

Our Seminary in Watertown: 1863-1870

Introduction

Though its doors did not open until September of 1863,¹ one could say that the seminary of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod began on the morning of May 27th, 1861. As President Johannes Bading concluded his first yearly report to the Synod, meeting in convention at St. Mark's in Watertown, he offered the following suggestion: "The honorable Synod should try to get it straight in its own mind, whether or not the time has come to take appropriate steps toward the founding of our own seminary."² With that suggestion, President Bading literally put the establishment of a seminary at the top of Synod's agenda.

Actually, the idea of a seminary to train pastors for the Wisconsin Synod had been around for a number of years. Professor E.E. Kowalke says, "Even at the first meeting there was talk of having a seminary of our own. At every meeting in the early years the shortage of pastors and means of meeting the shortage was discussed."³ In his history of the Wisconsin Synod, J.P. Koehler says that "the idea of Synod's own seminary had been suggested by the German society agents."⁴

Ever since the Wisconsin Synod's founding, these mission societies in Germany had been a main source of pastors for the young synod in America. No matter how many pastors the mission societies were able to send, however, more were needed—and the members of the Synod were at times not happy. In the minutes of the Synod convention of 1853, the secretary records the remark that "people complained a great deal about the lack of preachers, and that in the past year, all hopes for help from the East had been unsuccessful."⁵

The second half of that remark reminds one that Synod was not relying solely on the German mission societies to provide it with pastors; Synod too was doing what it could: looking for graduates from other Lutheran seminaries in America, exploring the possibility of making use of the Illinois Synod seminary in Springfield,⁶ ordaining candidates who had been trained in a congregation by the local pastor, and even resorting to "fly-by-night, would be pastors," who, however, "too often proved to be the cure that was worse than the original bite."⁷ But all of these efforts were not enough. One gets a feel for the massive numbers of German immigrants pouring into the American Midwest—and needing pastors—by

¹ Though one source gives September 1, 1863, as the start of the Watertown seminary, I have not been able to confirm that in any primary source. The convention proceedings say that Moldehnke did not arrive in Watertown until the end of September. Interestingly, the *Katalog des Evang. Luth. Theol. Seminars von 1907-1908* says that the seminary was founded in 1865. (p. 9)

² *Verhandlungen der Elften Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 12.

³ Erwin Ernst Kowalke, *Historical Highlights of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary* (WLS Archives, Box 9), p. 33.

⁴ John Philipp Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod* (Sauk Rapids, MN: Sentinel Printing Company, 1981), p. 83.

⁵ *Synodalversammlung in der Gnaden-Gemeinde in Town Herman, Dodge Co., Wi., den 22., 23. u. 24. Mai 1853*, p. 18.

⁶ Kowalke says, "The Synod rejected plans to cooperate with the Iowa Synod, two Illinois Synods and the Norwegian and Swedish Synods in conducting a joint theological seminary in Springfield, Illinois, to be called Illinois State University. (This was not the University of Illinois.) *Historical Highlights*, p. 33. In his history of the seminary, Immanuel Frey says the Illinois seminary "was being sponsored by two Synods of the General Synod in Illinois. At first our fathers seemed inclined to avail themselves of this offer. However, the matter was finally dropped, chiefly, because of the fear that the German professorship would not amount to much in an otherwise English-speaking institution. How much confessionalism played a role is not apparent." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary: 1863-1963* (WLS Essay File), pp. 3-4.

⁷ Edward C. Friedrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992), p. 15.

glancing at just a couple of statistical reports. The 1858 report lists 25 congregations reporting 804 baptisms, with Mühlhäuser's Milwaukee congregation topping the list at 171.⁸ Six years later, 55 congregations reported 1,286 baptisms.⁹ The Wisconsin Synod was growing, and with that growth was the need for even more pastors.

President Bading assigned his suggestion of founding a seminary to a committee consisting of Pastors Mühlhäuser, Köhler, Böhner, and Sauer. The next day, Bading had Synod's initial response. The committee reported "that as desirable as it might be to have its own seminary, we just can't see how the goal could be reached at present." But there was a ray of hope. The committee continued, "We recommend that the Synod name a committee which in the course of the upcoming Synodical year directs its attention to this topic."¹⁰ And so the Wisconsin Synod earnestly began work that, under God, is still bearing fruit 150 years later.

The first steps Synod took toward establishing its own seminary can be described at best as small and cautious. In keeping with the initial resolution regarding a seminary, a "committee for the matter of education" was appointed. It consisted of Pastor C. F. Goldammer, Pastor J. Mühlhäuser, Pastor W. Streißguth, and Mr. D. Schwecke. They presented a report the next day. The report began by noting the significant growth in the Synod, both in the number of members and in the amount of territory served. The committee then recommended three things: 1.) that pastors be reminded of their duty not only to pray for more workers, but also to encourage young men toward the public ministry, and to provide some pre-seminary training for it; 2.) that congregations be thanked for their past support, while at the same time be reminded of the ongoing, increasing need; and 3.) that Synod should continue to entrust its pastoral students to Gettysburg Seminary of the Pennsylvania Synod, and especially to the German evangelical Lutheran professor there, Dr. Schäffer, because the prospects for starting our own seminary looked dim. The minutes record that the committee recommendations precipitated "a rather lengthy discussion." There did seem to be more interest in the idea than there had been before.¹¹

A year later, President Bading had not forgotten the movement the 1861 convention had made in the direction of its own seminary, slight as it might have been. His strategy was to get behind the Synod and push hard. He did that as he closed his yearly report to the convention on the morning of June 16th, 1862. At the end of a ten-page report, President Bading said,

I can't really believe that the Synodical praesidium has ever, since the beginning of our Synod, had to feel the lack of preachers as acutely as it happened in the course of the past Synodical year. Old Synodical congregations have stood there orphaned for many months, fighting for their life with the sects and schismatics. When they repeatedly asked for help, we could give them no comfort other than: wait with hope for the eventual help of the Lord. Requests for help have come in from new congregations which have not yet joined, but we were not able to grant their request. Where will this end, if we do not think more seriously about the founding of our own seminary and get to work with more strength and courageous faith. We cannot and we may not rely on Germany. Even if a worker is sent to us now and then, whom we want to accept with heartfelt thanks to the

⁸ *Synodal-Bericht der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, 1858, p. 5.

⁹ *Verhandlungen der Elften Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 13.

¹⁰ *Verhandlungen der Elften Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 22.

¹¹ *Verhandlungen der Elften Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 25-26.

Lord and to our German brothers who have a heart for us, that is only a drop in the bucket. We must dig a well in our land, in our Synod, from which workers flow to us. If we want to wait with the founding of an institution of this kind until we are rich, then nothing will come of it. How did August Hermann Francke begin his orphanage in Halle? How did Pastor Harms begin his mission house in Hermannsburg? With little money, for they were poor, but with a strong faith in the almighty and rich Lord. Or do we want examples a little closer to home? Then let us look at the small beginnings of the educational institutions of the Missouri Synod, or at the small beginning of a seminary in the reformed fellowship of our land? All of them began in an unspectacular and insignificant way. And look, they have not only barely managed to survive, they have in part, by the grace of God, become large, flourishing institutions. Let us follow in their footsteps and just make a small beginning, with faith in the Lord's help. I hope in God, that a time will come also for us, when we can praise God about this with the Psalmist: "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy." Come now, dear brothers and friends, let us at this Synodical convention draw up a plan for the founding of an educational institution and call across the sea, "We are starting." I know for sure, some people from over there will call out to us, "We want to help."¹²

By Synodical resolution, President Bading's report was handed over to a committee for their reaction. With Bading's closing words perhaps still ringing in their ears, the committee of Pastors Mühlhäuser, Fachtmann, Goldammer, and lay delegate Kiekhöfer responded that afternoon. "The committee acknowledges with joy the advisability of the suggestions and encouragements which have come from the Langenberger Verein¹³ for the establishment of a seminary for preachers in the evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and bordering states, and recommends the matter to the Synod for careful, serious consideration."¹⁴ The delegates agreed. It was another small step forward.

The extensive discussion that followed focused first on *the urgent need* Synod had for its own seminary. The delegates mentioned a number of things that emphasized that need:

1. the growing influence of the Catholic church;
2. the exclusive spirit of the seminaries of Missouri and Iowa, of which the Synod did not approve, and with which it did not want to fill its pastors;
3. the fact that at present thirteen congregations had vacancies, with no prospect of filling them;
4. requests for pastors from Minnesota and Iowa;
5. the fact that the lack of preachers was opening a big field of labor for the Methodists and Albrechtsleute;¹⁵ (Estimates at the convention were that the population of Wisconsin at that time was about 800,000, of which 250,000 were German. Of those, 160,000 were Protestant.)

¹² *Verhandlungen der Zwölften Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 13-14.

¹³ The Langenberger Verein was a division of the United Rhine Mission Society, a mission society formed in 1828 by Christians in a number of German towns along the Rhine River. They operated a mission school in Barmen.

¹⁴ *Verhandlungen der Zwölften Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 14.

¹⁵ "Jacob Albrecht, known to English-speaking people as Jacob Albright, was a layman, the son of a Lutheran pastor. The son turned Methodist and became a lay evangelist, an enthusiastic preacher of Methodism among the German immigrants. The Church of the United Brethren followed the Germans into Ohio and Wisconsin whither the main stream of immigrants was flowing. Since their preachers themselves were German and preached German, and

6. the fact that though Minnesota was also very Protestant, there were just eight preachers there, only 2 or 3 of whom were full-time, while the Albrechtsleute and Methodists were doing missionary work like a well-oiled machine, rushing into every new settlement almost before the first house had been built.
7. the workload of the Lutheran preachers, which was so great that for some congregations, a sermon was a rare thing;
8. the fact that no schooling was available for the children;
9. the need for a strong unity, for a strong Synodical spirit, and for interest in Synod's congregations—something a seminary 1,000 miles away could not do.

The delegates were sure that such urgent need would awaken congregational interest in and support for a seminary.¹⁶

Convinced of the urgent need, the convention delegates got serious as they began to discuss not if, but how they could establish and maintain their own seminary. Their thought was to start small, and then gradually to expand, including also a college. They would rent a space and conduct a capital campaign. They estimated they would need between \$5,000 and \$6,000 to begin. A professor's salary would be another \$500. They were sure young men would come, especially if there were a college there. They also knew that the Langenberger Verein had promised to send them suitable students. As far as location was concerned, the delegates figured probably somewhere in the Milwaukee area. Wherever it would be, it needed to be a location that was easily accessible, that would show its support, and that had plenty of young people. As the day ended, the convention was "unanimous;" it needed its own seminary.¹⁷

When discussion of a seminary resumed the following morning, the conversation immediately turned to money. Pastor J. Mühlhäuser expressed his willingness to bring a Synodical request for financial support before the Gustav-Adolph-Verein¹⁸ during his upcoming trip to Germany.¹⁹ The delegates empowered Pastor Mühlhäuser to act in Synod's behalf while there, and voted to contribute to the cost of his travel.

Several delegates then spoke about the need Synod would have to incorporate, since it might be buying property for a building. Pastor Stark was charged to look into the new incorporation law in Wisconsin and report back to the Synod. When he did so that afternoon, the Synod resolved to incorporate itself as "The German Evangelical-Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Bordering States." Synod's officers were legally empowered to transact business in the name of the Synod.

since they called themselves 'Evangelisch' (Evangelical), the same name by which the immigrants had known the Lutheran Church in Germany, they found it a relatively easy task to gather Lutheran settlers into their congregations. The missionaries of the Wisconsin Synod in the 1860's, wherever they went, found these 'Albrechtsbrueder' as they were known, active among the Lutherans, persuading them that their Methodism was an American brand of Lutheranism. The familiar German language and the name Evangelical often were sufficient to quiet any suspicion that the simple people might have had that they were being led into Methodism. The letters and reports that the missionaries wrote describing their journeys through Wisconsin seldom fail to mention with vexation that the Albrechtsbrueder had been at work in the missionaries' preaching places." Erwin E. Kowalke, *Northwestern Lutheran*. January 8, 1967, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Verhandlungen der Zwölften Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 17-18.

¹⁷ *Verhandlungen der Zwölften Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁸ The Gustav-Adolf-Verein was a mission society established in 1832 to help needy Protestants. It began in the area of Leipzig and Dresden. A second, similar movement began in 1841. The following year, the two groups united to form the Evangelischer Verein der Gustav-Adolf-Stiftung. (*Christian Cyclopedia*.

<http://cyclopedia.lcms.org/display.asp?t1=g&word=GUSTAV-ADOLF-VEREIN>, accessed on October 8, 2013.)

¹⁹ The Langenberger Verein had invited Pastor Mühlhäuser, its first missionary, to return to Germany to celebrate in its midst his 25th anniversary in the ministry and the 25th anniversary of the Verein.

Finally, the committee in charge of reacting to the president's report resolved "that we strongly support the recommendation of the praesidium with respect to the establishment of a preacher seminary."²⁰ The 1862 convention had unmistakably shown that Synod was getting ever more serious about its own seminary.

The fact that a Wisconsin seminary seemed to be just on the horizon is something President Bading reflected in his report to the Synod convention on May 9th, 1863, as it met at Grace Church in Milwaukee. The establishment of a seminary was one of the first items of business he mentioned, and when he did, he spoke as forcefully about it as he could.

While we must think about the situation of our land and people with such sighing, and while we were plagued the whole year through with the horrors of war, in the affairs of the church, the Lord showed us grace beyond all our asking and comprehension. When we left our Synodical convention last year, an overview of our fields of labor and of our workers had called to mind the Word of the Lord, "The harvest is great but the workers are few." Not less than thirteen vacant congregations had sent us urgent requests for preachers and pastors. Some of them had been without spiritual care for a long time already and had been plagued most severely by Methodists, Albrechtsleute, and other enthusiasts. Yet we had no idea where so many workers should come from to satisfy all these needs. But the Lord was gracious to us. He knew ways and means. He crowned the trip of our honorable Senior in Germany with such success, that a whole group of evangelists came across the ocean to work in fellowship with us in the labor of the Lord. Then we were able to meet the many needs with help, and give our travelling missionary opportunity, with his tireless, zealous spirit to open new fields and to prepare them for a pastor. To be sure, that requires new workers. For if the thousands of our fellow countrymen are not to fall prey to the sectarians in their forests and prairies, or become victims of unbelief, if the thousands who settle each year in Wisconsin and the bordering states are to remain in the Lutheran church, then every year we have a need for a significant increase in workers. In this we may certainly still look back to our old fatherland and live in the confidence that our German brothers, who have the spiritual well-being of their fellow Germans in America on their heart, will keep sending us workers we can use. But as thankfully as we recognize every bit of help which is sent to us from the German societies and fellowships to be, because of the great spiritual need of America and for the sake of the well-being of our Synod and of our congregations, we must come back again and again to the establishment of our own theological seminary. The desire for one has already been expressed long ago. The plan for the founding was talked through rather extensively at the last Synod convention. Now it depends on this: that it be implemented boldly and courageously. Certainly one should first estimate the costs, if one wants to build a tower. But just doing arithmetic won't get anything done. That does more to discourage than to encourage the founding of a seminary. We must include in the calculating faith in the almighty Savior who will strengthen the weak and bless

²⁰ *Verhandlungen der Zwölften Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 20.

the small; indeed we must put that at the top, and then confidently begin, small and humbly, with the meager means and strength which are available to us. When we start something to the glory of our Savior and for the salvation of immortal souls, then we may entrust something to our Lord, to his almighty power and grace, without having to fear that we will come to shame with our work. Therefore, if we step forward confidently with the founding of an educational institution at this Synod convention, the Lord will provide it and carry forward the work we start to its glorious goal.²¹

The floor committees then took up the business of the 1863 convention. Much of it dealt with the founding of our own seminary. After accepting the documentation presented for incorporating the Synod, the delegates authorized its submission to the state of Wisconsin for approval. They also ratified three additional Synodical trustees President Bading had had to appoint, since the state of Wisconsin required six. Later, the delegates discussed at length sending their Synod president to Germany for the express purpose of collecting funds for a seminary. Since they felt this visit was necessary, they would also need to find a substitute for his Watertown congregation. Step by step things were moving forward.

