is Our Great Heritage*. Six essays were assigned to carry out this theme: three under part I, *It is ours to share*; three under Part II, *It is ours to preserve*. A seventh concluding essay was of a historical nature. Provisions were made for an opening and a closing service.

Other appointments were made by the planning committee. Prof. Wilbert Gawrisch was asked to serve as Conference Chairman; President Armin Panning, as Secretary; as Steering Committee, Prof. Lyle Lange and President Wilhelm Petersen; Prof. Juul Madson, as Conference Chaplain with Mrs. Beth Balge as Pianist/Organist. Mrs. Debbie Smith was asked to provide secretarial services.

The planning committee had thought of everything necessary for the conference to carry out its work in a pleasant environment and in an orderly manner. At the same time, it was concerned to keep the purpose of the conference central: The member churches were to have an opportunity to express their unity of faith and to encourage and strengthen one another in proclaiming and preserving the precious Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

The three days of meetings in April 1993 were attended by 19 voting delegates, 11 advisory delegates, and 13 official guests, coming from six different continents. 35 Many were accompanied by their wives. Visitors added to this number. English was the official means of communication.

At the opening service WELS President Carl Mischke preached the sermon with Prof. Lyle Lange serving as liturgist. His message, based on John 17:14, had as its theme: *I Have Given Them Your Word*. He concluded with the prayer "that all we do and discuss and decide upon help us to 'keep its teachings pure throughout all generations' so that 'spreading its light from age to age shall be our chief endeavor.'"³⁶ Devotions were conducted before each session by the appointed chaplain, Prof. Madson; Rev. Christer Hugo from Sweden preached for the morning devotion on the final day. The closing communion service was held at Immanuel Congregation at Steeden, one of the churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church. Pastor John Sullivan, who was serving as its pastor at the time, was liturgist for this communion service. ELS President George Orvick preached the sermon on Romans 3:24. His theme was: "Why our new conference must ever proclaim the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." In concluding he reminded the hearers that "our new Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference has a tremendous message to proclaim to the world, the message of justification by grace alone through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Only as we continue to proclaim this message can our existence be justified. May that ever be the flag under which the ship of our new conference sails."³⁷



Professor em. Wilbert Gawrisch, First President, CELC

The business of the conference required only a fraction of its time. Functioning under the provisional constitution, elections were held. Prof. Wilbert Gawrisch was elected as president for the next three years, Prof. Lyle Lange as Vice President, and President Armin Panning as Secretary. To serve with them on the Planning Committee President Gerhard Wilde and Rev. Duane Tomhave were chosen, and President Wilhelm Petersen and Rev. Gaylin Schmeling as alternates. Provisions were made for regional conferences. Mr. Eugene Schulz, a layman from Milwaukee, serves as the appointed Treasurer. He also took numerous pictures on film and tape. Subsequently he prepared a 27 minute video of the conference.

Two informal evening sessions were held. A member from each church was given opportunity to speak. The presentations were made in a lively manner and at times with a touch of humor. Often they shared their inner feelings. "Speaker after speaker arose, with emotion welling up in his voice, to tell of the work of his church was doing and the difficulties they encountered. All repeatedly pointed out what it meant to be united in a common faith with others."³⁸

By far the most time was devoted to hearing and discussing the essays. They were the true highlight of the convention. They provided for the study of biblical doctrine with practical applications and strengthening of faith and encouragement to spread the saving message of the crucified and risen Christ. Since the essayists came from different churches serving in different cultures from far flung parts of the world, it was truly edifying to hear the same commitment to Scripture and the Confessions, the same love for the Gospel, the same joy over the redemption our risen, living Savior won for people of all nations and languages and cultures. In the discussions members of the mission churches also participated freely. The Holy Spirit through the Word had worked in their hearts. They expressed their faith well also in a language that was not native to them. The complete essays may be read in the Proceedings of the Conference. We must content ourselves here to give an outline of the program of essays and essayists and conclude by quoting from some of the essays to show how the conference under God's blessing served its intended purpose.

