

# The Story of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society



Matthew Ewart

December 2005

## A GROUP WITH A MISSION...

From June 23<sup>rd</sup> through June 26<sup>th</sup> 2005, nearly 1,500 WELS women from across the United States and the world gathered together in Bloomington, Minnesota. The reason: to become more acquainted with on-going world mission efforts put forth by the Wisconsin Synod and to support those missions as they were so enabled. World missionaries who were home on furlough gave presentations and explained the work that they do overseas. A number of home missionaries also informed the women of the work they do.

The results of this four day convention were varied, but all positive. Lutheran women were not only informed of current situations in the world, but they were also excited and fueled to continue this mission fervor at their own local level. Mission box offerings were gathered - the total amount was \$59,162.10. This money was split between the Mormon outreach website and an Apache mentoring program.

The event being described was the 42<sup>nd</sup> National Convention of the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society. Ever since 1964 this society has met annually for national conventions, and each year their purpose remain has remained the same: "To increase interest in and to support mission endeavors, which are a part of or in the interest of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.<sup>1</sup>"

LWMS is right up on the front lines with our missionaries. Since in most cases these women cannot be in the mission fields in person, they generously offer prayers, materials and offerings. In just 42 years, they have raised over \$4 million<sup>2</sup> which was specifically designated for certain mission fields. But who could ever calculate the impact their prayers have had on God's people across the world...

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<sup>1</sup> *Forty-Year History of LWMS*, pg. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Amount of 4 million quoted from LWMS video: *Women Working for Missions*, 1997.

## A GROUP WITH DEEP ROOTS...

So where did this group come from? What are its roots? Perhaps we can appreciate LWMS even more if we were to look at their past. And since the group just celebrated their 42<sup>nd</sup> National Convention, some of the “pioneers” of this group are still with us today. God has accomplished great things through this humble group of women. Let us thank God for all he has done through this group as we glance to their past.

Mary Lou Schmidt, president of LWMS from 1977-1981, recalls the first LWMS National Convention which took place on Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1964. She recalls:

*Compared to the figures in recent years, the numbers were small, but the feelings of those present were most indescribable. There were missionary wives who were sharing compelling stories from the mission fields while home on furlough, and the Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMM) was being developed using the special talents of nurses from mainland USA. The hearts of the WELS ladies were being stirred to be active in the work of our Lord.*

*I had the wonderful privilege of being one of the ladies present at the humble beginnings of the LWMS. I recall getting up early, driving from Oconomowoc, WI to Winona, MN, attending the meeting and returning home the same day. With our husbands as chauffeurs, my dear friend, Isola Millett, and I were absolutely elated. It was really happening! As young mothers with five children, collectively, under the age of 10, here we were, miles from home, experiencing another opportunity in our lives.*

*Would it be possible for us, too, to contribute in some small way to the efforts underway to serve Jesus? Only God knew that day how he would bless us with opportunity after opportunity to serve him. As the day unfolded, the revelation of the groundwork and direction for this infant organization, with our God as its guide, assured each of us that there was work to be done and a place for each of us in it. Pleas for God's help in all plans made for the future, prayers and songs of praise, and thankfulness expressed for the realization of what had almost seemed to be a dream were the order of the day. Ladies and pastors stepped forward with humility and willing hearts and minds to commit to the opportunity at hand. The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society was born!*

*Who could ever have foreseen how that small group would grow and 'snowball' to what it has become today? With God nothing is impossible! And how he has blessed the LMWS!<sup>3</sup>*

256 people attended the first convention that in 1964 that Mary Lou was talking about. But as early as 1958, women of WELS congregations from the Mississippi River Valley Conference, the Wisconsin River Valley Conference, and what was later known as the Southwestern Conference of the Western Wisconsin District were holding regular regional mission rallies.

Topic books, one for each month, were prepared and provided to the ladies of each congregation at these regional rallies so that they might become better informed of the mission endeavors of the WELS. Each book contained articles about Home Missions, Mercy Missions, and World Missions.

Many women saw the value of these small rallies. They were beneficial for the communication between missionary and lay person. They were uplifting for both for the missionaries who gave presentations and the women who listened to the presentations. With so much happening at individual, localized rallies, the leaders of these women's groups began to imagine the possibilities if women from all over the U.S. could pool their resources for a mega-rally (or a national convention, if you will).

On January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1963, that possibility started to take form. The members of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Winona, Minnesota, under the spiritual guidance of Rev. Harold Essmann, extended an invitation to all WELS pastors and any interested ladies to come to the first national convention of Lutheran Women's Missionary Society. Although it was initially set to happen on June 25<sup>th</sup> 1963, it was postponed until June 27<sup>th</sup> 1964 so that synodical leaders could inspect this young group. Before Synod was going to allow this society to operate under its umbrella, it

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<sup>3</sup> Forty-Year History of Lutheran Women's Missionary Society, p. 7-8.

rightly wanted an explanation of who this group was, what they planned to accomplish, and how they proposed to accomplish it.