On Monday morning, Floor Committee 6 brought its report. As far as the committee was concerned, “the need for such an institution can’t be emphasized strongly enough.” The committee felt that Synod needed to decide on a location. The place needed to have a good sized population and be centrally located; Watertown was preferable. The committee also recommended that Synod get going with establishing a seminary, keeping the costs low. Synod should also give most careful thought to finding a suitable Inspector²². Floor Committee 6 ended its report by reminding the members of Synod of their duty both to work and to pray for this goal.²³

As discussion began, reports of two conferences and another floor committee were read aloud. Once again, the suggestion was made that Synod establish its seminary in Watertown. It was more centrally located, had cheaper land, was as a smaller city, did not have as many distractions as a larger city, and had people who were in a position to donate goods for the support of a seminary. People in Milwaukee were busy supporting a hospital.²⁴

The discussion about location went back and forth; some delegates in favor of Milwaukee, others Watertown. For almost each point one delegate made, another had a counterpoint. Worth noting in the debate is the participation of Senior Mühlhäuser and President Bading. As one might expect, Mühlhäuser favored Milwaukee and Bading, Watertown. It is worth noting because of a comment J.P. Koehler makes in his *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*. He writes, “The personal choice, Bading or Muehlhaeuser, was a subject that was, of course, taboo in the discussion, but according to the unanimous testimony of the old-timers, pastors and laymen, who were actively interested at the time and still living thirty to fifty years ago, that was the potent though silent factor.” Finally, the delegates decided to vote, and to do so by ballot. When all the ballots were in, the vote was Watertown 45, Milwaukee 19.²⁵

The only thing left to consider was who would be the teacher. Whom would Synod choose to be its first seminary professor? President Bading wasted no time. “He suggested excusing Pastor Moldehnke

²¹ *Verhandlungen der Dreizehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 9-10.

²² We would call an Inspector a Dean of Students.

²³ *Verhandlungen der Dreizehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 22.

²⁴ *Verhandlungen der Dreizehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 22-23. The hospital was the Passavant hospital.

²⁵ Koehler, J.P., *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 89.

from his position as travelling missionary so that he could move to Watertown and begin with the training of any available pupils.”²⁶ Synod agreed, and so did Pastor Moldehnke, provided Synod would allow him three months to complete his work as travelling missionary.²⁷ That was June 1st, 1863. Just over three months later, Professor Moldehnke opened the doors of Synod’s seminary in Watertown, WI. He was just shy of 27 years old at the time.

When the convention resumed its business the next morning, however, Pastor Fachtmann and Senior Mühlhäuser immediately moved to reopen the discussion about the location of the seminary. They felt Synod had acted unwisely from the perspective of money, and that it had rushed its decision on location. The delegates agreed to revisit the decision, but place the discussion at the end of the convention. Instead, the discussion resumed the next morning; the majority of the delegates wanted to settle the question sooner rather than later. Again Senior Mühlhäuser feared that Watertown would not show itself willing to support a seminary. In addition, Pastors Fachtmann and Streißguth expressed their opinion that Milwaukee was a better place for a college, which Synod would also need. After considering these additional points, Synod reaffirmed its decision for Watertown, but this time with the proviso that Watertown would need to show its willingness to support a seminary by raising \$2,000 for it. If it did not, Synod reserved the right to revisit its decision about location once again.

As the convention of 1863 wound down, three other matters related to the Watertown seminary were decided. The delegates approved an expenditure of \$75 toward President Bading’s trip to Germany to raise funds for the seminary. They also arranged for the pastoral vacancy which would then exist at St. Mark’s in Watertown because of Bading’s absence. Finally, they named an admissions committee for the seminary.

About a month later, in early July of 1863, President Bading left for Germany as Synod had charged him to do. He would be gone for over a year. His task was to collect funds for the new seminary. He travelled extensively through northern Germany, and in the fall of 1863 moved on to the Baltic provinces and to parts of Russia. Seemingly, it was this first phase of his trip about which J.P. Koehler is speaking when he says, “The total net amount of his cash collection abroad, according to the next year’s Synodical report, was 10,294 Thaler, not quite \$13,000 according to the then rate of exchange.”²⁸ Because of that success, Synod voted to extend President Bading’s trip abroad so that he could travel through Prussia and continue to gather offerings. In his history, Prof. E. Fredrich reports that this second and final phase “in Prussia raised another \$7,500 ... in the form of endowment funds.”²⁹ Finally, on October 15th, 1864, President Bading and his family returned to America, arriving in Watertown about a month later. They had been gone for fifteen months. Unfortunately, Synod and its new seminary never saw any of the money that had been raised during the latter phase of the trip through Prussia³⁰. As Synod continued to become more and more confessional, it also continued to distance itself more and more from the mission societies and the Prussian High Consistory. Though it did not yet know it, Synod would be pretty much on its own in financing its new seminary. At the time, Synod had 31 members.

²⁶ *Verhandlungen der Dreizehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 24.

²⁷ The report of the floor committee for the seminary at the Synod convention of 1864 says that Pastor Moldehnke’s call at this time was “temporary” (vorläufig). See *Verhandlungen der Vierzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 13.

²⁸ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 104. Kowalke says that “the total sum collected everywhere and deposited to the credit of the Synod was \$10,215 in American money.” *Centennial Story*, p. 25. I freely admit some confusion in exactly how much was collected, from where, and when.

²⁹ Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p. 16.

³⁰ The reason for this will come later in the story of our Seminary in Watertown.

Year One: 1863-1864

While President Bading was travelling through Germany and Russia, back in his hometown of Watertown, the seminary for which he had worked so hard opened its doors for the first time. The delegates had repeatedly expressed the thought that the seminary should start small, and that our seminary did. “In the fall of 1863 a seminary was opened in a rented house that also served as the dwelling of the one professor,”³¹ Dr. Edward Frederick Moldehnke (Moldenke). J.P. Koehler identifies the first home of Dr. Moldehnke as “the Stoppenbach house. That was the house at 814 North Fourth St.³² that later, after the Civil War which was now raging, was bought by (Confederate) Col. Gardner (*Gaertner*) and then by that name known as the original home of the college.”³³ J.P. Koehler also says that “by the end of September Moldehnke had moved to Watertown.”³⁴

Rev. Edward Friedrich Moldehnke, Ph.D., D.D., was born on August 10, 1836, in Insterburg, East Prussia. Today, this is the city of Chernyakhovsk and is in Russia. His parents were Franz August and Justine (Kessler) Moldehnke. His mother’s family had originally come from Salzburg. When Moldehnke was nine, his mother died. His father remarried, but Moldehnke “had a very sad life under the harsh treatment of a step-mother.”³⁵

Moldehnke received a very traditional, classical education. He began as a student at the Gymnasium in Lyck in 1845. At age 17, he enrolled at the University of Königsberg as a student of philosophy and theology. In the spring of 1855, he transferred to the University at Halle, where he lived for two years in the home of Prof. Dr. August Tholuck whom he served as private secretary.

Moldehnke first worked as rector of a parochial school in Eckersberg, East Prussia, where he was also an assistant to the pastor. The year was 1859. He did not work here long, however. In July of that year, Moldehnke returned home to teach religion at the College of Lyck/Lyck Gymnasium. For two years he taught four upper level religion courses, two upper level Hebrew courses, and Latin and German. At this time he married Elise Harder.

In July of 1861, Moldehnke responded to an appeal from the Langenberg and Berlin mission societies “for a travelling missionary for the Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, and as he had a great desire to do missionary work, he was . . . ordained at Königsberg and sent out to Wisconsin.”³⁶ The mission societies provided his annual salary of \$200. Moldehnke, along with his wife³⁷ and their one child, arrived in Wisconsin on August 3rd. Here he began “with undefatigable (sic) zeal”³⁸ his work as Synod’s only *Reiseprediger*. In Berlin, a monthly publication entitled *Ansiedler im Westen*³⁹ printed reports of his work.

³¹ Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p. 16. It is interesting that the current WLS catalog says “The Theological Seminary of the Wisconsin Synod was formally opened in the fall of 1863 at Watertown, Wi. Instruction in theology was initially given by Professor Edward Moldehnke, Ph.D., in the school building of St. Mark’s congregation” (emphasis added). WLS *Catalog*, 2013-14, p. 4. I have not be able to confirm this in any primary source. In a 1969 editorial in the “Northwestern Lutheran,” Erwin Kowalke wrote, “Within a year, according to one uncertain record, it moved into another house next door to the old St. Mark’s Church in Watertown” (emphasis added). August 3, 1969. I do not know to what “uncertain record” Kowalke is referring.

³² Kowalke, *Historical Highlights of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, p. 33.

³³ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 119.

³⁴ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 119.

³⁵ J.C. Jensson, “Rev. E.F. Moldehnke, Ph.D.. D.D.” in *American Lutheran Biographies*, 1890, pp. 525.

³⁶ Jensson, in *American Lutheran Biographies*, p. 526.

³⁷ It took a good deal of time and persuasion before Mrs. Moldehnke agreed to come.

³⁸ Jensson, in *American Lutheran Biographies*, p. 526.

³⁹ *Ansiedler im Westen* was a publication of the Berlin Society for the German Mission in North America. The periodical began in 1863 and appeared monthly. The articles were devoted to accounts of mission work among

Moldehnke continued in this field of labor until Synod called him to be its first seminary professor in the summer of 1863.

The *Dictionary of American Biography* describes Moldehnke as “a man of commanding presence and great personal charm,” who “conversed fluently in German, English, Latin, Polish, French, and Italian, and had few equals as an orator in German.”⁴⁰

Dr. Moldehnke⁴¹ began the seminary’s first academic year in September of 1863 with one student, a man whose last name was Engelhardt. In addition to his seminary duties, Moldehnke also helped take care of the Watertown vacancy caused by Pastor Bading’s trip to Europe. On top of that, he reported to the 1864 convention that he had made two small mission trips during the winter, visiting 23 different places, setting up Sunday Schools and worship services where possible, baptizing 70 children, and distributing the Lord’s Supper to 79 communicants.⁴²

Unfortunately Watertown’s first seminary student, Mr. Engelhardt, did not last long. J.P. Koehler reports, he “had to be shipped by Moldehnke by the end of October.”⁴³ In his report to the Synod convention in May of 1864, Vice President G. Reim said it was because of the “lack of a decidedly Christian way of thinking.”⁴⁴ Fortunately, God provided another seminary student in November, a man by the name of A.F. Siegler from Wollin, Hinterpommern. According to Koehler, “A. Siegler had already received teacher’s training and had served as an assistant teacher from November 1862 - April 1863 in the parish of Pastor Lohmann at Glowitz.”⁴⁵ Mr. Siegler roomed in the Bading’s empty parsonage and ate his meals with the Moldehnkes. In addition to his seminary studies, Siegler also helped at the parochial school.

What exactly the seminary curriculum looked like that first year is, to the best of my present knowledge, impossible to say. The earliest seminary catalog available in our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library is from the 1903 school year. The *Gemeinde-Blatt* did not begin until September, 1865. Though a seminary report was made to the Synod convention, the curriculum during the first year was not a part of it. In his book *Centennial Story*, Kowalke describes the class day and curriculum this way.

The day’s work began at eight o’clock in the winter, a half-hour earlier in summer, and continued with a short intermission till twelve noon. In the afternoon, again with a short intermission, the work went on till six o’clock in the winter and five-thirty in the summer. Hours like these were obviously needed if the subject matter assigned for treatment was to be covered even with greatest brevity. For example, the schedule for Monday morning included dogmatics, church history, exegesis of the Old Testament, German, mathematics, and Latin. The afternoon schedule was equally formidable: Greek New Testament, the Symbolical Books, Greek grammar, English, Hebrew, exegesis of the Old Testament, history, geography. According to the schedule submitted, this continued

Germans in the Midwest, especially in Wisconsin. Dr. Moldehnke bound the issues from 1863-1867 into a single volume for his own library. In 1967, the Moldehnke family presented this volume to the Northwestern College library as a gift. (“The Northwestern Lutheran,” November 12, 1967.)

⁴⁰ *Dictionary of American Biography*, Volume 13. (American Council of Learned Societies. New York: Scribner, 1927).

⁴¹ He was made an honorary Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.) by the University of Rostock in 1865 or 1866, and in 1877 a Doctor of Sacred Theology (D.D.) by Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA

⁴² *Verhandlungen der Vierzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 7.

⁴³ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 119.

⁴⁴ *Verhandlungen der Vierzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 6.

⁴⁵ *Verhandlungen der Vierzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 6.

through the week until Friday afternoon, when only Greek and geometry were scheduled. But the slack was taken up at eight-thirty on Friday evenings by ex tempore speeches.⁴⁶

J.P. Koehler was not impressed. He comments, “It may be that the apparent confusion is more in the hastily printed program than in the actual work, for Moldehnke, as a former German Schulrektor, certainly must have known better. On the other hand, it is in keeping with the impression that otherwise, too, Moldehnke’s whole work leaves, to wit: that he was a man devoted to *multa* and hence did not accomplish the *multum*, despite his unflagging zeal and devotion to duty.”⁴⁷

In the end, the curriculum was not the big issue; money was. Money was the seminary topic that would dominate the discussion at the upcoming Synod convention. Koehler comments, “The lack of response on the part of Synod’s constituency to the efforts of raising funds for the Seminary — lack of interest and hence of contributions, naturally aggravated by the war conditions — was doubly disappointing to a man of Moldehnke’s volatile temperament.”⁴⁸

The Synod met in convention from May 27-31, 1864, in Manitowoc. In President Bading’s absence, Vice-President G. Reim chaired the convention and made the annual report. At the top of the convention agenda was the seminary. Reim’s opening remarks made clear how much Synod was depending on money from Germany for the support of the seminary. “The eager participation of our friends in the old homeland is supporting our honorable president in his efforts for the founding of our seminary most richly, and we can keep the seminary, which we have already begun, going without anxious worries. . . . He has been successful to a great degree in awakening among our friends there interest in this goal and in collecting a significant sum.”⁴⁹ He also announced that at the request of those in Germany, President Bading would be extending his stay to finish this seminary collection, and was therefore asking for a Synodical salary of \$42 per month. Vice President Reim further reported the successful incorporation of the Synod, and the acceptance of its legal Charter by the state legislature of Wisconsin. Finally, he shared the information that the founding of a college in Watertown would have to wait until Synod had the necessary facilities.