Convention Theme: God's Word Is Our Great Heritage

- I. It is ours to share.
 - A. We have a common mission: to make disciples of Jesus Christ.
Essayist: Pastor Duane Tomhave, Administrator, Board for World Missions, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (USA)
 - B. We have a common message: sins are forgiven through Jesus Christ.
Essayist: Prof. Salimo Hachibamba, President, Seminary of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa
 - C. We have a common means: The Gospel in Word and Sacrament.
Essayist: Pastor Gaylin Schmeling, Chairman, Doctrine Committee, Evangelical Lutheran Synod (USA)
- II. It is ours to preserve.
 - A. We have a common foundation: God's pure Word.
Essayist: Pastor Egil Edvardson, Lutheran Confessional Church (Sweden and Norway)

B. We have a common confession: unity in the Spirit
Essayist: Pastor Gerhard Wilde, President, Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (Germany)

C. We have a common concern: to divide Law and Gospel properly.
Essayist: Prof. Wilhelm Petersen, President, Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Evangelical Lutheran Synod (USA)

III. Lessons for the Future from the Past: Highlights from the History of the Synodical Conference

Essayist: Pastor Richard Lauersdorf, First Vice-President, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (USA)

The importance of mission work, but with the pure Word, was stressed. "If any place there ought to be an intense interest in pure doctrine, it ought to be on the church's front line of gospel outreach . . . What an awesome assignment! Make believers out of unbelievers . . . Who will bring the saving gospel to the nations in our day? Who will be the voice of biblical, historic, confessional, orthodox Lutheran Christianity if not we who are assembled here and the churches we serve? . . . But souls are still best won and nurtured by person-to-person communication." "We can preserve our confession best if we give it to others."

Cultural differences do not change the message. "The Bible is above any culture and other religions or beliefs. It is God's book to men which makes us, even though we are many and have different cultural backgrounds, one in Christ . . . The facts we have presented on justification are biblical and can be said to be beyond cultural boundaries . . . We will also want to make sure that the fact of forgiveness is understood in biblical culture and not in any other . . . For people of different nationalities, continents, languages and almost representing all colors of human race to have the kind of fellowship as this one, which binds us together, means that such people are agreed in their confession of faith and doctrine."

The conference serves as an inspiration and encouragement. "It is good for our little Lutheran Confessional Church in Sweden and Norway to be part of a fellowship where we have a common foundation—God's pure Word. This fellowship encourages us not to give up but to continue to go on contending for preserving God's Word so it will become the heritage of our coming generations." "By God's grace we have been led together . . . our hearts are filled with gratitude . . . It will be helpful of we come together often . . . Then we will have opportunities to discuss matters of doctrine and developments in our churches and our surroundings, and to search our hearts, lest we become lukewarm."

What lessons can we learn from the history of the Synodical Conference? "Why a new conference? The founders wanted a group that was like-minded in doctrine and practice on the basis of God's inerrant, infallible Word . . . They knew that only by faithfulness to all of Scripture could they retain the full blessings of the gospel . . . Interesting, isn't it, how back at the beginning the founders considered justification and fellowship as topics most important for discussion . . . That's the way it is with believers, whether individually or in a group. It's their very nature to share God's good news in Christ . . . The Synodical Conference in its mission efforts showed that confessional

commitment is not merely some sterile theoretical combating for the truth. Interwoven with that commitment is always the concern for spreading the gospel in all its purity in order to save souls. . . . Mutual examination and exhortation are so important. And it works both ways, as history shows - the larger church bodies in concerned love caring for the smaller ones, and not shrinking because of the danger of being perceived as paternalistic - and the small church bodies with the same concerned love caring for the larger ones, and not scared off because of size . . . We need brother-to-brother concern. We need to meet together. We need to listen to one another. We need to share with one another. We need to grow together through study in the Word so that our Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference might continue to be what the Synodical Conference once was."