Some time between August 7<sup>th</sup> to August 14<sup>th</sup> 1963 the Synod leaders took time out of the Synod Convention to learn about and discuss this new society. Under the category of “World Missions” came the discussion of this new group called the Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society. The following is the record of what the Synod Convention heard about LWMS and what their decisions were:<sup>4</sup>

***Assignment of the Committee:***

*Your committee, upon recommendation of the Conference of Presidents, was appointed by President Oscar Naumann of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod “to study the aims and purposes of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society and bring a report regarding the Society to the Synod in convention.” Your committee herewith presents the following report and recommendations:*

***History of the Society:***

*The LWMS was begun in the Winona, Minnesota, area, where 13 congregations at present are represented in the Winona Circuit. Another Circuit has been organized and is active in the Wausau, Wisconsin, area and another is in the process of organization in the Tomah, Wisconsin, area.*

***Objectives:***

*The objectives of the LWMS are twofold:*

- a) To increase interest in charitable and mission endeavors which are a part of or in the interest of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod;*
- b) To support the same.*

***Program:***

*The LWMS has a twofold program:*

- I. To increase interest in Missions*
  - 1. By presenting topics for discussion in smaller groups. Well-planned topics on home missions, mercy missions and world missions are prepared each year to tell the story of mission work in these various fields.*
  - 2. By holding rallies for larger groups. Rallies should be held once or twice a year to attract a larger number of ladies from various congregations. Men*

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<sup>4</sup> Synod Convention notes found in Convention Proceedings, Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod: 1961-1965. Notes cited are from the Thirty-Seventh Convention (August 1963), pages 179-182.

*who have personal interest or contact in the various mission fields will be invited as speakers. These rallies are to demonstrate oneness of faith and purpose, give a better insight into mission work, and point up the commission of Christ, "Go ye and teach all nations," and "Serve the Lord with all your heart."*

## *II. To support Mission Endeavors*

*1. By encouraging the regular use of mission offering envelopes of the local congregation as the main source of funds to conduct the work of our Synod.*

*2. By distributing Mission boxes to all LWMS members for gifts to be used to aid various mission and charitable endeavors.*

### **Membership:**

*All ladies who are members of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod or of churches in fellowship with this Synod are eligible for membership. Congregational organizations (Ladies' Aids, Guilds, Dorcas Societies, Missionary groups) that wish to become members may do so by applying for membership.*

### **Organization:**

#### *I. On the Local Level*

*The LWMS members in the local congregation shall be free to organize according to one of the three plans given in the Bylaws of the Circuit Constitution. Under any organizational basis the interest and wishes of the local congregation and pastor must be respected.*

#### *II. On the Circuit Level*

*When several congregational organizations are chartered in a given area, they are encouraged to form a circuit of their own and hold semiannual (April and October) or annual mission rallies. The circuit may adopt its own organizational plan and constitution. The suggested and recommended circuit constitution includes the following: In addition to the usual set of officers, the circuit shall have a pastoral advisor and a spiritual growth committee composed of two pastors and two ladies. The spiritual advisor shall attend all meetings of the executive committee (three pastors, six ladies) and the regular meetings of the circuit, and give spiritual guidance. The Spiritual Growth Committee is to be responsible for disseminating monthly topics and other pertinent information to the LWMS groups in the circuit. The executive committee shall serve as a steering committee for the time and place of the circuit meetings and plan the program.*

#### *III. On the National Level*

*Each local organization shall be entitled to one delegate and one alternate at the national convention to be held annually in June. The nation convention shall chose its officers and determine the mission projects to be completed for that year.*

*The following individuals, elected by ballot for a term of two years, shall be the National Executive Committee; A) President, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and pastoral advisor. B) Spiritual Growth Committee of two pastors and two ladies. The National Executive Committee shall serve as [a] "steering committee" for the time and place of the meetings and shall plan the program...*

### ***Observations and Findings of the Committee***

*Your committee, having studied the objectives and program of the LWMS as outlined above, offers the following observations and findings:*

- 1. The Lord has given to His Church the commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).*
- 2. There is a definite need to increase our mission efforts, wherever possible, and this should be our constant concern.*
- 3. Any Scriptural and orderly method for carrying out the Lord's great commission, whether this is done individually or collectively, is commendable.*
- 4. Women are a part of the royal priesthood to whom the great commission was given, and will therefore concern themselves with the same (1 Peter 2:9).*
- 5. The Scriptures speak highly of the service rendered by women in aiding the cause of the Gospel (Romans 16:1,2,6; Philippians 4:3; Acts 16:14), even though their role and their sphere of activity in the Church is restricted by Scriptural injunction (Genesis 3:16; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Corinthians 13:34; Ephesians 5:2; 1 Timothy 2:11,12).*
- 6. The LWMS is dedicated to the task of carrying out the Lord's great commission as stated in its objectives "to increase interest in and to support charitable and mission endeavors which are a part of or in the interest of our Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod."*
- 7. The LWMS has already demonstrated that it can perform a helpful service to our Synod by spreading more detailed information on Synod's mission and charitable endeavors (prepared topics) without interfering in the established procedures of the congregation or Synod and by giving support to special mission and charitable projects (chapel room of the Rhodesian Medical clinic).*
- 8. The LWMS encourages the regular use of mission offering envelopes of the local congregation as the main source of funds to conduct the work of our Synod and also encourages its members to bring added gifts for special mission and charitable projects.*
- 9. The LWMS offers a wider opportunity to utilize the special gifts and talents given to the Church for the edifying of the body of Christ.*
- 10. The LWMS by its threefold plan of operation on the congregational level allows this organization to be adapted to local conditions with the pastor's approval.*