It was then that the floor committees got to work. After a longer debate about where to keep the money President Bading had collected so far, the convention decided to deposit it in a Milwaukee bank owned by Mr. Imbusch and Mr. Mitchel. They also asked Synod officials, in light of the important seminary collection to be held in Prussia, to clear up any misunderstanding with the Prussian High Consistory which might prevent their approving this collection.

The next morning the committee charged with seminary matters was first on the agenda. It reported that Watertown had indeed raised the \$2,000 for the seminary which the 1863 convention had requested to show that it would support a seminary at that location. The committee recommended using the money to buy the property Professor Moldehnke was renting. It also asked the Synod either to confirm Dr. Moldehnke as seminary professor or to call Pastor Giese. (Some people in Germany wanted Moldehnke, whom they were paying to serve as travelling missionary, to remain the *Reiseprediger*. These same people also felt that Pastor Giese was better suited for the work of seminary professor.) The committee also recommended to Synod that it should conduct a special offering for the purpose of

⁴⁶ Erwin Ernst Kowalke, *Centennial Story* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1965), pp. 26-27.

⁴⁷ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 120.

⁴⁸ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 119.

⁴⁹ *Verhandlungen der Vierzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 5.

enlarging the home where Professor Moldehnke was living, and that Synod should employ a teacher with strong English language skills in addition to the seminary professor. Perhaps of greatest importance was resolution 6: “The committee assumes it is self-evident that only those who faithfully adhere to the doctrine of our church be chosen for the theological teaching positions, and that they be pledged to all the confessional writings of our church.”⁵⁰

The delegates accepted the report and began to discuss it. After asking for and hearing proof that Watertown had indeed raised the \$2,000, Synod in essence confirmed Watertown as the location of the seminary. The delegates also authorized the Board of Trustees to use the \$2,000 collected in the Watertown area, along with any other money it might collect, to buy suitable property. When the convention resumed the next morning, the delegates heard more about the desire of the Minnesota Synod to make use of Wisconsin’s new seminary, and of the willingness of Minnesota Synod President Heyer in return, to undertake a collection “in the east” for the support of the seminary. The delegates approved. They also approved a special collection in the congregations of their own Synod. After debating how this might best work, the delegates adopted the following resolution: “A committee shall be appointed to formulate an address in which on the one hand the necessity of a seminary for our Synod is presented and laid on the hearts of the congregations, and on the other hand the assurance is given, that this seminary shall also serve, to the best of its ability, the interest of the school.”⁵¹ The last seminary actions the delegates took that day included approving the recommendations for a teacher with strong English skills and for the confessional requirements for all theological professors.

When the convention resumed on Monday morning, seminary matters were again on the agenda. First up was the charter of incorporation. The floor committee felt that some things needed to be clarified and/or corrected. The delegates twice decided to seek legal counsel. Finally, Synod resolved to appoint a committee which would present the next convention with either one or two fully worked-out charters, along with any necessary by-laws. The delegates also decided to move the Synodical library to Watertown so that it would be available to the seminary students.

That left only one major seminary item on the convention agenda: the funding appeal to the congregations which Synod had charged a committee to compose.

To Our Dear Congregations. “Knock, and it will be opened to you.”

We are following the exhortation, we trust the promise of our Savior, therefore we are turning to you, dear congregations, in the sincere confidence that you will be willing to continue laboring with us in the work of the Lord and to help us, where it is necessary, to found a seminary for preachers and school teachers, a workshop of the Holy Spirit, in which he forms capable young people and prepares them for his service.

Not only for the salvation and blessing of the members of our dear evangelical Lutheran church scattered here in the northwest and lacking shepherds, not only for the salvation and blessing of the new immigrants, but also for your salvation and blessing and for that of your children and descendants, have we, with much prayer and supplication to the Lord, decided in the last year to establish a seminary for the education of capable Lutheran preachers and teachers, “so that one may raise up people, capable to teach in the

⁵⁰ *Verhandlungen der Vierzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 13.

⁵¹ *Verhandlungen der Vierzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 15.

church. For some imagine it is enough for a preacher that he can read German. But that is a harmful delusion. It is also not an insignificant skill to teach and instruct others in a way that is clear and correct; and it is also not possible for unschooled people to have this skill.” “The Word and the preaching office,” says our dear Dr. Martin Luther, “is the highest and chief thing.” He says further with respect to the office of teachers: “and I, if I could and would have to stop doing the work of preaching, then I would prefer to have no other work than to be a schoolmaster or a teacher of young boys. For I know that this work, after the work of preaching, is the most useful, greatest, and best, and I do not yet know which of the two is the best.”

If, with our Lord’s help, the pure teaching of the sweet Gospel of Jesus Christ is to be further preserved for the old and young, for their comfort in life and death, and that is the Lord’s will, then it is our duty to provide for the training of orthodox preachers and teachers. The urgent need of such a seminary is something your own experience teaches you. Indeed, you have yearned for shepherds for a long time. And the longer a soul recognizes and experiences the grace of God, which he grants you through the preaching office, the greater is your desire for it, where it is lacking. Through the Lord’s grace you are provided with preachers, some of you also with teachers. Some have preachers, who likewise can also have school with the dear youth. Others by contrast can only be sparingly served with Word and Sacrament and must do without an organized school for their children. Indeed, many congregations which belong to our Synod presently don’t have a preacher or a teacher, and continually call for help. “Man does not live on bread alone.” Therefore, when we look at so many many scattered fellow believers who emigrated to the west going without any and all church care, when we see the lambs of Jesus Christ growing up without Christian training and instruction and being carried away more and more by the flood of corruption, our hearts go out to these people, and we feel their cry: “come and help us!” deep in our hearts. In addition, there is what the sects are doing, who in great haste are preying on our shepherdless Lutheran brothers to lead them astray into their fanatical ways, and from justification by faith to work righteousness. “Therefore, let us do good to everyone, but most of all to fellow believers.” New immigrants are coming from the old German homeland in droves. Our own congregations are growing and need more and more preachers and teachers. — “O Lord of the harvest, look. The harvest is great; the number of harvesters is small.” —

To be sure through messengers from Germany, through efforts of our own preachers, and through organized mission work, we have tried to help and with thanks to the Lord, we must confess, that he has blessed our small efforts richly. But help which will be enough, which will also stretch into the future can only be afforded by the founding of an institution in which preachers and teachers are trained. “And because the greatest need, lack, and complaint everywhere is that we don’t have enough people, we must not wait until they grow themselves. We won’t hew them out of stone or carve them out of wood either. God will also not do miracles, as long as we can accomplish something with what he has already given. Therefore **we must do our part and apply effort and money to it.**

We must educate them and do it.”⁵² And so we have made a beginning, in weakness, and taken a few students. In addition, our president last year, Pastor Bading, has at this point gathered a significant sum in Germany and Russia for our seminary. With new courage, we have in mind, with our Lord’s help, to continue laboring in our work, to the honor of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the eternal salvation of immortal souls. **We anticipate your willing help with joyful confidence.** For the institution is chiefly for your good. “Everything happens for your sake.” We are all the more dependent on your help, as little is to be expected for a Lutheran seminary and for a seminary of the Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin from the English churches. Above all, we need your whole-hearted participation, your zeal, especially your prayers, then your young, capable people. “If you don’t want to encourage your child to do this, and someone else doesn’t want to encourage his, and so on and so forth, if neither father nor mother want to give their child to our God, where then will the spiritual office and estate be?” Furthermore, we need money, food, and things necessary for the equipping of the seminary. We point you to the example of other branches of our Lutheran church, especially the Norwegians, who are building one institution after another and from whom a synod recently gathered \$18,000 in their congregations without outside help. If every family just does something—and we hope that no family will exclude itself from the work of the Lord, we can gather a significant sum in our own Synodical congregations. It is in your hands to exercise, with the Lord’s help, incalculable influence on this and the coming generations. Help plant and water so that, provided the Lord gives the increase, you and your descendants can enjoy the fruit. “And may the Lord our God be gracious to us and may he establish the work of our hands. Yes, may he establish the work of our hands.” Amen.⁵³

The delegates accepted the document, directed that 5,000 copies be printed, and that delegates write down how many copies each of them needed.

This left only a few seminary matters to attend to as the 1864 convention came to a close. The delegates added a sixth man to the seminary’s Board of Trustees, and then made Moldehnke’s call as seminary professor permanent. They also established a seminary admissions committee consisting of the Trustees and seminary professor. Looking back at this convention a year later, President G. Reim would call it “a great turning point in the development of our Synod.”⁵⁴

The months between the end of the 1864 Synod convention on May 31st and the opening of the seminary’s second academic year were busy ones on a number of fronts. Since a large part of financing a seminary (and college) depended on offerings coming from Germany, including the planned collection in Prussia about to begin, it is worth mentioning that it was at just this time that questions about the relationship between Synod and the unionistic German mission societies were coming to a head. A letter from the Langenberger Verein dated July 3, 1864, asked for a definitive answer from Synod regarding its doctrinal confession and practice. Synod secretary Adolf Hönecke replied on July 30th; his letter was not particularly conciliatory. Nonetheless, the Board went ahead with the purchase of land. Acting on the

⁵² Pastor Bading is quoting Luther’s text: *An den Ratsherren aller Städte Deutschlands, daß sie Christliche Schulen aufrichten und halten sollen.*

⁵³ *Verhandlungen der Vierzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 19-21.

⁵⁴ *Verhandlungen der Fünfzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 5.

authority of the convention, they purchased 5.5 acres of land at a cost of \$687.50. The land was a pasture on the corner of Western and College.⁵⁵ Though other sites were available, J.P. Koehler indicates that the Trustees chose the parcel of land they did for a very specific reason. “There were two other available sites which would have afforded the school a more commanding view than its present location. ... Fifty years ago, Chr. Gamm told the author that the farm could have been too readily disposed of again and thus might have facilitated the removal or discontinuance of the school, and that would have militated against raising contributions in Watertown. The ‘experimental’ talk at Synod, though squelched, had evidently raised new fears.”⁵⁶

The Trustees, however, did not stop with the purchase of land. They also proceeded with the construction of a building. The facility the Trustees had designed and built was a style common at the time. According to Koehler, it was known as the “old coffee mill.”⁵⁷ It was to house the seminary, the college, a preparatory school, and an academy or general high school. The building design provided for future wings, but these were never erected. The cost of the building was not to exceed \$10,000. Initially, the Trustees used money which Bading had collected abroad to make the payments. When Bading heard that this is how the money was being used, however, he put a stop to it immediately, indicating that these funds were to be used as an endowment for teachers’ salaries. Ground was broken in July or August of 1864.⁵⁸

The Trustees realized that they would now need more than the general appeal letter which had been drawn up at the Synod convention. They would need a second appeal, and a special collector. When they appointed one, however, their appointment raised questions of authority. G. Reim, who in Bading’s extended absence had been elected Synod president at the 1864 convention, vetoed the Board’s resolutions, and the Visitors⁵⁹ demanded the right to vote with the Trustees and to participate with them in their supervision and reporting roles. In addition, the Visitors protested against the building project, saying that the 1864 Synod convention had not authorized it. It was in this context that the Watertown seminary began its second academic year in the fall of 1864.

Year Two: 1864-1865⁶⁰

It was an eventful year. One bright spot for the seminary was the fact that in its second year of operation, enrollment jumped from one to eleven⁶¹. A. F. Siegler returned for another year of seminary

⁵⁵ Kowalke, *Centennial Story*, p. 31.

⁵⁶ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 120.

⁵⁷ The Watertown Historical Society has a number of picture of this building on their website. According to the information there, this building was destroyed by fire on the evening of July 30, 1894. All that was left standing were the walls. A year later Synod rebuilt the facility. It was a large recitation hall with nine classrooms, a faculty lounge, science lab rooms, an assembly hall and chapel on the third floor, and a library room. Some pastors living today still remember this building from their student days.

⁵⁸ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 119. Kowalke gives July 22, 1864, as the date of the purchase of land, and August 10, 1864, as the date of the ground breaking. (*Centennial Story*, p. 31)

⁵⁹ The Visitors (Visitatoren) functioned in some respects like our circuit pastors today.

⁶⁰ In his revision of *You and Your Synod*, Elmer Kiessler adds the following, not in Kowalke’s original. “After a year, Dr. Moldehnke and his seminarians moved to St. Mark’s parish school, where they remained until the synod’s first college...was founded in 1865.” (*Our Church its Life and Mission*, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1990), pp. 142-143. This contradicts Kowalke’s original, which specifically names the new 1865 building the seminary’s second home. Some attribute this information to a history of the seminary written by Dr. Adolf Hönecke for the 1903 Seminary *Katalog*, but I do not find this information there.

⁶¹ There had been 14 students, but “three of these had to be dropped after a short trial because they had not had enough schooling to be able to follow the instruction in the Seminary.” Kowalke, *Centennial Story*, p. 45.

training.⁶² He was joined by Hermann Hoffmann, “who already had had three years of training in the Berlin mission house and for one-and-a-half years had attended the theological lectures at the university there.” Koehler says that of the remaining nine students, “two were the oppidans⁶³ Max Gaebler and Johann (?) Gamm. Three probationers were denied enrolment (sic) after seven weeks.” These “nine students formed the lower division, which was calculated to offer some teacher training (Joh. Gamm).” In addition to their studies, the students were expected to help out in the garden, in the kitchen, at church, and at the school.⁶⁴ The older seminarians along with Professor Moldehnke also preached at vacant congregations in the area. In addition, Dr. Moldehnke made three trips, one to Milwaukee, one to Racine, and one to Fond du Lac “in the middle of the school year, to drum up the wherewithal to keep the school going.”⁶⁵ He was gone for three and a half weeks in January and February.⁶⁶ He wanted to make other trips, but just couldn’t. He also tried, unsuccessfully, to drum up support for the seminary out east. In addition, the seminary students themselves collected food in Dodge County and in Town Lebanon over the winter. As the year started, meals were prepared by Mrs. Moldehnke. When meal preparation became too much for her alone, she was joined by Mrs. Koester, a pastor’s widow, who took over the work of *Hausmutter*.⁶⁷ That was in November. Only by the grace of God could the Watertown seminary finish its second year. But what a joyful spring it was, when on April 25th, 1865, seminary student Hermann Hoffmann passed his examinations and was called as pastor of the congregation in Portage. Synod’s seminary had its very first graduate.

The year had taken a real toll on Professor and Mrs. Moldehnke, however. In a letter to Synod President Reim in October of 1864, Moldehnke wrote,

...and the actions of the Trustees are a matter of total regret for me, since they seem to think I can handle the whole burden alone.