The essayist concluded his essay and the chairman closed the conference with the pre-sermon prayer Dr. Walther had prayed at the 1872 convention of the Synodical Conference: "It is not the work of man, O Lord Jesus, it is not our work but Yours alone and due to Your grace that we are assembled here today in unity of faith, knit together by the bond of love and peace. To you be thanks, praise and blessing in time and eternity . . . But You alone, O Lord, who have begun in us the good work, can sustain it . . . Work with us, enlighten us, sanctify us, strengthen us, bless us, and let a blessing go forth from all our gatherings for the welfare of our dear charges, for the upbuilding of Your whole church, for the honor of Your great name. Lord, we bow ourselves before You in our prayers, relying not on our righteousness, but on Your great mercy. Hear us for Your mercy's and your truth's sake. Amen."



CELK Officers
Left to Right: Gerhard Wilde, Lyle W. Lange, Duane Tomhave,
Wilbert R. Gawrisch, Armin J. Panning

Endnotes

1. *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 1968, pp. 61f.
2. *Proceedings of the 47th Convention of the Lutheran Synodical Conference*, 1962, pp. 20, 68.
3. *WELS Proceedings*, 1967, pp. 222-223.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 247.
5. *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 1969, p. 60.
6. *WELS Book of Reports and Memorials*, 1969, p. 112.
7. *WELS Proceedings*, 1971, p. 21.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
9. The 1971fall meeting of the Forum already repeated this encouragement as reported to the nine districts in 1972, p. 95. Repeated also in later meetings, see, *WELS Report to the Nine Districts*, 1976, p. 84, and *WELS Book of Reports and Memorials*, 1977, p. 114.
10. *WELS Book of Reports and Memorials*, 1977, p. 82.
11. *WELS Proceedings*, 1977, p. 98.
12. *WELS Report to the Ten Districts*, 1978, p. 105.
13. *WELS Book of Reports and Memorials*, 1979, p. 108.
14. *WELS Proceedings*, 1961, p. 199.
15. *Ibid.*
16. This was the commission's name until 1974 when its name was changed to Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR).
17. *Doctrinal Statements of the WELS*, p. 50.
18. *WELS Proceedings*, 1973, p. 92.
19. A detailed account with full documentation of the discussions and correspondence with the German churches is found in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 1978, pp. 7-43, 130-148.
20. *WELS Proceedings*, 1977, p. 205.
21. *WELS Proceedings*, 1979, p. 127.
22. *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 1975, pp. 336f.
23. *WELS Proceedings*, 1979, p. 126.
24. *WELS Proceedings*, 1981, p. 120.
25. *WELS Report to the 12 Districts*, 1986, p. 129.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
27. *WELS Book of Reports and Memorials*, 1987, pp. 130ff.
28. For the full text of the suspension, see *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 1985, pp. 149-153.
29. *WELS Proceedings*, 1987, p. 112.
30. *WELS Report to the 12 Districts*, 1986, pp. 132-134, contains the complete report.
31. *WELS Book of Reports and Memorials*, 1987, p. 127.
32. *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 1989, p. 123.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 124f.

34. For the complete text of the proposed constitution, see *Proceedings of the Constituting Convention*, 1993, pp. 1-4.

35. See *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 1993, pp. 218-219 or *Proceedings of the Constituting Convention*, 1993, pp. 7-9, for a complete list of the delegates and official guests.

36. *Proceedings of the Constituting Convention*, 1993, pp. 141-145 contains the complete text of the sermon.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 146-151.

38. *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 1993, p. 221.