### **Conclusions**

*On the basis of our observations and findings we therefore recommend:*

- 1. That the Synod recognize the LWMS as an organization that can give valuable aid especially to women in increasing interest in our mission and charitable endeavors in addition to that given by the duly established agencies of our Synod created for that purpose.*
- 2. That the Synod encourage the use of the LWMS program by the women of our Synod.*

*We, however, suggest that the following points be given further study:*

- 1. Synodical supervision by responsible individuals.*
- 2. Correlation with other boards and committees of Synod, e.g., Board of Information and Stewardship and Mission Board.*
- 3. The need and advisability of going beyond the circuit and District level in further organizing the LWMS.*
- 4. The creation of a board or committee to fulfill the functions of the National Spiritual Growth Committee as proposed in the National Constitution.*

*We bespeak the prayers of all our people that God would continue to grant His blessing upon all God-pleasing methods of increasing interest in all of our missions and charitable endeavors.*

*Waldemar F. Zink, Chairman                      Frederic G. Kosanke, Secretary  
Edward H. Krueger   Clarence Koepsell      Frederick E. Thierfelder*

There were probably a couple of concerns going into this report that needed to be answered. First of all, would the LWMS be diverting funds away from the local congregations in order to carry out its tasks? With money being as tight as it was, not many congregations could afford to have their funds re-routed through alternative organizations. But this report made it clear that congregational offerings were to remain congregational offerings. The main source of funds to carry out mission work for the Synod was clearly stated as the congregational mission envelopes. Any additional offerings over and above the usual would be designated by using “mission boxes.”



A second concern might include the proper roles of men and women and how that would apply to this group. The committee explained that this group would have women leading women. And where necessary, pastors would be serving as spiritual guides and overseers.

The notes from the Synod Convention outline well the mindset of this young group. They simply want to do on a larger level what they had already been doing on a smaller level: meeting together to learn how missions were doing and to help where they could. It also bears witness to the dedication of the men and women who drew up these proposals and viewed everything from a scriptural viewpoint. A former LWMS president, when thinking about the amount of time these first women must have spent drawing up these proposals, wonders what those women would think today as the LWMS has become such a large group. "It's a reminder that we too have to keep the spirit of this society going so that we don't give up what so many women worked hard to start."

The roots of the LWMS are indeed quite deep. These roots span back to the early 1960's (and some might say the 1950's). These roots are embedded in a foundation of strong, faithful, committed Lutheran women who sacrificed much of their own time and materials to make this society work. But most important of all, this society has always had its roots deeply implanted in the one foundation that would never dry up or be lacking: the Good Shepherd himself. Throughout every LWMS presentation, publication and convention the women remind themselves and others that the roots go much deeper than any one person in the room. The roots are held together by God's grace and they are strengthened through his Word. "It is only by his grace that what was started forty years ago continues to serve him today and tomorrow."<sup>5</sup> A group that accomplishes so much today finds its roots just as strong as when it officially began in 1964. To God be the glory for that.

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<sup>5</sup> A closing remark from *Forty-Year History of LWMS*, pg. 57.

## LWMS SPECIAL PROJECTS

### MISSION TO THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

During the first year of its existence, LWMS was given a project that they took seriously and accomplished great things with. When Rev. Oscar J. Naumann, WELS president, requested the LWMS to produce materials for the blind, the response was phenomenal. Mrs. Erna Speekin, first president of the LWMS, spearheaded the project. Thanks to her diligence and the hard work of many other women working alongside her, they began the Mission for the Blind, later renamed Mission for the Visually Handicapped, and now currently named the Mission for the Visually Impaired (MVI). Braille transcribers, blind proofreaders, and a staff to establish and office for the reproduction of materials were all formed during these early years.