I am hereby letting you know that my wife is giving up the upkeep of the Seminary; and I will likewise be looking for another position. Therefore see to it in due time, because if you don’t want everything to fall to pieces, you have to show some concern for your teacher and students. It’s just finally getting to be too much, the way I have to wear myself out and watch my wife wear herself out. I’d like to get together with Fachtmann in Minnesota, as has been my intention for some time now. You can certainly call Hoenecke or someone else here.⁶⁸

The 1865 Synod convention began just as the 1864 convention had ended—with the Watertown seminary. Because of the very recent and unexpected resignation of President Reim, Vice-President Wilhelm Streißguth presented the annual report of the president, which still appeared under Reim’s name.

⁶² He had transferred to St. Louis for a year, feeling that he had been treated unfairly in Watertown. (Kowalke, *Centennial Story*, p. 49).

⁶³ town students

⁶⁴ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 119.

⁶⁵ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 119.

⁶⁶ Kowalke says that during one of these trips, A. Hönecke “took the professor’s place three days in a week.” *Centennial Story*, p. 24.

⁶⁷ *Verhandlungen der Fünfzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 10.

⁶⁸ Moldehnke, Reim correspondence as translated in *Edward Frederick Moldehnke: The Wisconsin Synod’s First Seminary Professor* by Mark Porinski, 1978. WLS Essay File, p. 13.

It spoke of the very positive impact the seminary would have on doctrinal correctness and unity. The fact that Wisconsin now had its very own seminary would show other confessional Lutherans in America that it did indeed want to be confessional and orthodox. With great joy Synod looked forward to the ordination of Candidate Hermann Hoffmann, the Watertown seminary's first graduate, which would take place during the convention. But the report also had some questions for the convention. It asked them this way.

People said, 'let's start now.' Last year, through their delegates, our congregations called to us, 'Begin in God's name.' We did that in faith. But where is the energetic support from our congregations? An appeal to our congregations for the support of our seminary was appended to the last Synod proceedings. During the year, the Trustees of the seminary issued a second appeal. Yet only a part of our congregations supported the seminary with contributions. The others did nothing. We hear people say, 'Times are tough.' And that is true. But the times aren't so tough that one couldn't support the seminary if one wanted to. Do you want to help with the shortage of preachers? Then support the seminary. That is the only advice we can give you."⁶⁹

In closing, the report mentioned a number of other seminary matters that the delegates either should know, or that would need their attention. It informed them that the Trustees had not had enough time to carry out the Synodical resolution regarding the charter. Nor had Minnesota Synod President Heyer had the time to conduct a collection for the seminary. And finally, it reported that construction of the building in Watertown had progressed to such an extent that it would be ready to use in a few weeks. When that happened, Synod could and should also open the college, which would mean that Synod would need to provide a college instructor.

When the convention reconvened that afternoon, Professor Moldehnke was first on the agenda with the seminary report. Given the kind of year it had been, Dr. Moldehnke struck a very positive tone, putting the best construction on the lack of financial support. Though congregational support had not been what he had hoped for, he attributed it to the Civil War, a bad harvest, and other problems in congregations which had made pastors hesitant to ask for support for the seminary. He looked confidently toward a new academic year, quoting Psalm 68, "Praise be the Lord every day. God lays a burden on us, but he also helps us. Sela." and the words of 1 Samuel 7, "Thus far has the Lord helped us." He did, however, suggest that Synod consider sending out a collector to raise money for the seminary. He also asked the convention to arrange for a summer vacation for the seminary. There had not been one the previous year, and the students, most of whom were quite poor, needed time to earn enough money to buy clothes. They also needed some rest. In addition, he asked Synod to donate clothes for the seminary students. After that came the seminary's financial report. Dr. Moldehnke reported an operating deficit for the year of \$705.88,⁷⁰ followed by a detailed report of all expenses and all income as of July 1, 1865. Among the expenses was money for sheets, towels, wool blankets, tablecloths, washcloths, lamps, chairs,

⁶⁹ *Verhandlungen der Fünfzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 5.

⁷⁰ Various thoughts in Kowalke's centennial history of the college might be considered when looking at this deficit and the lack of support. First he says that in 1862 congregations had contributed \$620.14. He also says, "...the people who would have to support the school, once it was founded, were still busy clearing the land, laying out homesteads, building small churches, and doing their best to support pastors, and although the Civil War was beginning to take an even larger toll in men and money..." Last of all is the fact that the vast majority were coming from a state church system in Germany in which the government provided a great deal. *Centennial Story*, pp. 15-18.

firewood, tools, dishes, laundry, lumber, a mirror, a clock, a scale, beds, tables, and two ovens, one for heating and one for cooking. Following that was a list of the names of every individual or group that had given a gift of money or goods to the seminary. Among the donations were potatoes, meat, butter, cabbage, carrots, turnips, beans, flour, onions, chicories, towels, soap, wood, barrels, sheets, quilts, pillow cases, and wool socks, plus some trees, plants, and labor for a bit of landscaping in front of the new building.⁷¹

Discussion of Dr. Moldehnke's report followed. The main focus was on the lack of money and students. The delegates could only say that if Synod's congregations showed as much interest in the Watertown seminary as the people in Germany did, the kind of needs Dr. Moldehnke had outlined would not exist. They enjoined the pastors to place the seminary's needs emphatically on the hearts of their congregations, and bemoaned the fact that Synod had no publication which could regularly bring these needs before the members of the Synod, and encourage them to do their duty and to help.⁷² The delegates promised to do what they could and asked everyone to pray for the seminary. As far as the lack of students was concerned, the delegates expressed the thought that because people in America were so materialistic, it would be good to follow Dr. Moldehnke's lead and look into establishing a pre-seminary program in Germany.⁷³

Not until a day later did seminary matters once again come before the convention. The floor committee responsible for the seminary asked that the Board of Trustees report on the actions they had taken since the last convention. They especially wanted to hear about the use of the money Bading had collected, the position of an English professor, and the purchase of land. In addition, they recommended that the Board be empowered to determine the curriculum, the school calendar, and the employment of the students during breaks. Last of all, they wanted the Synod to discuss whether or not the Board of Trustees had the authority to send a collector outside the congregations of the Synod.⁷⁴

That afternoon, the floor committee charged with reviewing the charter reported that the Trustees had not had time to carry out the resolution of the previous convention and that therefore Synod should appoint a committee which would not fail to see to this work. The previous year's difficulties between the Board and the Visitors, and the fact that President Reim had vetoed a Board resolution, illustrated the importance of this work.⁷⁵

When the convention resumed on Monday morning, the seminary floor committee added an addendum to their report. They asked the convention to thank Dr. Moldehnke publicly for his tireless efforts for the seminary, to pray for and support him, as well as to provide him with some relief in his work so that he might have a little time to rest.

The Synod accepted these resolutions and then moved on to the report of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees took the opportunity to respond to the specific questions which the convention had asked of it. Speaking for the Board, Pastor Huber told the delegates that if the Board had acted contrary to the wishes of the Synod and in a way that was in fact beyond its authority, this action was due only to the imprecision both of the charter and of the way Synod had expressed its wishes the previous year. The lack of clarity in the charter was also the reason, he said, for the difficulties with the Visitors. The Board also wanted the assembly to know that they had been very careful regarding the finances of the new building.

⁷¹ *Verhandlungen der Fünfzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 8-13.

⁷² The convention later resolved to begin publication of the *Evangelisches-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*.

⁷³ *Verhandlungen der Fünfzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 8-13.

⁷⁴ *Verhandlungen der Fünfzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 15.

⁷⁵ *Verhandlungen der Fünfzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 18.

After hearing the report, the delegates resolved to let bygones be bygones, and in unity to move forward in support of the seminary. Shortly thereafter, they approved the positions of two teachers for the college, and called upon Professor Moldehnke and the Trustees to draw up a provisional constitution for the seminary and college which would contain specifics about the ages and acceptance of students, to be valid until the next Synod convention, at which time Synod would review it. They also resolved to ask each of the delegates present to write down how much he could contribute to the annual salary of Professor Moldehnke.⁷⁶

That afternoon the convention continued with seminary matters. The committee charged with the topic of establishing a pre-seminary program in Germany which would serve as a feeder for the Watertown seminary recommended to Synod that Pastor Lohmann in Glowitz begin such a program as soon as possible. This pre-seminary program should reflect Synod's doctrinal position, provide a thorough elementary training, good knowledge of Bible history and the Catechisms, and, if possible, begin with the old languages. Synod did want Pastor Glowitz to know that it could not afford to send any financial assistance now, but hoped that people in Germany would provide such support. Synod approved these recommendations. After voting to raise Professor Moldehnke's annual salary from \$500 to \$800, in addition to free rent, the convention approved the gathering of a special offering for the poorest students. They then rescinded the motion regarding Professor Moldehnke's raise and committed the matter to the Trustees. That afternoon the delegates heard the final report regarding the money Pastor Bading had raised for the seminary during his trip abroad. The Synod could hardly thank him enough for all he had done. Shortly thereafter, the delegates empowered the Trustees to appoint a collector to gather a special offering during the year in Wisconsin for the seminary. This convention had once again been dominated to a large extent by the seminary in Watertown.⁷⁷

Shortly after the end of the 1865 convention, the first edition of the Synod's church newspaper, the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, appeared. Its editors, Dr. Moldehnke, Pastor Bading, and Pastor Hönecke wasted no time in using it to support the Watertown schools. The September 1 edition contained an open letter "to our dear congregations." Once again the author highlighted the great need for preachers. The author acknowledged that Germany was doing all it could to send pastors. But their effort was not enough. The article continued,

We need young people for service in the church and in schools **from our own congregations**. What do you say about those people who are physically strong enough to work, but prefer to put their hands in their lap and wait for the help of others? ... Where appropriate, offer your sons to the Lord for service in church and school and **do not hinder their work**, but rather pray that the Lord prepare for himself among your children willing workers and **urge** them into his service. ... The Lord deigned to need the service of poor humans: he has need of weak tools for the preservation and spreading of his kingdom. Those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus are happy to have children who have received from God the **natural** and **spiritual** gifts for service in the church and school. Such parents will start early, directing the hearts of their children to the precious work.

⁷⁶ *Verhandlungen der Fünfzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 18-19.

⁷⁷ *Verhandlungen der Fünfzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 20-24.

Even if a preacher in this country must perhaps bear more shame and want than in other countries, even that is something salutary.⁷⁸

Year Three: 1865-1866

On the afternoon of September 14th, 1865, Synod dedicated its seminary's first building. Pastor Bading, as president of the Trustees, spoke first, and presided over the actual dedication. Professor Moldehnke then spoke about the significance of religion, especially Christianity, in the history of the world. Finally, the new college professor, Adam Martin, spoke to the gathering in English about the significance of the college for the education of the individual, for the well-being of the state, and for the interests of the Church. Pastor Gausewitz closed the dedication ceremony with prayer and the blessing, after which those in attendance sang, "Now Thank We All Our God."

Erecting this building had not been easy, by any means. As Pastor Bading, the president of the Trustees, began his report to the Synod convention in the summer of 1866, he spoke of the "discouraging state of affairs" with which the year had begun. He was referring in particular to the debt Synod had incurred in erecting a building for the seminary and college in Watertown. Costs had exhausted the funds and created a significant debt-load, which had hindered the completion of the building.⁷⁹ Pastor Bading attributed this set of circumstances to the fact that Synod's congregations did not know about "the troubling situation of their scattered and abandoned brothers in faith," and so did little to support the costs of the building. Nonetheless, the Board had found ways of completing the work, "leaving it to God's care to provide the required means for doing it." And provide God did, through some generous gifts from congregations, through a special collection, through gifts from Europe, and through interest-free loans.⁸⁰

With a new facility now ready for occupation (according to Frey, the seminary occupied the third floor), Synod also opened a college—something it had wanted to do from the start. Though not meant to serve exclusively as a pre-seminary institution, the college did intentionally have that function as part of its mission, and therefore offered instruction in German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, in addition to courses in French, mathematics, history, geography, physics, chemistry, and astronomy.⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 1, No. 1. Sept. 1, 1865, p. 2. (Note: This article also provided the following details regarding admission to the seminary. "The provisions for acceptance in our seminary are the following: 1) Young people who want to be accepted into the evangelical Lutheran seminary in Watertown, Wisconsin must have reached their 18th year of age. 2) They must submit a curriculum vitae which they have written themselves, along with recommendations from reliable men concerning their conduct until now. 3) If it is clear from the curriculum vitae and the recommendations that the applicants look promising, they shall be called before the Board of Trustees for a personal interview. If no important concerns arise, things will move to a vote, decided by the majority. 4) The tuition will be given free of charge. 5) For food, a room, heat, etc. a sum of \$100 is to be paid for the year. With respect to young people who are not able to pay this sum, a discount will be granted according to individual circumstances, so that even the poorest can receive an education for the preaching or teaching ministry."

⁷⁹ Frey gives the actual cost as \$16,906.07. There is some question about whether this included necessary furnishings. Kowalke cites J.P. Koehler's grand total for everything as \$22,000. (*Centennial Story*, p. 32) Frey also says that "Except for a few hundred dollars, it was debt free on the day of dedication." (*Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, p. 6). Kowalke seems to describe things a bit differently. He says that there was a debt of \$1,400 that remained six months after completion. This was after spending all the money Bading had collected in Europe. Funding for the building caused a rift between the Board of Trustees and the Board of Visitors which spilled over onto the convention floor, the Visitors wanting the Synod officially to censure the Trustees for exceeding their authority in spending so much for the building. (*Centennial Story*, p. 3.)

⁸⁰ *Verhandlungen der Sechszehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 12.

⁸¹ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeindeblatt*, Jahrgang 1, No. 2. Oktober 1, 1865, p. 3. In his history of Northwestern, Professor Kowalke draws attention to the fact that the September 1, 1865, issue of the *Gemeinde-Blatt* ran an entire

With the start of a college department, which saw an enrollment of 66 by year's end, Synod had to increase the teaching staff, first to two and then to four. As the "theological professor," Moldehnke "was to be the ranking teacher." Koehler calls Professor Adam Martin the "head and organizer of the new school, or department." According to Koehler, Martin's "call apparently specified that he should organize the college." In addition, Moldehnke was "not to have anything to do with the management of the household; Bading was to be the Board's executive in that respect."⁸²

The next day, the seminary began its third year with eight students preparing for the pastoral office. (The seminary also played a role in the training of those preparing for the office of teacher.) Of the eight seminary students, three were new: Aug. Schmidt, Louis Junker, and J. Grotheer. Four students also returned, among them was A. Siegler. The others were Achilles, Horwinsky, Schwarting, and Denke.⁸³ Moldehnke also mentions three students who were in the college's pre-seminary program: Dahlke, Denninger, and Gamm.⁸⁴

Not all eight completed the year, however. Hönecke says that five were dismissed, some temporarily and some permanently. Synod *Proceedings* provide some details. "One student, by the name of Schwarting, despite all his effort, could not make up for the lack of natural gifts. Dismissal, at his request, was not denied. Unfortunately, it became clear that the other, Wilh. Denke, was a hypocrite and a malicious person, and had to be excluded because of his unworthiness which had become evident."⁸⁵ Apparently, attrition has always been an issue.