Vignette - Christmas Memories

by M. Lehninger

Translation of *Weihnachtserinnerungen* from the *Ev. Lutherisches Gemeindeblatt*,
December 27, 1926 by Paul Lehninger

Every year my thoughts are carried back to Christmastime in the days of my childhood. It is as if a hand strummed over long-silent strings and played before me the worthy melodies from my parents' home. I hear the bells of my hometown ringing and see the peaked church steeple poking out of the snow-covered landscape. Through the windows the candles of the Christmas trees are glowing. The jingling of the sleighs rings in my ears. And the smell of spicy cookies and stollen and other undefinable things fills the air; in short, it smells like Christmas.

Do you experience similar things, dear reader? Is there still today such intense expectation, is there still such an atmosphere of Christmas as formerly? What do you think?

Before my eyes stands the picture of our living room. It is about the hour of dusk. In the stove a cozy fire is crackling, which on and off bathes the furniture and the people in an uncertain light. There! The stamping of horses' hooves near the house! It is father, whose profession of policeman, or, to use the contemporary title, patrolman, most often kept him away from home until darkness fell or even until late at night. Finally he sits with us in his comfortable house jacket. And it doesn't take long for singing to resound through the room. Father and mother sing sacred songs and folk songs of varied provenance in colorful harmony, and we children, on the knees or laps of our parents, joyfully sing along.

I want to emphasize that at that time people really lived in the church year. The great festivals: Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, meant so much in the community that everyone all together observed special appropriate events. When such a festival approached, week-long special preparations were attended to in school and at home. What great value lies in Christian customs and habits, which have also always been highly treasured in the Lutheran church. But in our country more and more of this will be lost under the influence and scorn for Christian customs and outward practices.

I was only a young lad at that time, so I don't know exactly which songs we sang in the family circle at Christmas time. But one thing I know, that I will be able to sing songs like *Oh, Come, Little Children*; *Oh, How Joyfully*; *Silent Night*; and *From Heaven Above* as long as I have a memory. Soon came years when the desire to sing completely fled away from my parents, years of great suffering. Father died young. He did not leave his young widow in splendid circumstances. It became a bitter endeavor for mother to fight her way through and give her two children a good education. But the light of Christmas was never completely extinguished for us. And each year, when we once again stood around the blazing Christmas tree, the kindness and loving condescension of God our Savior, which was manifest in the Christchild, gave us comfort and strength, and the light that beamed forth from the crib in Bethlehem once again drove away all darkness with its bright shining.

The eternal light comes here below,
And bathes the world in purest glow;
It even shines in darkest night
And makes us children of the light.

Kyrieleis!

Years have passed. Meanwhile, the young lad has grown into a man, who as a rookie pastor is stationed at a small congregation in southeast Nebraska. He is the first resident pastor. A band of eight to ten children from age 13 to 17 must be prepared for confirmation. At the same time Christmas is standing at the door and for the first time the little congregation, which until this time has not had its own home, is eager to celebrate the dear Christmas holiday festively in the just-built church. And without question, a children's service must also take place. Is it possible?

Where should school be held? A farmer, who had just built himself a new house, obligingly placed at our disposal his old house, which he had intended to make over into a granary. Tables and benches were hammered together from a pair of planks, and so it could begin! A grammar, a slate, a catechism, and a Bible History were the means of instruction.

The difficulties were not slight. Whether it was the courage of ignorance or industriousness, the persistency, and good will—or perhaps both—at any rate, the matter progressed. The subject matter was spelled out, taught, and explained, to the point that sometimes heads experiences a "spell" of pain and restless bodies wanted to rebel. Of course my children had learned English in school and spoke low German at home, but High German was a considerable deficiency. And now in addition something had to be learned for the children's service on Christmas Eve. Even the younger children were supposed to, and wanted to, take part. Mothers and fathers went about the work eagerly and taught each of their children one or two little verses, as they still remembered theirs from their own childhood.