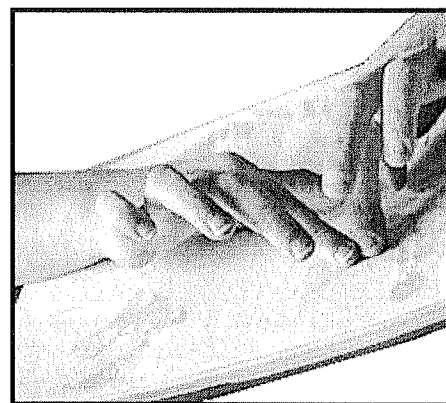
In 1966 a woman by the name of Gertrude Green of Flagstaff, AZ, offered her services as a master Braille transcriber. This offer included lessons to teach ladies to learn and transcribe Braille. By 1967, the first copy of the *Revised Gausewitz Catechism* in Braille was unveiled. This copy, consisting of five volumes, was given to Rev. W. Franzmann of Northwestern Publishing House. This gift represented more than one year of work and was the first milestone for the LWMS. At the LWMS convention that year a permanent committee for the Mission to the Visually Impaired was ratified. This committee consisted of members from the LWMS national board and women from Minnesota. The first workshop for the MVI was set up at St. Croix Lutheran High School. In 1967 there were 121 volunteers ready and willing to do production and mailing. There were additionally 25 students who were training to be able to transcribe Braille. This MVI program was under the direction of the General Board for Home Missions.

By 1968, two Braille transcribers had become certified and had completed their first assignment for MVI. In 1969 their Braille work went overseas as they produced fifty copies of a Japanese tract for the WELS mission in Japan.

By 1975, the MVI (being in operation only ten years) was staffed with 19 Braille transcribers, 3 instructors and 2 proofreaders. They were supplying materials in Braille and large-print as well as audio publications. 1,635 books in Braille were mailed to blind recipients between January 1974 and March 1975. Missionaries in distant places such as Africa, India and England were requesting material in Braille. They had recognized mission opportunities in these challenging areas and asked the LWMS for help. The LWMS continued with the responsibility of staffing and funding this ongoing project.

Perhaps a taste of the fruits of their efforts came in 1980 when a young man named Dale Schultz from Manitowoc, Wisconsin attended the 17<sup>th</sup> LWMS National Convention in Wheaton, Illinois. Dale was a blind man who used and greatly appreciated the audiocassette tapes that MVI made and distributed. He stood up in front of the crowd and spoke a message of thanks from his heart. "As he shared poetry he had written for us, *A Time for God*, hearts stirred and tears flowed at his expression of joy and thanksgiving to our Lord, despite his personal losses."<sup>6</sup>

This Mission for the Visually Impaired continues even today. Because of modern technology, computers can now convert printed material into Braille in a matter of seconds. Because human transcribers are no longer a necessary part of that process, MVI now falls under the committee of the Commission on Special Ministries of the Wisconsin Synod. But LWMS still readily participates in this endeavor they began so many



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<sup>6</sup> Forty-Year History, pg. 25.

years ago. Thanks to their generous funding, along with the help of WELS churches and individuals, all materials that come from MVI are produced and shipped for free. (The only obligation is that the person receiving these products must be visually impaired.) The cost for materials is completely covered by outside funds, thus making it possible for MVI to operate without synodical budgetary funds.<sup>7</sup>

## LWMS SEAL

A noteworthy project done for the LWMS in its early years perhaps gets overlooked quite often, yet it is a project with continuing significance. Shortly after the first convention in 1964 a young man by the name of Jerome Anthony de Galley (son of Rev. James de Galley) designed a seal for LWMS based on the motto “United to Serve Jesus” that had been chosen at the first convention. The seal he drew is the same symbol that you will find on all LWMS printed materials today. This is how Jerome described the seal as he presented it to the Society:

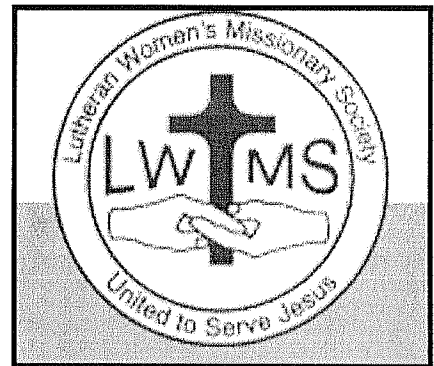
*The circle represents the unity of your organization and represents your missionary endeavors around the globe.*

*The clasped hands at the foot of the cross signify the strength of the Word of God and your society to spread His message.*

*The hands also show charity in that they appear in the act of giving and receiving.*

*The cross represents Jesus and His Word.*

*The letters, LWMS, of course, stand for your society.<sup>8</sup>*



It wasn't until the 6<sup>th</sup> LWMS National Convention in June of 1969 when Jerome's logo would be stamped onto metal pins. The first pin was set aside so that it could be presented to the artist himself. Unfortunately, Corporal Jerome Anthony De Galley had died in Vietnam on March 17<sup>th</sup> 1969. He is remembered on Panel 28W, Row 97 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

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<sup>7</sup> Current information about MVI can be found at the WELS website under MINISTRY – PARISH SERVICES - : <http://www.wels.net/cgi-bin/site.pl?2617&collectionID=651&contentID=3452&shortcutID=1279>

<sup>8</sup> Explanation for the logo found in *Forty-Year History of LWMS*, pg 11.

The first pin, therefore, was dedicated in his memory out of gratitude for what he had drawn. It was proudly presented to his mother with love and respect at the 6<sup>th</sup> Convention. Pins with these same seals are still produced and distributed today.