The seminary, and now also college, continued to receive gifts of food and handiwork from people in the area. J.P. Koehler says, "The keep of the students thru (sic) the year probably would not have been possible without that."⁸⁶ Bading reported that because of gifts like these, and the careful management of the housemother, Mrs. Koester, the institution ended the year only a few hundred dollars in the red.⁸⁷ The seminary also received one gift during the year worthy of special mention: a number of valuable books from Mr. Oscar Steinmeyer of Berlin, who also promised to send more.

Professor Kowalke provides the following picture of life in the new building. "Rising time in the summer was 5:00, in the winter 6:00; chapel was held one-half hour later. Breakfast was served at 7:00, dinner at 12:00, supper at 6:00; bedtime was at 10:00. The hours from seven o'clock till eight, from twelve till two, and from five-thirty till seven-thirty were free periods; at all other hours students had to be either in the classroom or in their study rooms. No student was permitted to leave the grounds without

article which announced the opening of the college, but did not say a single word about its pre-seminary function. *Centennial Story*, p. 35.

⁸² Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 121.

⁸³ Adolf Hönecke, "The History of the Wisconsin Synod," *Seminary Katalog*, 1903. Translation by W. Gawrisch, p. 1.

⁸⁴ *Verhandlungen der Sechszehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 16.

⁸⁵ *Verhandlungen der Sechszehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 14. Kowalke adds considerable detail, calling him a combination of "pietist and rascal." He referred to fellow students as "the world," did not do the work required of those who paid no board, attended other churches on Sunday, did not do work for which he had accepted payment, and was especially cruel to the housemother. (*Centennial Story*, pp. 49-50).

⁸⁶ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 121. In his history of the college, Kowalke reports that "before the very first term was completed," there was a debt of \$2,700 which shocked the Board, a debt he calls a "disaster" given the wages of the day. As a result, Moldehnke, Sieker, and Goldammer set out to collect funds in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania with little success. He says that this crisis prolonged the bad feelings between the Trustees and the Visitors. Kowalke also says that this played a role in President Adam Martin's plan to sell scholarships. (*Centennial Story*, p. 39).

⁸⁷ *Verhandlungen der Sechszehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*. p. 13

permission.”⁸⁸ The rules were in place; the problem was, there was very little supervision in the dormitory to enforce them.

With so many more students, “the domestic and dormitory management of the school now created a problem.”⁸⁹ During this school year, the work Mrs. Koester was being asked to do became too much, and she asked to be relieved of her duties. Bading reported this matter to the Synod convention this way.

The in part very sad experiences with the students led us to recognize that a thorough change in the internal management of the institution must occur. And so also in this matter, a difficult task for the Board had become more difficult. The command and the promise of our faithful God alone were able to keep us from despondency, and show us the straight way of a faith-filled, joyful continuation of the work. The Board could beseech God’s blessing with confidence, because (no matter how many mistakes may have occurred) the founding of the institution was no presumptuous step, but an absolute necessity. . . . In keeping with the nature of the matter, the regulation of the internal affairs of the institutions: the management of the students, the engaging of teachers, the establishment of the limits of various authority, etc., requires greater attention than the administration of the externals. . . . Accordingly, the Board drew up a provisional set of rules, after inspection of all the regulations we could get ahold of from other, similar institutions. It is placed before the honorable Synod for approval or improvement. . . . A further point, which the Board believes it can’t emphasize seriously enough, has to do with the daily management and oversight of the students by an inspector enabled to do so. Aside from the fact that many evils which occurred in the course of the year establish this measure as very necessary and desirable, many other circumstances make this arrangement an irrefutable necessity. Professor Moldehnke is thinking about a possible return to Germany very soon. The housemother, Mrs. Koester has likewise decided to retire from her sphere of activity, so that the seminary finds itself, possibly soon, standing there completely orphaned. With such a state of affairs, serious prayer for God’s leading, to whom the matter belongs, and most zealous effort to find and get the right man, are well in place. May God be gracious to us and help us! When the necessity of the engagement of an inspector was deduced just from the resignation of Mrs. Koester, and some other reasons, the Board decided to suggest for this office Pastor Hönecke, the honorable secretary of the Synod. Whether or not this decision in view of the most recent development of our relationships is to be upheld is for an honorable Synod to decide.⁹⁰

The third year of its existence had been a strenuous one for the young seminary. Professor Kowalke sums up Dr. Moldehnke’s report to the Synod this way. “In his report Professor Moldehnke referred to the unremitting battle to overcome physical difficulties, to the debt that was strangling the institutions, to the many discouraging occurrences in the schools, and to the struggle to keep the infant college alive and to harmonize its work with that of the seminary. Besides all this, he says, the three enemies that Luther mentions in the Small Catechism, the world, the flesh, and the devil were inordinately active within and

⁸⁸ Kowalke, *Centennial Story*, p. 49.

⁸⁹ Koehler, *Centennial Story*, p. 121.

⁹⁰ *Verhandlungen der Sechszehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 12-15.

without the institutions. He had never favored locating the college in Watertown and remarked that the college was now harvesting the bitter consequences of the mistake that was made in placing the school in a small city.”⁹¹

As President W. Streißguth began his annual report to the 1866 convention, point number one in his report was the seminary. He summarized the seminary’s situation well.

At the time of our last convention, our schools were in a situation which justified both great hopes and great concerns. They did not come into existence following a path of quiet development, but with a sudden, powerful jolt. They will therefore need more than the usual amount of time, as well as wisdom and love from the Synod and its officials. It will also need to have more than the usual measure of divine blessing, patience, and help in order to achieve its purpose. May the rich God grant both!

For the first time, the Board of Trustees presented a formal, written report to the convention. Much of its contents you have already heard, as we reviewed the 1865-1866 school year. Just one more thing pertained specifically to the seminary—enrollment. Eight students were not enough to meet Synod’s need for pastors. Since, in the Board’s opinion, the American frame of mind was so materialistic, it could not expect to find many acceptable young men here who would be willing to work in the Lord’s vineyard. Therefore it encouraged Synod to continue urgently pursuing the establishment of a pre-seminary program in Germany. It also reported encouraging news on that front from both Professor Moldehnke and Board President Bading.⁹²

Immediately following the report of the Board of Trustees was that of Professor Moldehnke. He acknowledged that it had been a difficult year, for all the reasons Bading had mentioned. But he also reminded the delegates that what is worthwhile always is hard work. In addition, they could count on God’s help. He informed the delegates that in addition to his teaching duties in the seminary, and now also the college, he had his work as editor of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*. From Christmas through around Easter, he had also served the vacancy in Columbus and the surrounding area. On top of that, he had gathered a special offering. Then, in order to “recover from great stresses” he made a nine-week mission trip in Minnesota during the winter. Because he used four weeks of break to do it, he only missed five weeks of class! He further reported that the plans for starting a pre-seminary program in Germany had hit a few bumps, but if Synod was willing to cover some of the cost, the program could possibly begin that year.⁹³

Synod acted almost immediately on the matter of a pre-seminary program in Germany. It resolved to ask the Prussian High Council to use the interest on the money President Bading had raised in Prussia, along with the interest from a planned collection in Mecklenburg, to help fund the program, but under the condition that the program teach Synod’s doctrinal position. It also said it would provide what help it could, but could not make any promises.

The next major matter to come before the convention was the report of the committee responsible for the seminary. Its report included the following on the provisional handbook (*Hausordnung*) which the Board had drawn up. In general, it approved of the document as presented. It added its voice to that of the Trustees in establishing the position of Inspector. It did, however, feel that the Inspector should have

⁹¹ *Northwestern Lutheran*, December 11, 1966, pp. 391-392.

⁹² *Verhandlungen der Sechszehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 15.

⁹³ *Verhandlungen der Sechszehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 16

more authority over the students, in particular in the interaction between male and female students. The committee called for narrower limits in the interactions. It also felt there should be more details in the authority for discipline. Though the individual members of the committee approved of the mission trip Prof. Moldehnke had made, and which the Board had approved, it did call on the Board to provide its rationale. (The whole topic was later “hotly debated.” The convention subsequently resolved that the permission given was “justified under the circumstances at the time.” One of the floor committees did, however, “express its wonder, how it has become possible for Prof. Moldehnke to exchange his teaching office at the seminary for an extended period with his office of travelling missionary.”) Last of all, the committee felt that the matter of suspending a student was too vague. They also felt that the Inspector should do some teaching, and supported the Board in its choice of Pastor Hönecke.⁹⁴

The delegates agreed with the committee’s feelings about the handbook (*Hausordnung*). They also agreed to establish the position of Inspector, who would also teach theology in the seminary. The Synod elected Pastor Adolf Hönecke. At this point, the minutes record something that no doubt surprised, if not shocked those who were there. “As a result of this motion, Professor E. Moldehnke announces that he is resigning his office” (professor and editor of the *Gemeindeblatt*). In his Synodical history, Professor Fredrich says that Moldehnke “insisted that he could not consent to such a lavish waste of manpower for such few students enrolled. There were no personal problems. Adolph Hoenecke, the Synod’s choice for the second post, was a Halle fellow student whom Moldehnke himself had recommended for a college teaching post.”⁹⁵ J.P. Koehler also offers this thought: “We have heard before, in the correspondence of the German societies, that Eichler didn’t consider Moldehnke the man to start or head the Seminary. This sentiment was evidently shared within the Synod and sought vent, the year before, in the questioning of Moldehnke’s tenure and the year after in the election of Hoenecke.”⁹⁶ The following two entries in the convention minutes say, “Professor Moldehnke’s reasoning is not recognized as sound as far as a number of people are concerned, and for the sake of the future, his remaining as theological professor is urgently desired.” That’s how things remained until the next morning. As the convention was drawing to a close, this entry is also included in the minutes, “Upon his request, the Synod announces to Prof. Moldehnke that the resignation he offered is not accepted.”⁹⁷ As a follow-up to the convention, J. P. Koehler reports, “For the time being the matter was adjusted with the understanding that he was to devote seven months to his missionary work, as he himself had wished, but within the week after Synod he sent his definite resignation, in very cross humor, stating that he was returning to Germany.”⁹⁸ In a letter dated June 19, 1866, this is what Moldehnke said.

As soon as I returned home and spoke with several Synod associates, it became clear to me that I could not keep my position. I was called by the Synod as a theological professor, not as a dorm father. Nevertheless, out of necessity I encountered innumerable difficulties, which lay outside of the proper sphere of my call. How could I deny that things should have been handled much better! But that I have been condemned for not being able to maintain discipline, and for having had difficulties with discipline also

⁹⁴ *Verhandlungen der Sechszehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 20-22, 25, 34.

⁹⁵ Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁶ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 120.

⁹⁷ *Verhandlungen der Sechzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 20-22, 25, 30, 37.

⁹⁸ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 121.

during the last year—well, that I just can't figure out. I guess I'm just not sure what my call as theological professor involves. The fact that I had extensive dealings with an unruly college student is a completely different matter; but still, I think that I had a right to complain, since I was burdened with him in several classes—after all, the other teachers who hardly had anything to do with him keep complaining endlessly. For the very reason that I am concerned about discipline, I became deeply involved with several English boys, and my successors will soon understand what I'm talking about. ...

Now I'll come to the consideration of the position to which I have been appointed by the honorable Synod. Although I have been assigned as a theologian and professor and in this convention there has been no complaint raised against me, nevertheless, according to the Committee Report to appoint an inspector who can at the same time instruct, the very next proposal was to call an inspector who should at the same time be a theological professor. Now, as I pointed out in Fond du Lac, two theological professors are too many; consequently I have been virtually forced out of my position in an underhanded way, without anyone actually coming right out and saying so. My resignation, which I had no choice but to offer if I didn't want to lose all respect, was not accepted; but now I found out that this non-acceptance was due to this reason: "He worked too much, we shouldn't wear him out"; "If he had said he was going to Germany, then we would have gladly accepted his resignation"; "Who's going to tell him he should go to Germany?" Remarks such as these naturally are making life bitter for me; things like this are said in order to avoid hurting my feelings, but they're just a cover-up for the real reason. As a front they tell me that they're offering me the Reisepredigt so that I don't get worn out; and without suspecting what their real intention was when they spoke of my travels, I joined in their discussions. But now I hear that the Synod expects me to travel for seven months. Well, they will have to admit that I know more than they do about what condition my bodily strength is in. Physically I'm so low that I couldn't possibly undertake such difficult travels. In addition, spreading myself too thin goes against my grain; I would neither be able to edit the Gemeinde-Blatt nor carry out my duties in my capacity as professor; and inwardly I would be even more torn apart than I already am. As I said previously to Pastor Bading and others, if a dorm father could have been acquired who would also teach at the College, then naturally my course would be all laid out before me—my duty being to remain here—and everything would be clear to me. But now, in a manner which I cannot comprehend, and which is totally unexpected, my whole position has gone down the drain, and I can't see any other course than to go to Germany. You can imagine what thoughts and feelings I will have as I go over there. Being bound by no promise or fixed date, I permit myself to inform you hereby that I will take the first opportunity which presents itself to go to Germany. The Lord also will not forsake me there.

You yourself, highly esteemed Mr. President, will understand, since you are a man full of insight and good judgment, that after such events, it had become impossible for me to remain here. I simply ask you to put yourself into my place; and I assure you that nothing personal has moved me to my decision; it's just the way things turned out.

You would be doing me a big favor if you would send these lines, hastily thrown together as they are, over to the Board of Trustees.⁹⁹

Board President Bading, in his 1867 report to the convention does remark that “after the administration officials had seen to a few negotiations with him, they did accept his resignation and gave him his certificate of release, wishing him the blessing of the Lord for his further activity in the kingdom of God.”¹⁰⁰

The report of the treasurer for the Watertown schools showed a budget deficit of \$443.08 for the year. When added to the building debt and the interest-free loans, the total debt of the seminary and college was \$1,802.86. The treasurer for the seminary, Mr. Daniel Kusel, called upon the delegates to offer interest-free loans in the amount of \$50 or \$25. Later the convention heard again of the willingness of the Minnesota Synod to provide financial support.¹⁰¹

Year Four: 1866-1867

On September 12th, 1866, the seminary in Watertown installed Professor Adolph Hönecke as Inspektor and Professor. The installation service was held in the large prayer hall (Betsaal) of the seminary building. The service began at 10 a.m. with the singing of the hymn “Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now.” Synod President Streißguth read Psalm 24, and Board President Bading delivered the sermon based on Matthew 13:31-32. He spoke about the precious gift of pure doctrine inherited from the Reformation and called upon Professor Hönecke to teach this same doctrine to the seminary students and thus to make them fit preachers. He then pledged Professor Hönecke to the Scriptures and to the Lutheran Confessions. Professor Hönecke next spoke about the center of all pure teaching: the doctrine of the person of Christ the Redeemer. In the meeting of the Board which followed the installation service, Professor Hönecke was also pledged to the handbook (*Hausordnung*).¹⁰² It was Professor Hönecke, more than anyone else, whose name would be associated with Wisconsin’s seminary until his death in 1908.