With so much to practice, time seemed to fly. The great evening arrived. There appeared a quite stately Christmas tree that had been decorated by the congregation. From all directions vehicles arrived. At that time none of us had carriages, but each had a wagon or a light open vehicle which could be placed into service. Some young men even came by saddle. If snow had fallen to a certain extent, one also placed into service homemade sleds, which horses certainly had to pull often enough over the white-blanketed, frozen ground, and then there was also not lacking the corresponding jingling of the sleigh or harness bells. But I don't remember any more whether there was snow every Christmas Eve.

The church filled up. In the very front sat the children. But the lighting? The candles on the tree could not all be lighted at once, or they would not last until the end; moreover, their light alone would not have been sufficient. Two ushers had solved the problem this way: on their authority they had bought two large round hanging lamps, of the type which at that time were used for lighting places of business. Of course they had to answer for themselves at the congregational meeting in the new year, since they had acted high-handedly. Even though everyone realized that we needed light for the nativity celebration on Christmas Eve, whether the purchase of the lamps for one evening of the

year—we had no other evening service—would be justified, would be earnestly discussed before it found approval. Such an outlay of money was no little matter among our people, who had established a home for themselves on the prairies of the West and among whom there were many who had just gotten started. Without help from others, they had just built a modest, attractive church, and had called a pastor, whom they had promised a salary of \$300. That's how it was in the early 1900's. Trade and traffic lay in the land down below (?), and agricultural production brought laughably low prices.

But back to our celebration! We of course also wanted to sing. I had not been able to practice any songs with the children. The congregation did not own an organ or any other musical instrument. Only one member of the congregation, if I'm not mistaken, had a harmonium in his house. So we got along by singing all the songs in unison. Even if a refined taste would have had much with which to find fault, we were not exactly refined. If perhaps it was not artistically polished, nevertheless we sang with full hearts, with enthusiasm, and with love. The pastor gave the intonation and acted as cantor, and the congregation followed. Usually that went quite well. Only occasionally it happened that, as at the Wartburg at the time of the minnesingers, there was a kind of tournament between the pastor and an usher who had an especially strong voice. That's how it happened that the pastor took his book out of his hands and he rejoined the congregation. (?) And so that disturbed our joy in singing no further.

So that evening as our children told the old and yet ever new story of the birth of the Savior and recited their verses, and as the dear old Christmas songs resounded, the eye of many a man gleamed from restrained emotion—all from pure joy. Afterwards, then, in closing, small presents were presented to the children, and all departed by lantern light for home, fully content. And for the two feast days the entire small congregation gathered again in their church for divine service.

Yes, it was a wonderfully beautiful holiday that my first congregation celebrated as the first Christmas in their new church, my first Christmas in Nebraska.

[The Rev. M. Lehninger was later called from Firth, Nebraska to the Wisconsin Synod Seminary as professor.]

... from the Editor

Special thanks are extended to Pastor em. Armin Schuetze, former professor at and president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI for his account of the origin of the CELC. Thanks also to Mr. Eugene G. Schulz of Milwaukee for the photos printed with the article.

The vignette – *Christmas Memories* – was sent to the editor by Mrs. Margaret Lehninger, mother of the translator and first secretary of the Historical Institute. Thank you!

Members are reminded that memberships in the Historical Institute expire on December 31, 1994. By renewing your memberships before 1995 the cost of handling and mailing of renewal letters would be saved for better uses for the Institute, and the membership committee would have a happier New Year. Membership fees and the address are found on page 46 of this *Journal*.

A repeat request from the July 1994 *NEWSLETTER*:

We, the WELS, are experiencing a change in the structure of our educational program. Four educational institutions will be closed in 1995 and two new ones will be established. Therefore I would like to request that students and former students of these four educational institutions send items of historical importance and interest to me. It is hoped that the entire issue of the April 1995 *Journal* will feature such historical facts, especially those that are not too well known. Please send them by January 1, 1995 to the following address:

Editor, WELS Historical Journal
N7353 County Road Y
Watertown, WI 53094

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