### **THE BEFRIEND A MISSION PROGRAM**

LWMS members gladly and earnestly prayed for missionaries across the world. In fact, special calendars were produced to remind women of new missionaries each month so that they had something specific to pray for. This was all good. Our God answers prayer, and the women knew that. But the women wanted to do more. One of the national board members commented that the women of the LWMS would like to do more than pray for missionaries. It is the goal of the spiritual growth committee to continue to find new ways to increase interest in mission fields and to support those missions. Over the course of a few months, much brainstorming took place. Finally, this new program to help missionaries even more was going to be announced at the 22<sup>nd</sup> national convention in 1985. The name of this program: *Befriend a Mission*.

The original form of this program is slightly different than it is today.

*The vice president assigned the program to the national spiritual growth woman, Ruth Knoke, who had the responsibility for the first assignments. The dilemma was how we were going to assign the home and world missionaries. We again worked with the Home and World Mission Boards to receive the missionary information. Remember, that was before the massive use of computers. Many, many letters and long distance phone visits supplied needed information. The final arrangement was to assign one world missionary to each circuit and divide the home missionaries equally among the circuits. These assignments were sent to the circuit vice presidents for implementing, and the assignments were done yearly in the summer so the circuits would have them by September of each year.*

*A letter was sent to the circuit vice presidents, giving them suggestions that included sending cards for birthdays and anniversaries, and letters of encouragement to our missionaries. The one thing that we emphasized was the important work that the missionaries were doing on our behalf, and we did not want them to feel responsible to respond to the letters from our members. It is*

*amazing how God can take one idea, bless it, and use his people to evolve it to where it is now, known as Befriend A Mission!*<sup>9</sup>

The Befriend A Mission Program has, since its inception, upgraded the technological means of gathering information on missionaries and sharing that information with LWMS circuits.

Yet the goal remains the same. The purpose, according to a brochure that can currently be found on the LWMS website, simply states that “the Befriend A Mission program aims to assist the work of missions and their missionaries by offering prayers,

encouragement and God’s love to those within the body of Christ. It also keeps in prayer those souls yet to be reached in the mission fields, which have been prepared by the Holy Spirit through the spreading of the Gospel.”<sup>10</sup>

The *Befriend a Mission* program reflects the focus of LWMS by increasing awareness of home and world missions. This program provides a system of support by offering opportunities for women of the LWMS to remember and be a friend to missions, missionaries and their families. The LWMS video *Women Working for Missions* shows several interviews of people highlighting the benefits of this system. Missionaries, though they may be secluded by many miles of foreign lands and oceans, are remembered and prayed for – and they know it. The *Befriend a Mission* program was a big step forward for the LWMS as far as personally getting to know and assisting missionaries in the field. May God continue to use this program for its designed purpose: “saints refreshing saints.”



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<sup>9</sup> Forty-Year History of LWMS, pg. 31.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.lwms.org/resources/bam\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.lwms.org/resources/bam_brochure.pdf)

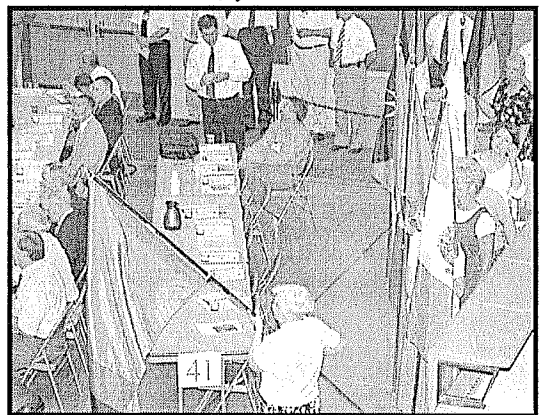
## LWMS SPECIAL TRADITIONS

### PRESENTATION OF FLAGS

On June 29, 1968, 937 attendees showed up for the 5<sup>th</sup> annual LWMS convention in Watertown, Wisconsin. Not only was this the first soggy convention (not just a pun on the name of the town, but it was literally pouring rain), but this was also the first convention in which flags were displayed representing the WELS mission fields. The ladies of one of the circuits, using drawings in encyclopedias for patterns, made these flags. Costumes were worn depicting the countries whose flags were presented.

Gradually those drawings based off of encyclopedia images were exchanged for authentic flags from the mission field countries. The very next year the first replacement for the hand-made flags was presented. Missionary Richard Poetter of Japan made a presentation to the convention assembly of the flag of Japan with the message, “The people who have waked in darkness have seen a great light. You have supported them, and as a token of our sincere appreciation to you, we present this flag from Japan.”<sup>11</sup>

One by one, and sometimes in small bunches, missionaries would gratefully present authentic flags to the LWMS. Today, if you visit a national convention, you will still see the presentation of flags as now every country with a WELS mission is now accounted for. In the picture, LWMS members line up as they prepare for their flag procession during the opening moments of the 2005 Synod Convention in New Ulm, Minnesota.<sup>12</sup>



<sup>11</sup> Missionary Richard Poetter's quote is taken from *Forty-Year History of LWMS*, pg. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Picture of flag procession is courtesy of the Fall 2005 *Mission Connection*.