So began the fourth year of the seminary’s existence. Mrs. Hönecke took over the housemother duties which Mrs. Koester had done the year before. Because the Hönecke’s had free room and board, Professor Hönecke’s salary was set at \$500. J. P. Koehler identifies just four students, another decline in enrollment.¹⁰³ They were Louis Junker, a returning student, Albert Siegler, who had returned after spending a year at St. Louis, Christoph Dowidat (Dovidad), a teacher from Lithuania whom the Langenberger Verein had sent, and Wilhelm Schimpf, from P. Köhler’s congregation. Aug. Schmidt had left the seminary because he was “not fit for the public ministry.” (Among the 68 enrolled in the college department, one was training to be a teacher, and between six and eight looked promising for the

⁹⁹ Porinsky, Mark, *Edward Frederick Moldehnke*, pp. 16-17. Translation by Pastor Mark Porinsky. Pastor Mark Porinsky wrote this paper as his 1978 Senior Church History project while a student at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. His main sources included personal correspondence, which he reported at the time as being in the Northwestern College Archives, and an article by Moldehnke in the *Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung* entitled “Fünf Jahre in Amerkia.”

¹⁰⁰ *Verhandlungen der Siebzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 16.

¹⁰¹ *Verhandlungen der Siebzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 24- 25.

¹⁰² *Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 2, No. 4. Oktober 15, 1866, pp.1-2.

¹⁰³ Frey comments, “The reasons for the decrease are not quite apparent. The transfer of some students to the St. Louis Seminary may have had something to do with it. Though there are no records on that, it is known, for instance, that the original student, Siegler, spent a year studying in St. Louis.” (*Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, p. 6).

seminary.¹⁰⁴) Despite the previous year's operating deficit, the seminary continued to offer free tuition, room, and board for those preparing for the ministry who needed it.¹⁰⁵

Finances continued to be a vexing problem. The seminary did receive financial support from unexpected places; gifts of money and books arrived from Germany, Russia, and even St. Louis. The Synod's own congregation's, however, present a mixed report. Some supported the seminary generously, while others supported it either sparingly, or not at all. In the October 15 edition of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, the following article appeared.

To the dear congregations and brothers in the ministry. Taste and see that the Lord is good. These, dear congregations, should be the thoughts with which everyone in your midst looked at the high stalks of grain or at the filled barns and floors. Yes, the Lord has been kind. You taste it. You see it. Now, dearly beloved, here we sit in our seminary, a small group of teachers and students. We look around us, but we don't see any stalks of grain or filled barns. But nevertheless we also cry out: Taste and see that the Lord is good, as if we too had rich harvests to bring in. We do that in the simple faith that you have harvested also for us, that we will also get our share of the harvest. We believe that you will ask yourselves how you can show the good Giver your thanks for the gifts of God you have received, and that you will regard it as well-done to give to the school something of the blessing given to you. From this school still better gifts will come for you and your children than those which God allowed to grow in your fields. It is really necessary that you remember your theological school in Watertown in active love, for not only is there often a lack of supplies for its daily need in it, there are also still some pressing debts from earlier times. Therefore we would like, in the name of our common Lord, to direct our request to you, that you might desire to have a collection for the seminary on the coming Thanksgiving, and so that it is a generous one, and also made known ahead of time, we call on our brothers in the ministry, that they may desire to urgently lay this collection on the hearts of their dear congregations. May the Lord, who directs the hearts, desire truly to open many hearts to alleviate every need and let us see his kindness here. May he do it for his name's sake. Amen.¹⁰⁶

Aside from finances, which were not an insignificant issue, the fourth year of the Watertown seminary seems to have gone smoothly. "Strict disciplinary proceedings were therefore scarcely required."¹⁰⁷ Just one disciplinary case had to be brought before the board. The seminary also hired someone to help with running the building since, in Hönecke's opinion, that was better in a number of ways than asking the seminary students to do it. And like his predecessor, Professor Hönecke also did some teaching in the college department, served as editor of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, and preached in vacant congregations in the area. Apparently the work of teaching college courses and serving vacancies became so much during the year that Hönecke felt he would need to ask for help.

¹⁰⁴ In his report to the 1867 Synod convention, A. Hönecke identified six students who had been prepared for the seminary: Dahlke, Denninger, Gamm, Bauernfeind, Hoyer, and Pankow. (*Verhandlungen der Siebzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 34).

¹⁰⁵ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, pp. 122, 123.

¹⁰⁶ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 2, No. 3. Oktober 15 (1), 1866, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ *Verhandlungen der Siebzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 34.

The financial part of operating the seminary, however, brought problems. Once again, expenses had been more than income. The Board of Trustees decided to speak directly to the pastors and lay members of the Synod through the *Gemeinde-Blatt* once again. In the June 1 edition of 1867, just before the Synod was to meet in convention, the following article appeared from the pen of Board President Bading.

The well-known, very sad lack of preachers and teachers caused the Synod in due course to proceed to the founding of a seminary in order, for its part, to help to bring the Means of Grace to abandoned brothers in the faith for the salvation of their souls. The Synod believed at that time that its members—preachers and congregations—were themselves completely convinced of the need for this step and filled with love for their brothers, and that a lack of support could never occur. In this strong faith the Synod moved ahead. . . . And how far have we come now? Praise God! We did not labor in vain. We can point to 10 young men who are preparing for the holy ministry and we may live in the hope that soon the blessing of our work, if not in streams yet still in a tangible way will be passed on to our congregations. . . . —But, how is a large part of our pastors and congregations reacting to the great need and the great work which has become necessary through it? Dear reader, be you a preacher or a member of a congregation, let your conscience give an answer to this question. What have **YOU** contributed to the support of this highly necessary work? Our Synod numbers about 90 congregations with ___ communicants. So, should it be so hard to manage the budget of the seminary without debts increasing yearly? Certainly not, if all preachers and congregations would be as willing as some. But a sad state of affairs emerges when one looks more closely. In the past Synodical year, the budget of the seminary had to pay out \$400 more than it took in. With joy in our hearts we acknowledge the faithful work of some congregations. But with deep pain we must look at the large number of those who have taken no part at all in our common work. What is lacking, brothers? Has God the Lord not blessed? Has he withheld the early and late rains, so that you, despite your sincere desire, can't carry on the Lord's work? That is something no one will want to say. Or are the pure Word and Sacrament such insignificant things in your opinion that we can withhold them from our brothers in the faith without liability? If that is so, then it is high time that each of us beat his breast and ask God for enlightenment, so that we can recognize the grace of God given through them. Then a warm beating of our pulse for our brothers who are in need will follow.

The Board of Trustees lives in the hope that our dear brothers in the ministry and their congregations need only the clear reference to the actual conditions in order to make sluggish hands eager and active tools for the support of this great work. The Board has therefore instructed its current officers to lay **this urgent appeal** on the hearts of all congregations and pastors, especially those who have done little or nothing up till now. **Please bring to the upcoming Synodical convention a collection gathered from house to house.** May God provide many willing givers! Dear brothers, let your congregations know: tell them about the sad need. Call to them loudly and clearly: "Where are the other nine?" who have experienced the blessing of the Lord and his recent help, and are now going on their way, cold toward such love? Keep calling until all come and involve

themselves in thankfulness toward their heavenly Father. Give, and it will be given to you. Who believes that?¹⁰⁸

When the Synod met for its 1867 convention, it was once again Board President and now also Synodical Vice-President Bading, who laid the seminary and its work on the hearts of the delegates as he had done so many times before. His plea was echoed by President Streißguth and Professor Hönecke in their reports.

Often we have sighed before the Lord over such a lack of participation, and we feel compelled to let our laments take voice and to express our urgent petition to our congregations and their pastors to have more heart for this matter of God and to want to provide the seminary more substantial help. Judge for yourself. Must it not be a truly embarrassing feeling for the Inspector and his wife to have to manage things with the awareness that the hearts in the Synod are not beating everywhere and warmly for the seminary? Must the treasurer not lose all joy in his work, when he so often, devoid of all means, is supposed to pay for the expenditures, which the daily support of about 19 people require? A general willingness to sacrifice in order not only decently to maintain our institution, but also to raise and put aside in addition a modest annual salary for the fund for the theological professorship is a trifle among some of our pastors and their congregations. If the pastors of the Synod would make the effort to prevail upon the families of their congregations to make an annual contribution of just 50 cents, which in this land so richly blessed should not be hard, the administration would have more means at their disposal than are necessary for paying all the costs of the seminary.¹⁰⁹

Bading also updated the convention on the matter of a pre-seminary in Germany. Though war¹¹⁰ had made Pastor Lohmann's initial plans for such a program no longer feasible, Dr. Wichern in Berlin had made a similar offer. No doubt this was welcome news for the delegates who had earlier heard President Streißguth tell them that "The founding of a pre-seminary program in Germany is being recognized more and more as a necessity for the seminary."¹¹¹ As Streißguth saw it, increased enrollment in the seminary would translate into more interest and support from Synod's congregations. In September, Synod sent Pastor Vorberg to Germany for the purpose of making the plan for a pre-seminary program there a reality.¹¹²

The committee responsible for the seminary and college brought a number of recommendations before the convention. They asked that before someone was taken into the seminary program, careful thought be given to his prospect of completing it. They also requested that consideration be given to a simplified pre-seminary program that did not require the "older languages" for older or less gifted students, or that they be trained as elementary school teachers. They suggested that it might help with support for the seminary if the Board would express the thought that gifts given would be used only for

¹⁰⁸ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 2, No. 20. Juni 15, 1867, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Verhandlungen der Siebzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 16-17.

¹¹⁰ The reference is to the Seven Weeks War or Austro-Prussian War in the summer of 1866.

¹¹¹ *Verhandlungen der Siebzehnten Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 5.

¹¹² *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 3, No. 2. Sept 15, 1867, p. 4.

the purpose for which they had been given. Furthermore, the committee wholeheartedly supported what they had heard about Dr. Wichern's offer to establish a pre-seminary program in Berlin.

That offer, however, would not last. For this was the time when Synod was finally cutting its ties with the union mission societies in Germany, the same societies from which it had received so much financial support for its seminary and so many of its pastors and pastoral candidates. By the time the next Synod convention would convene, Synod would basically be on its own—for the support of its seminary, and for the support of everything else.

Year Five: 1867-1868

The 1867-1868 school year, which began on September 12th, was relatively quiet, at least as far as academics and student life were concerned. In his exceedingly brief seminary report to the Synod, Inspector Hönecke wrote, "In general, the state of things during the course of the Synodical year with respect to discipline was quite satisfactory."¹¹³ Seminary enrollment remained low, however—just 4 students. Only one student, Carl Oppen, from Höxter in Westphalia, was new. He had come from the Berlin Verein.¹¹⁴ The Synod remained hopeful, however, that Pastor Vorberg's trip to Germany would result in increased enrollment. In an update to the Synod in the October 1 edition of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, the author commented that in Pastor Vorberg's trip to Germany, "we think that we have hit upon the right way to alleviate the great need" for pastors. Synod appealed for a special Reformation festival offering.¹¹⁵ The October 15 edition of the *Gemeinde-Blatt* presented the formal announcement of the offering.

Celebration of the Reformation and Seminary. From this heading, most of our readers will have already guessed what we want to say in these lines. Some are also probably thinking: Not giving again! There is no end to this begging! Ok, you guessed it. Actually, we want nothing other than to bring to your hearts, dear brothers in the ministry and congregations, the request which we expressed in the last edition, to remember our seminary for preachers at the upcoming Reformation celebration. Who knows—and every Lutheran Christian should rightly know—with what inestimable, precious goods the Lord has blessed us since he awakened his servant Martin Luther 350 years ago, to put the light of the Gospel, which had so shamelessly been put under the bushel basket, back on the lampstand. Whoever has learned from his Bible, which was put into his hand through the Reformation, how he can gather treasures which last to eternal life, and who does in fact gather them, we have to think that someone like that would not be able to do anything other than joyfully show himself thankful. Here is an opportunity to do that, and to be sure, an urgent one. Our seminary is in need of the most speedy and energetic support from our congregations. —When we have stepped forward with our plea before, we heard on occasion, there aren't any students in the seminary. For the three or four who are there, there is no need for such great efforts. Now, this excuse has been taken from the unhappy givers. At the moment, we have seventeen young people in the seminary who are preparing themselves either for work as teachers or preachers, and who, for their

¹¹³ *Verhandlungen der 18. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 6-7.

¹¹⁴ In his history of the seminary, Hönecke has, "According to the president's report for the year June 1867 to June 1868, twenty young people were preparing themselves at the school to enter college. Among the eight new enrollees were A. Schroedel and C. Oppen. One seminary student was readmitted. Two students, L. Junker and C. Dowidat, were given permission to take their examinations." (p. 2)

¹¹⁵ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 3, No. 3. Oktober 1, 1867, p. 2.

physical support and education, either can pay nothing at all, or just a little. To fill seventeen young stomachs each day, which can eat, is a task that requires the help of our entire Synod to fulfill. When we see in the church newspapers of other Synods what their congregations are doing for their schools, we cannot hide, that our congregations, with only a few laudable exceptions, are a distant second. In connection with the upcoming Reformation celebration in particular, most Lutheran Synods will bring a considerable offering for the kingdom of God. We ourselves have read about one congregation which has decided to offer a tenth on this occasion for the purposes of the church. So then, dear brothers, let us not stay behind. Whoever has much, give generously. And whoever has little, give it with faithful and cheerful hearts.¹¹⁶

As one pages through subsequent editions of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, one sees that this call for a special offering met with some success, especially as farmers harvested their crops. One also notices regular gifts from women's groups. This acknowledgment in particular catches one's attention. "With sincere thanks I acknowledge the receipt of two quilts and two sets of sheets which the women's group of West Granville recently gave to the seminary. The women's group of West Granville has seen to the seminary's need in this matter with real faithfulness. How very desirable the inquiry of other women's groups would be in this matter. In the coldest days of the winter, we have sometimes been afraid we would find some of our theological students frozen in the morning, so inadequately were they supplied with quilts."¹¹⁷

Any growth in offerings, however, was immediately matched by a growth in the need for more. The college student body was continuing to grow. At present, enrollment was around 90—at least when it wasn't harvest time. Among the students were about twenty who planned on studying for the pastoral ministry. The college was showing the potential to become the seminary feeder school Synod had hoped for. The success Pastor Bading was having in selling scholarships gave the impression that the college enrollment would double very quickly. In the *Gemeinde-Blatt* of March 15, 1868, President Bading also announced that the Board of Trustees had felt compelled to authorize the building of a dormitory at a cost of \$5,000 to \$7,000. He appealed to the members of the Synod to follow the example of two businessmen, Mr. Inbusch and Mr. Borth, who had contributed the first \$1,000. Subsequent issues of the church publication do not, however, report a large number of gifts. Eventually, the Board settled for a plan to build two, two-story frame houses at a cost of \$2,750. Only one of them, however, was actually built. In addition, the Board purchased 30 acres of land to the north at a cost of \$6,475. Debt was mounting at a rapid pace.

No doubt it was a time of great joy when, in July of 1868, the Watertown seminary was able to produce two more graduates, Louis Junker and Chr. Dowidat. Synod had now provided three of its own pastors through its own seminary.

The one matter that was of great concern to Professor Hönecke was the health of his wife. At the Synod convention in June of 1868, he reported that her health simply would not allow her to continue to manage the household affairs of the seminary. No doubt the personal tragedy which the Hönecke's had suffered during the year was a contributing factor. During the night of February 19th, the Höneckes's little son Hermann died after a short illness.

¹¹⁶ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 3, No. 4. Oktober 15, 1867, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 3, No. 12. April 15, 1867, p. 4.

Though its fifth year of operation had in many ways been a smooth one, finances, continued to plague both seminary and college. Pastor Bading, once again president of the Synod, wrote,

In general let it be said here that we had to live through and overcome hard days and great difficulties in the maintaining and furthering of our institutions. The seminary, which should be carried by the Synod like a child in one's arms, is being repeatedly forgotten. Most of our pastors and congregations are doing as good as nothing in raising money for the professor's salary and for the things our students need for their livelihood, as well as the other household things. The thought and the awareness that in the Synod there is so little participation in the development of our institutions does little to encourage or to cheer those of us who live in Watertown and have to carry the heavy load and concern, to keep working with joyful hearts for that which the Synod itself, to such a high degree, is neglecting. ... If the Lord had let us suspect the difficulties which now stand in the way, before the founding of our institutions, we would have perhaps backed away from carrying out our plans before we started.¹¹⁸

Even the man who more than anyone else had championed the cause of a seminary from the very beginning was having second thoughts. Almost everyone else who spoke about the seminary at the convention of 1868 echoed President Bading's remarks.

Though financial support from the congregations of the Synod continued to lag, and though Synod still owed \$1,900 on the original seminary building, the Trustees felt they had no choice but to construct a dormitory for college students who had enrolled at the Watertown school as a result of the scholarships Synod had sold. Synod supported them in that decision.

Other convention items also dealt with financial matters at the seminary. To those there, the list must have sounded like a steady drumbeat of woe. Though Synod had wanted to provide free tuition and greatly reduced (or free) room and board to anyone preparing for the pastoral ministry who needed it, the Board felt it could not longer continue this practice exactly as it had in the past. Synod therefore passed a resolution which had come originally from the Trustees, requiring all seminary and pre-seminary students to sign a document stating that they would reimburse Synod if for some reason they discontinued their preparation for the pastoral ministry. After a lengthy debate, the delegates also resolved "that the pastors and delegates be called on most urgently to see to it that every congregation member pledge a specific yearly contribution for the support of the seminary."¹¹⁹ Perhaps nothing else during the convention impressed on the delegates the dire financial situation of the seminary more than the closing words of the treasurer's report. "In conjunction with giving this present report, the undersigned treasurer allows himself to ask the honorable Synod most urgently to be sufficiently concerned that the treasurer be put in a position to satisfy the requests made of him with respect to the payment of money. Otherwise he would see himself compelled to resign the office given to him. At the moment, the finances are such that the undersigned is not in a position to be able to pay either the twenty-five percent of the construction costs which are due according to the contract, nor the salaries of the teachers, nor the operational costs."¹²⁰ For the most part, this seems to be the sum and substance of the seminary reports to Synod in the summer of '68.

¹¹⁸ *Verhandlungen der 18. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 6-7.

¹¹⁹ *Verhandlungen der 18. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 25.

¹²⁰ *Verhandlungen der 18. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 30.

Two other suggestions had been made at the convention. One suggestion, which appears in the Synodical minutes without rationale, was the approval to call Dr. Münkkel, who was from Germany, to serve as editor of the *Gemeinde-Blatt* and to a professorship at the seminary. (President Bading reported to Synod the following year that Dr. Münkkel had declined Synod's call.) In addition, the delegates heard from Synod Secretary Vorberg about yet another possibility for the establishment of a pre-seminary program in Germany. (Pastor Vorberg had travelled to Germany after the 1867 convention for the purpose of once again seeking support for the Wisconsin seminary abroad, both in terms of money and manpower.) This time, however, things were quite different from what they had been four years earlier. Synod was in the process of cutting its ties with the union mission societies, who did not appreciate Synod holding out one hand for money, while holding a scissor in the other.

In July of 1868, the Board of Trustees decided that they needed to take more aggressive measures to increase financial support for the Watertown schools among the congregations of the Synod. To that end, they engaged Mr. August Gamm, a very active layman in the Synod, to serve as a Collector. Today he would perhaps be called a "special giving counselor" or a "mission advancement officer." His job was to travel from congregation to congregation to inform people about the Watertown schools and to gather offerings for their support. The members of the Board announced his position in the *Gemeinde-Blatt* of July 15, 1868, and called upon the congregations to receive him and support him in his work for the sake of the Gospel. From subsequent editions of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, it appears that Mr. Gamm's work enjoyed real success, more than one notices in connection with any previous appeal.

Year Six: 1868-1869

In the fall of 1869, the Watertown seminary began its sixth year. Once again, Synodical reports contain very little to no detail about the year itself. Among the students were several who had served in congregational schools before enrolling at the seminary. The seminary's working assumption was that these students would be prepared for the pastoral ministry in a relatively short time. That was good, because time was short that year. With the outbreak of a small-pox epidemic, the Board of Trustees was forced to end the academic year just before Easter and send the students home. The Board saw as a special grace of God that the student body experienced no cases of severe illness or death. Despite the shortened year, Synod was still able to produce two more seminary graduates, numbers four and five. They were Albert Siegler and Carl Oppen. Siegler had passed his examination, graduated, and been called during the previous Advent to Menominee, and Oppen during Lent to Columbus.

In May of 1869, no doubt noticing that offerings for the Watertown schools had begun to decline, the *Gemeinde-Blatt* once again recommended the Watertown schools' "Agent," Mr. August Gamm, to the congregations of the Synod. In the article, President Bading spoke of his long acquaintance with Mr. Gamm, of his active service in his local Watertown congregation, and of his fine Christian character. He assured the members of every congregation that they could receive Mr. Gamm with the utmost confidence. He admonished some in particular to join in supporting the Synod's worker-training schools.

Many, and this I say with sorrow, have brought little, and in some instances nothing at all as an offering in this work of the Lord. What is reason for that? For the most part, it is a lack of goodwill, of a Christian, self-sacrificing spirit. People say: it's a bad time. Prices for crops are down. There is no business. We don't have an income. That's all true. The Lord has allowed a truly miserable time to come over us. We intend to yield to it humbly and in repentance, confessing that we have deserved much more miserable times. But

general experience teaches, that the people who are not willing to do something for the work of God now, for the most part have also done little or nothing at all in past, better times. Even in the best of years, our schools have not had to complain about having too much. Now, in this difficult time, however, the shortage has become a very tangible one.¹²¹

In June of 1869, the Board of Trustees presented to the Synod convention a rather mixed report. The past year had had its share of difficulties. “To be sure, in this work, we were not lacking sad experiences, nor quite a number of in part not insignificant difficulties. Sometimes we did not know what to do, and we almost lost courage.” Tough times had not, however, been the whole story. “But the Lord our God did not turn his smiling face away from the work of our hands. Through the experiences we had, he made us smarter, allowed us to recognize and remedy all kinds of deficiencies, and now and then he allowed us to experience joy, which encouraged and cheered us up for our continued work.”¹²²

Though not directly connected to the seminary, the Board also reported that one of the two dormitory homes under construction was finished and had been occupied, and that most of the money Mr. Gamm had collected had been used to pay for that building project. The Board also announced that they felt it would have been irresponsible on their part, from the perspective of the long-term interest of the institution, not to accept an offer to purchase a thirty-acre parcel of land adjacent to the seminary grounds at a cost of \$6,475.00. The Synod approved both the position of Mr. Gamm and the purchase of the land.

Other seminary matters that came before the convention included the following. Pastor Harms in Hermannsburg, in full agreement with Synod’s doctrine and practice, had expressed his willingness to send students from his mission to Watertown, provided Synod support the work of his mission financially. Things also looked promising in Mecklenberg for the establishment of a pre-seminary program. Pastor Chrestin in Bützow was willing to establish such a program conjointly with a school for teachers which had just opened. He did want to know, however, what level of preparation students needed before coming to the Watertown seminary, and whether or not it was desirable or necessary that students learn the “old languages.” President Bading did not want to answer those questions before consulting with Synod. The convention said they would let the answers to such questions up to the professors of our Watertown school. Though the Synod convention was happy for the offer, the delegates did want Pastor Chrestin to know, however, that Synod was not in a position to support such a program financially. Synod had also received word that others in Germany were willing to provide young men with a pre-seminary training at a nearby Gymnasium and then send them to the Watertown seminary. As a result of its cutting of all ties with union mission societies, Synod had also received official word from the Prussian High Church Council that it would be using the money which President Bading had collected for mission work in North America; the money would not, however, be coming to Watertown. After debating the question, Synod officially resolved not to make any claim on the funds.¹²³ Other financial reports included the announcement of an operating deficit of \$2,400.34, (It would seem that this was for both seminary and college.) and debt totaling \$3,373.09.

The big news at the convention of 1869, however, was no doubt the announcement of a plan to consider joining Wisconsin’s Watertown seminary with Missouri’s St. Louis seminary. The way for such an amalgamation had been cleared when Synod had finally cut all ties with all union mission societies in

¹²¹ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahr. 4, No. 18, Mai 15, 1869, p. 4.

¹²² *Verhandlungen der 19. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 25.

¹²³ *Verhandlungen der 19. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 11-14.

Germany. At the request of the 1868 convention, Pastor Bading and others had meet with key members of the Missouri Synod with the hope of clearing up any misunderstandings between the two Synods. The result of these meetings was the recognition of the doctrinal fellowship between Missouri and Wisconsin, something that was now coming before the Synod for official action. As a result of that fellowship, the suggestion had been made of a joint seminary. Wisconsin would provide a professor for St. Louis. Wisconsin's school in Watertown would then become a "flourishing and influential Gymnasium" with teachers and students coming also from the Missouri Synod. It would also have an English academy and a college. The Board had been seriously considering such an amalgamation during the year and had appointed a committee to work out the details. The Trustees were now ready to present the matter to the Synod for its consideration. Their recommendation reads as follows: "To the extent that we have considered this matter, we are convinced that this union may become a means through which the work of our hands, under God's grace and blessing, could be substantially advanced, and that it would be a special kindness of our God, if he were to allow the realization of the plan we have conceived to succeed for us. We therefore believe that we are acting in the interest of our precious Lutheran church and also in particular in the interest of our institution, when we submit this matter to the honorable Synod and recommend acceptance." The committee which discussed the recommendation brought back a majority and a minority report. The majority report recommended adoption of the proposal. The minority report of W. Dammann asked only that the Synod wait a year before deciding. After a "lengthy debate" the delegates approved the majority recommendation.¹²⁴

Year Seven: 1869-1870

Given the financial situation in Watertown, one might have expected Synod to move its seminary to St. Louis effective immediately. Such was not, however, the case. The Watertown seminary opened again in the fall. When it did, the enrollment more than doubled, from four to eleven. J.P. Koehler identifies the entire student body. "Five of them had been sent by Harms in Hermannsburg-Hannover: C. Althof, [C.] A[dolf] [M.] Zuberbier, H. Dageförde, [H. J. or F.] R. Haack, [Heinrich August] Ph. Kleinhans. Conrad Jaeger had received his training in the Hessian teacher seminary at Friedberg and helped out in St. Mark's school at Watertown; Gustav Denninger was a brother to the earlier Seminary student who had switched to teaching.... W. Schimpf, H. Hoops, J. Hodtwalker, Julius Haase completed the roster."¹²⁵ Koehler also reports where all of these students went. "Zuberbier, Haack, Kleinhans, Jaeger, Denninger, and Schimpf passed their examinations by Christmas and, barring the last-named, were admitted to the ministry: Jaeger at Mosel, Zuberbier at Two Rivers...., Dagefoerde at Leeds, Haack at Wrightstown and Depere (sic)."¹²⁶ Koehler also tells us why "the last-named," W. Schimpf, was not admitted to the ministry immediately, though he had passed his theological examinations. "Schimpf, on account of his youth, was sent as assistant to Koehler at Hustisford (who earlier had prepared him for the Seminary in his native Manitowoc) and then the following year took over the two subcharges of the parish east of Hustisford."¹²⁷ Koehler concludes this section of his history by saying, "The *five* students remaining at the Seminary stayed till March 1870, before entering the seminary at St. Louis, because a smallpox epidemic there also delayed the transfer" (emphasis added).¹²⁸ "*Five* students" is highlighted,

¹²⁴ *Verhandlungen der 19. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, pp. 21-23, 27.

¹²⁵ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 134.

¹²⁶ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 134.

¹²⁷ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 134.

¹²⁸ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 134.

because when one subtracts the seven assignees Koehler mentions (Zuberbier, Haack, Kleinhans, Jaeger, Denninger, Schimpf, and Dagefoerde) from the eleven students who started the year, only *four* remain (Haase, Hodtwalker, Althof, and Hoops). To make matters worse, however, Board of Trustees President Bading reported to the 1870 synod convention that “*six* of our theological students transferred to St. Louis, MO. in March of this year and entered there the practical seminary of the Missouri Synod in order to be trained for the holy ministry”¹²⁹ (emphasis added).

The confusion does not end there. In the 1903 seminary *Katalog*, for example, there is a “list of all those who studied in our seminary.” The list begins in 1863 and ends in 1900. After each name, one finds the place(s) each pastor served and the year that service began. The name of H. Dagefoerde does not occur in this list.¹³⁰ In his annual report to the Synod, however, Synod President Bading names “den Herrn Cand. Christoph Dageförde,” and says that he passed his examination, was called by the congregation in North Leeds, and was installed on the 21st Sunday after Trinity.¹³¹ (The proceedings from the 1871 convention do list Ch. Dageförde as the pastor from Leeds.¹³²) In that same report, Bading also names Zuberbier, Haack, Kleinhans, Denninger, and Jäger, a total of six candidates who graduated and were called into the ministry. Bading does not, however, mention W. Schimpf in his report as Synod president. Later, however, when Bading presents his report as president of the Board of Trustees, he says, “From the number of our theological students, six entered into work in the vineyard of the Lord in the course of the synodical year, (namely Mr. Zuberbier, Mr. Haack, Mr. Gustav Denninger, Mr. Conrad Jäger, Mr. H. Fr. Kleinhans, and Wm. Schimpf.)”¹³³ Curiously, President Bading mentions Schimpf in this report, but does not name Dageförde. When one puts all the sources together, it seems to be safe to say that seven men graduated from the Watertown seminary in its final year and became pastors in the Synod. This brings the Watertown seminary’s total to twelve pastoral graduates.