## SEMINARY DINNERS

Getting to know the missionaries when they're already out in the field can be a challenge. Rarely are they all in one spot at the same time... UNLESS you catch them before they leave the seminary! On April 22, 1999, the LWMS for the first time sponsored a dinner for the soon-to-be-graduates of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and their wives/fiancées. The purpose was to introduce the pastors-to-be to the LWMS. At that first seminary dinner, more than 50 shared in a fun-filled evening. Following the dinner, several national board members introduced themselves and gave brief presentations describing their position on LWMS and explaining the many things LWMS would be able to do for them in the future. Both LWMS members and Seminary students alike agree that the evening was well-spent. One seminarian wrote a letter afterward in which he said, "To see the care and concern you show to our people serving throughout the world is truly a blessing. God grant that we may be as great a blessing to your ministry as you have been and will be to many of ours."<sup>13</sup>

### LWMS: FIRM ROOTS, PROMISING FUTURE

As Marilyn Ewart, a former president of LWMS, looks to the present situation of this Society she sees two things. The first is an obstacle. Much of the recruiting and membership that LWMS depends on is based on the smaller church groups such as Ladies' Aids, Mary Martha Guilds, Ladies' Auxiliary, and the like. In fact, the Synodical Convention notes quoted on page 5 of this paper identify these small church groups as the most basic unit of the LWMS membership ties.

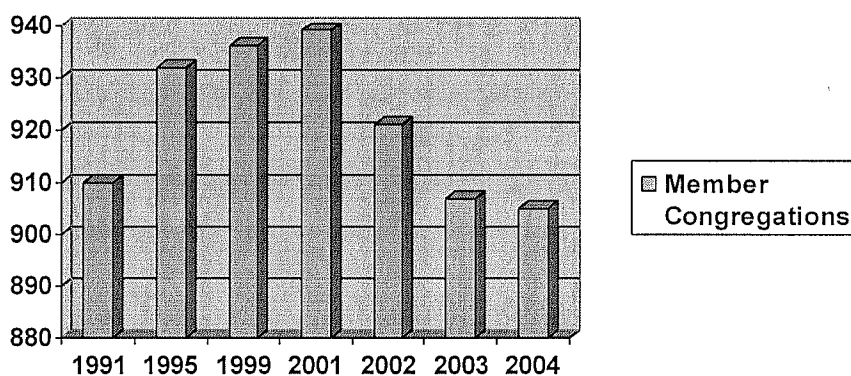
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<sup>13</sup> Letter, as quoted, from *Forty-Year History of LWMS*, pg. 45.



Unfortunately, the modern trend seems to be shifting away from these small church groups. More and more congregations are disbanding these formal, structured groups in exchange for a more informal group – perhaps one that is not even directly associated with the congregation. It seems that Ladies’ Aid groups have fallen out of style. While this modern trend might not cause any immediate, critical loss to a single congregation, LWMS is starting to feel the repercussions. The chart below shows the recent decline in congregations who are members of LWMS.<sup>14</sup>

Whether or not these numbers will work themselves out in time has yet to be seen.



While declining in the number of member congregations is an obstacle, the future that lies before this Society is full of joyous hope. After the 39<sup>th</sup> national convention in Las Vegas (June 2002), a California man who had been inspired by the convention came forward and talked to former president Marilyn Ewart. He expressed the joy that he had over the work the LWMS is doing. As Marilyn recalls, this gentleman said, “The LWMS is the ONLY thing that exists in the Wisconsin Synod to get people excited about missions and about sharing Jesus.” Prior to his attending that convention (which was almost by accident) he was sad that WELS people knew the true gospel and that they had the most cherished message on earth, yet in general they seem complacent to keep that message to themselves. This California man saw the LWMS as a spring

<sup>14</sup> Reference numbers drawn from *The Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society – National Convention Notes 1964 – 2005*.

from which new life and energy flowed. And as an independently wealthy man, he made a generous offer to cover the expense for anyone who could not afford to travel to the subsequent conventions. Five women from Antigua will be flying to the convention in Seattle this coming June of 2006 thanks to his generosity. His prayer: that the LWMS which started some forty years ago can remind us of the treasures we have, and then encourage us to be so bold as to share them.