The names of pastoral candidates were not, however, nearly the mess that the finances were. The finances had finally reached the crisis point. The December 1 edition of the *Gemeinde-Blatt* contained the following announcement. “The situation of our schools, namely, that which concerns the collegiate and theological part, has reached a state such that they urgently require a thorough and public discussion on the part of our pastors and congregations. Because the matter is of such far-reaching consequence and importance, that it surpasses the competence of the Board of Trustees and a delay until the next annual meeting of the Synod cannot be justified by the Board, it has urgently requested of me, through a proper resolution, to call together a special Synod convention. After I also convinced myself of the need for such a meeting, I herewith ask all our pastors and congregational delegates to gather for such a Synodical meeting in the church and congregation of Pastor Adelberg in Watertown on January 5th, 1870.”¹³⁴

On Wednesday, January 5th, the Synod gathered at St. Mark’s in Watertown for a special Synod convention. The institutions were in a fiscal crisis. The operating debt stood at \$4,024, plus another \$4,500 which was coming due because of the purchase of land. The delegates passed a motion to raise around \$4,000 a year through free-will offerings to support the teachers. How exactly to do this they left to pastors and their congregations. The convention also authorized the Board to arrange Prof. Hönecke’s move to St. Louis shortly after Easter (Easter was on April 17th in 1870), and to pay for the costs.

¹²⁹ *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, p.25.

¹³⁰ *1903 Katalog*, pp. 14-25.

¹³¹ *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, p.8.

¹³² *Verhandlungen der 21. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, p.2.

¹³³ *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, p.26.

¹³⁴ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 5, No. 7, Dezbr. 1, 1869, p. 1.

Professor Hönecke subsequently asked that he be relieved of his duties as editor of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*.¹³⁵ Subsequent editions of the *Gemeinde-Blatt* do not, however, provide any indication that the financial support resolved by the special convention came pouring in.

In March of 1870, the Watertown seminary closed, and the training of future pastors for the Wisconsin Synod was transferred to the Missouri Synod seminary in St. Louis. Oddly, the closing of the Watertown seminary and its move to St. Louis does not appear to be reported anywhere in the *Gemeinde-Blatt*.

The next real mention of the Watertown seminary in the Synod's official publication was in an open letter from President Bading to the pastors and congregations of the Synod in the May 15, 1870, edition. It was unfortunately not good news that he wanted to share. He reminded the readers of the special January convention and of the delegates' decision to raise \$4,000 in free-will offerings. Then he continued,

The Board of Trustees got to work with new hope. The brothers have heard about our need,—they have promised us strong support—they will keep their word—fifty pastors and congregations need just a little seriousness and effort to make the necessary support a reality. But what happened? It looks as if people have consciously and intentionally said no with their actions to that to which their mouths said yes. Of the \$4,000 promised, in four months \$220 has been received. With this small amount, the Board of Trustees is supposed to pay the salaries of four professors, support a number of poor students, and purchase various items for managing the household affairs. With such a state of affairs, there is much to complain about and much to find fault with. For those who are entrusted with managing and providing for the institutions, it is honestly necessary to fight very hard, that a bitter root does not grow in the heart, when they see themselves so completely abandoned in their work by the active participation and assistance of the pastors and congregations, when they must experience how laments and heartfelt requests in the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, presentation of our needs, and exhortation to help at Synod conventions and special Synod conventions fade away over the years without effect, how year after year, as a result of the almost universal failure to act, the schools walk step by step toward collapse. At present we have hardly one more step to take before we collapse completely. We are in the midst of it already. If the brothers in the ministry, if our dear congregations do not finally want to take the matter rightly to heart now, if they do not want to lend a hand of **immediate** help, **regular** help, **generous** help, if they instead want to let the schools fend for themselves, their doom is guaranteed, and the entire Synod will have to bear the shame which is rightly theirs. The Board of Trustees will be compelled at the next Synod convention to put back into the hands of the honorable Synod its work and the keys to the schools, but it will do it with the acknowledgment, that we went under because of the heartlessness and inaction of our own members.¹³⁶

On June 1, it was Professor Hönecke's turn. The lead article in the *Gemeinde-Blatt* was a lengthy article by the Synod's theological professor and teacher, the only one like it from his pen. It too was addressed "to our pastors and congregations." Whereas Pastor Bading's letter had struck a rather negative

¹³⁵ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 5, No. 11, Februar 1, 1870, p. 1.

¹³⁶ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 5, No. 18, Mai 15, 1870, p. 1.

tone, Professor Hönecke's remained positive throughout. After assuring the Synod that President Bading had not been exaggerating, that things really were as bad as he had said, Professor Hönecke continued,

No, we do not need to think about the downfall of our schools because to be sure there is help for them. In keeping with God's kindness and goodness, the help has already been given, if we will only look at it aright. To have a cheerful, happy heart, to give, to help, that's what we need. And God will help us do it. In fact, he has already given everything so that we can have it, and that is why I say, the help has already been given, if we will only look at it aright. Do we not **have** the dear, precious, saving Word of our God and Savior? Do we not sincerely **want** that it be preached at all times richly and powerfully, not only to us, but also to our children, and further, to all who are now without the Word here in this, our new home? Behold, such having and wanting is from our Lord God and both are exceedingly powerful and effective to give us a cheerful heart so that we all help to maintain our schools with all our power. They shall serve above all to prepare such young men who someday, with God's help, want to be made competent for the proclamation and carrying out of the saving Gospel of our Savior. How are these two things supposed to go together, that one is happy about the Word, that one has God's grace, and is not happy, from the heart and gladly, to build and care for such schools, with all the gifts which God has given, to help keep them going, especially in times of need—schools which shall serve to prepare preachers of the Word. One cannot do otherwise than to see such schools as worthy and good gifts of God. ... Note well, dear friends and brothers, how our faithful God in a truly kind and loving way, wants to help us Lutheran Christians in all sorts of ways to have a heart that is cheerful and inclined toward such schools which cultivate the languages and knowledge in a Christian manner and seek nothing other than to make all gifts of the Spirit serve the kingdom of God.¹³⁷

We have not yet, however, finished the story of the Watertown seminary's professor, Adolf Hönecke. According to the agreement worked out the previous year, Wisconsin was to provide one seminary professor for St. Louis. In its special convention in January of 1870, Synod had called Professor Hönecke, who was supposed to move to St. Louis at Easter. According to Koehler, "Prof. Hoenecke wavered until April about accepting the call to St. Louis. ... He did accept it because, as he explained to Bading in his letter (April 17, 1870), 'I would not like to expose myself to the charge sometime, when the structure of our institutions happens to collapse (of which I haven't the least doubt any more) that I especially contributed to that event by not going to St. Louis. It is a fact, however, that never in my life have I had to make such a distasteful decision as yielding in this matter.'" Koehler then comments, "Hoenecke's reluctance is explained further in the letter with what appears to be his fear that Synod's leadership was undergoing a change and the complexion of the College management becoming too much Missouri."¹³⁸ However, Professor Hönecke subsequently changed his mind, instead accepting a Call as pastor of St. Matthew's in Milwaukee¹³⁹. Synod would have to decide at its June 1870 convention what it

¹³⁷ *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Jahrg. 5, No. 19, Juni 1, 1870, p. 1.

¹³⁸ Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 134.

¹³⁹ The last word on this matter came in 1871. Koehler reports, "Hoenecke had again been called in 1871 to go to St. Louis but now, after apparently futile Synod dealings with his congregation, definitely declined the call." *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 135.

would do about this position of a theological professorship at the St. Louis seminary filled and funded by Wisconsin. The recommendation of the Board of Trustees was to delay filling the position indefinitely.¹⁴⁰ Though they would not be supplying a theological professor, they did still need to support the students there financially. “The entire cost of maintaining our students there had to be borne by the Synod. The board had even decided to furnish bedding for our students at the St. Louis seminary.”¹⁴¹

When the Synod met in convention from June 16-22, 1870, once again Synodical president Bading spoke passionately about the Watertown seminary, now just a memory. He first spoke to the delegates as their president. He first reviewed briefly the entire history of the seminary, going all the way back to 1863. He recounted the school’s continuous financial struggle to stay open, and ways God had blessed those efforts. He reminded delegates of the many past appeals for help and the frequent congregational promises to support the seminary. Then he continued,

Every financial report ended with a deficit, and five years ago already Synod debated about a Collector. That the continued existence of the institutions finally had to become unsure and questionable with ongoing experiences like this is understandable. Now the time has come when the Synod has to contemplate this matter more closely and may no longer fail to hear the laments made loudly every year. The governing board could well have administered the institutions in this same way for a few more years and kept the things going by taking out loans, except that it has a responsibility toward the professors we have engaged, toward the congregations, and toward the world not to. Right now we could still do right by everyone and end with honor, but after years this would no longer be possible with the continued inactivity of our pastors and congregations.

But how shall the need be relieved now, and the matter arranged, so that everything may continue in a better way? Should we let the college and Gymnasium go, and limit ourselves to a seminary? Or should reduction of the teaching staff, a decrease in subjects occur, and the goal of a classical education for our future preachers be made a lower priority? The Synod can hardly want that. The circumstances of the church among our people and in our land have reached a stage which makes competent academic abilities necessary for the church. The times are disappearing more and more when congregations can be satisfied with untalented and ignorant emergency help. Even sects, which up to this point have not been inclined toward any academic training, now recognize the need for a classical education of their preachers for their existence and increase of their church bodies, and offer hundreds of thousands for the founding of schools of higher learning and seminaries. How is it supposed to be different with Lutheran Christians whose church has always been the refuge of noble arts, Christian education, and academics? ...

If these words of Luther¹⁴² are spoken from our souls, how could we want to let the idea of a reduction in teaching staff, or of letting our Gymnasium go altogether, enter our

¹⁴⁰ *Verhandlungen der 20. Versammlung der Evangel.-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin*, p. 25-28.

¹⁴¹ Kowalke, *Centennial Story*, pp. 59-60.

¹⁴² The words to which Bading refers are these: How appropriately Dr. Luther lets himself be heard about the value and need for scholarly schools for the church. In “Concerning the Schools,” he says, “I have written much that one hold to it firmly and zealously. Although that boys learn languages and the liberal arts is viewed as heathen and an

mind even for a few moments. There is only one good way in this matter: that is greater sacrifice, a regular, organized habit of charity. Congregations are for the most part willing to do something, if only the pastors are ready to take up the matter with zeal, desire, and perseverance.¹⁴³

But President Bading wasn't done yet. He later appeared before the convention as president of the Board of Trustees. This report he began with the words of 2 Corinthians 4:8, "We are worried, but not in despair." Then he continued,

Our institution is, in its present situation, like a ship on the sea which has sprung a leak, and can be kept afloat only with hardship and effort. We regret to have to say here that the honorable Synod, in letting the necessary funding be lacking, has allowed our institution to get into this sad situation. We are worried that the ship will shortly sink into the depths, that we will have to discontinue the work in our institution, provided the necessary help is not soon rendered. We are worried that the needed help will not come, or will come too late, because many pastors and congregations in our Synod have up until now shown and indicated very little or no interest at all in the existence and blossoming of our institution. We are worried that we cannot captain and steer the ship of our institution much longer, for we openly admit, we have become fainthearted and are no longer about to be moved and encouraged any more by nice-sounding promises and resolutions of the Synod to administer the matters of our institution.

Yet, although we are worried, and indeed must be worried, when we contemplate our incompetency for the work of the Lord and the sad lack of sacrificial love in the congregations of our Synod, we still do not despair, when we look at the Lord, our faithful and gracious God. Indeed, it is his goodness, that things are not yet completely over for our institution, and his mercy has no end. . . . Therefore we may not and do not want to despair of the goodness, mercy, and faithfulness of our God, but rather hope that he will rescue our school from its need and will also further crown the work done in it with his blessing. Indeed, it is a necessary work, and one commanded by the Lord, which we carry on in our school. It is indeed necessary, that our Lutheran Zion be built and that capable workers be trained for this work. How rarely they safeguard the precious jewel of the pure and saving teaching of the Gospel for our children and descendants, and see to it that they do not lack messengers of peace. So will the faithful and gracious God turn the

outward thing, they are highly necessary for the church. For where one does not train students, we will not have pastors and preachers for long, for the school must give to the church people whom one can make apostles, evangelists, prophets, that is, preachers, pastors, rulers. Yes, you say, although one might have to have schools, what use is it to teach the Greek and Hebrew languages? Couldn't we just teach German, the Bible, and God's Word, which is sufficient for salvation? Answer: Let it be said to us, that we will indeed not retain the Gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which is the sword of the Spirit. They are the cabinet in which one keeps this treasure. Where we despise it and let the languages go, we will lose the Gospel. As dearly as we love the Gospel, let us be just as stubborn about the languages. It was not for nothing that God let his Scripture be written in just the two languages, the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New in Greek. What God does not despise, but rather has chosen for his Word above all others, that we should also honor above all others."

¹⁴³ *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, pp. 11-13.

hearts in the Synod more and more to his work and make them willing and cheerful in doing good and sharing.¹⁴⁴

The financial report supported what President Bading had said. On June 1, 1870, the Watertown schools had an operating deficit of \$3,610.64. In addition to this deficit, there were also building and land purchase debts. Everything together totaled \$8,528.31, a small fortune for a small Synod in 1870.

The discussion that followed does not seem to have been particularly pleasant. As delegates discussed how the schools had gotten into such dire financial straits, they left few without blame. “People believed to have to look for [the reason] partly in the existence of the troublesome scholarships, partly in the actions of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, partly in the administration of the schools, partly in the lack of awareness about Synod and about church things in general by the congregations.” At this point, a delegation from Milwaukee read a document in which they proposed moving the schools from Watertown to Milwaukee. This proposal was then debated back and forth by each side. All sides “expressed most emphatically a willingness to preserve the schools from the collapse which threatened them.”¹⁴⁵

The discussion then turned to what Synod was going to need to do financially in order to prevent the impending collapse of its worker-training system. The delegates first discussed how much money Synod would need to raise annually to support the system. Initially, that number was \$7,000. Realizing that this was unrealistic, the delegates discussed how they could reduce it. Eventually, they decided to do it “through a completely new management principle... which consists in this, that the Synod would grant poor students only free tuition and free room; their personal costs (food, clothing, etc.) would be left to them.” The delegates came to this decision after they understood that the operating deficit was in part due to the free board which had been provided to poor students. Other ways would have to be found to help poor students complete their studies.¹⁴⁶

With that difficult decision behind them, they turned their attention to the remaining \$4,500. Delegates offered a number of wide-ranging alternatives, including reducing the number of teachers, closing the academy (the part of the system that prepared students for the Gymnasium or College), and selling the land for the purchase of which Synod had incurred much of the current debt. In the end, they decided to raise the \$4,500. What that pledge, the 1870 convention ended, and with it the Watertown seminary.

German has a saying: *aller Anfang ist schwer*. That was certainly true of the seminary in Watertown. It was seven-year battle to keep the school going. But it was a battle men like Johannes Bading were willing to fight, because for him, the battle wasn't just about a school. The battle was about the continued proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by pastors trained to preach it faithfully. May God continue to grant us a seminary which trains such men and may he give us hearts glad and willing to support our seminary for as long as a gracious God allows it to remain.

¹⁴⁴ *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, pp. 24-28.

¹⁴⁵ *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, p. 29.

¹⁴⁶ *Verhandlungen der 20. Jahresversammlung der deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode*, pp. 29-30.

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