That takes us full circle, back to the humble beginnings of this Society. They have kept true to their mission statement: "To increase interest in and to support mission endeavors which are part of, or in the interest of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod."<sup>15</sup> Since 1964, this Society has been *United to Serve Jesus*. That is a firm root that will continue to support them in the future, as we can see that even now they are continuing to work hard while there is daylight. But when the light is gone and when our Lord comes again, the ladies of the LWMS will finally get to see the fruits of their labor. They will see souls in heaven – souls representing the flags of the nations that they as a group prayed for and supported. And as all of those in Christ will be permanently fitted with His righteous robes, we will all be joined together in the final procession that leads to the throne of the Lamb. And for eternity we will all be *United to Serve Jesus*.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.lwms.org/>

## ADDENDUM A: PEOPLE WHO HAVE SERVED AS NATIONAL OFFICERS

### PRESIDENT

Mrs. Erna Speckin	Wauwatosa, Wisconsin	1964 – 69
Mrs. Jo Myers	Benton Harbor, Michigan	1969 – 73
Mrs. Isola Millett	Oconomowoc, Wisconsin	1973 – 77
Mrs. Mary Lou Schmidt	Oconomowoc, Wisconsin	1977 – 81
Mrs. Kathryn Banbury	Lake Mills, Wisconsin	1981 – 85
Mrs. Beatrice Punke	Cochrane, Wisconsin	1985 – 87
Mrs. Ruth Wollenburg	Lake Mills, Wisconsin	1987 – 89
Mrs. Jean Rindal	St. Paul, Minnesota	1989 – 91
Mrs. Karen Bauer	Hustisford, Wisconsin	1991 – 93
Mrs. Elaine Otterstatter	Eagle River, Wisconsin	1993 – 95
Mrs. Ruth Kemerley	Arlington, Ohio	1995 – 97
Mrs. Nancy Koeplin	Dousman, Wisconsin	1997 – 99
Mrs. Gloria Knoll	Appleton, Wisconsin	1999 – 2001
Mrs. Marilyn Ewart	Broken Arrow, Oklahoma	2001 – 03
Mrs. Colleen Lindemann	Winner, South Dakota	2003 – 05
Mrs. Sarah Malchow	El Paso, Texas	2005 – (07)

### **PRESIDENT - ELECT**

Mrs. Beatrice Punke	Cochrane, Wisconsin	1984 – 85
Mrs. Ruth Wollenburg	Lake Mills, Wisconsin	1985 – 87
Mrs. Jean Rindal	St. Paul, Minnesota	1987 – 89
Mrs. Karen Bauer	Hustisford, Wisconsin	1989 – 91
Mrs. Elaine Otterstatter	Eagle River, Wisconsin	1991 – 93
Mrs. Ruth Kemerley	Arlington, Ohio	1993 – 95
Mrs. Nancy Koelpin	Dousman, Wisconsin	1995 – 97
Mrs. Gloria Knoll	Appleton, Wisconsin	1997 – 99
Mrs. Marilyn Ewart	Broken Arrow, Oklahoma	1999 – 2001
Mrs. Colleen Lindemann	Winner, South Dakota	2001 – 03
Mrs. Sarah Malchow	El Paso, Texas	2003 – 05
Mrs. Lynnette Hupman	Manassas, Virginia	2005 – (07)

## VICE PRESIDENT

Mrs. Fred Bohlmann	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	1964 - 68
Mrs. Mary Lou Schmidt	Oconomowoc, Wisconsin	1968 - 72
Mrs. Lois Meister	Aurora, Colorado	1972 - 76
Mrs. Donald Burnstad		1976 - 78
Mrs. Irene Cudworth	Saginaw, Michigan	1978 - 82
Mrs. Betty Thompson	Canton, Michigan	1982 - 86
Mrs. Karen Schimming	Beaver Dam, Wisconsin	1986 - 90
Ms. Barbara Janisch	Richfield, Minnesota	1990 - 92
Mrs. Sharon Baumann	Sutton, Nebraska	1992 - 96
Mrs. Esther Huebner	Columbia, Maryland	1996 - 2000
Mrs. Shirley Billings	Orange, California	2000 - 02
Mrs. Sally Valleskey	Houston, Texas	2002 -

## SECRETARY

Mrs. Carol Niemeyer	Winona, Minnesota	1964 - 66
Mrs. Frieda Behnken	Lake Mills, Wisconsin	1966 - 70
Mrs. Eunice Mickow	Lake City, Minnesota	1970 - 74
Mrs. Eileen Ivascu	West St. Paul, Minnesota	1974 - 78
Mrs. Grace Berg	New Ulm, Minnesota	1978 - 82
Mrs. Betty Wolf	Brillion, Wisconsin	1982 - 86
Mrs. Dorothy Laabs	Oshkosh, Wisconsin	1986 - 90
Mrs. Shirley Larson	Stetsonville, Wisconsin	1990 - 94
Mrs. Betty Schmidt	Denver, Colorado	1994 - 98
Mrs. Alice Sather	Northfield, Minnesota	1998 - 2002
Mrs. Jerilyn Kramer	Elkton, South Dakota	2002 -

## TREASURER

Mrs. Donna Schuppenhauer	Winona, Minnesota	1964 – 69
Mrs. Gladys Maas	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	1969 – 73
Mrs. Clarice Nicol	Stevensville, Michigan	1973 – 77
Mrs. Betty Schmidt	Denver, Colorado	1977 – 81
Mrs. Cloretta Coffey	Greeley, Colorado	1981 – 85
Mrs. Beverly Lund	Beckley, West Virginia	1985 – 89
Mrs. Beverly Pankow	Hudson, Wisconsin	1989 – 93
Mrs. LaVon M. Schultz	Normal, Illinois	1993 – 97
Mrs. Lynn Wempner	Neenah, Wisconsin	1997 – 2001
Mrs. Beckie Grube	Tucson, Arizona	2001 – 05
Ms. Linda Diersen	Baltimore, Maryland	2005 –

## PASTORAL ADVISOR

Rev. Harold Essmann	Sun Prairie, Wisconsin	1964 – 68
Rev. Karl Bast	Madison, Wisconsin	1968 – 72
Rev. Marvin Radtke	Hayward, Wisconsin	1972 – 76
Rev. Harold Wicke	Sun Prairie, Wisconsin	1976 – 78
Rev. Larry Ellenberger	Oak Creek, Wisconsin	1978 – 82
Rev. Wayne Schneider	Savanna, Illinois	1982 – 86
Rev. Kenneth Bode	Westminster, Colorado	1986 – 90
Rev. Anthony Schultz	Watertown, Wisconsin	1990 – 92
Rev. Wayne Meier	Genesee Depot, Wisconsin	1992 – 96
Rev. David Cooper	Slinger, Wisconsin	1996 – 98
Rev. John Beck	Kenosha, Wisconsin	1998 – 2002
Rev. David Witte	Bartlett, Illinois	2002 –



## ADDENDUM B: LWMS MISSION OFFERINGS

*Below are listed the mission offerings given by the LWMS according to convention.*

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Tape Record Fund, Student Canvass Fund, Japanese Radio Fund	\$2,668
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Radio Mission	\$4,298
4 <sup>th</sup>	Radio Mission	\$5,795
5 <sup>th</sup>	Furnishing Fund/Radio Mission	\$7,295
6 <sup>th</sup>	Church Extension Fund / Radio Mission	\$7,647
7 <sup>th</sup>	Radio Research / Support for Pre-Ministerial Japanese Students	\$8,084
8 <sup>th</sup>	New Mission Equipment Fund / Taiwan	\$9,624
9 <sup>th</sup>	Canvas & Survey Fund / Seminary Student Aid for Africa	\$10,012
10 <sup>th</sup>	Radio and Taped Service Program / Latin America Radio Fund	\$13,052
11 <sup>th</sup>	Canvass & Survey Fund / Equipment for S. American Mission	\$14,937
12 <sup>th</sup>	Spanish Language Study Fund / World Seminary Conference	\$16,260
13 <sup>th</sup>	Home Mission Equipment Fund / Books for Missions Fund	\$18,350
14 <sup>th</sup>	Inner City Mission Fund / Libraries for Young National Pastors	\$19,600
15 <sup>th</sup>	Radio & Taped Services / World Seminary Exchange Program	\$22,442
16 <sup>th</sup>	Information Out-Reach Fund / Latin America Printing Equipment	\$24,523
17 <sup>th</sup>	Canvas & Survey Fund / Language Study Grant	\$28,057
18 <sup>th</sup>	Mass Media Ministry / World Mission Building Fund	\$29,399
19 <sup>th</sup>	Campus Ministry Aid Fund / World Mission Film Fund	\$33,942
20 <sup>th</sup>	Canvass & Survey Fund / Spanish Language Publication	\$32,328
21 <sup>st</sup>	Home Mission Equipment / Africa Assistance for Training	\$36,000
22 <sup>nd</sup>	Mass Media Ministry / Latin America Vicar Program	\$36,800
23 <sup>rd</sup>	Multi Cultural Mission Fund / The Brazil Development Fund	\$39,969
24 <sup>th</sup>	Home Mission Equipment Fund / Hong Kong Study Center	\$44,580
25 <sup>th</sup>	Canvass & Survey Fund / Latin America Vicar Program	\$40,714
26 <sup>th</sup>	Home Mission Outreach Fund / Hong Kong Study Center	\$49,250
27 <sup>th</sup>	Campus Ministry Project Fund / Japan Radio Broadcasts	\$43,821
28 <sup>th</sup>	Home Mission Info Outreach / World Mission Language Grants	\$49,859
29 <sup>th</sup>	Church Planters Workshops / Latin America Vicar Program	\$51,793
30 <sup>th</sup>	Home Mission Canvas & Survey / Missionary Family Retreats	\$47,895
31 <sup>st</sup>	Info & Outreach / Materials in Central Africa	\$47,364
32 <sup>nd</sup>	Multi-Cultural Mission / Japan & Malawi Printshops	\$54,164
33 <sup>rd</sup>	Canvass & Survey / Hong Kong Sha Tin Tutorial Center	\$56,471
34 <sup>th</sup>	Taped Services Fund / Nigeria Parsonages	\$49,373
35 <sup>th</sup>	Equipment Fund / Slavic Retreat	\$57,655
36 <sup>th</sup>	Vans for Cross Cultural Ministry / Latin America Wives Retreat	\$53,966
37 <sup>th</sup>	Hmong Ministry / Native America Sioux Vicar	\$59,601
38 <sup>th</sup>	Language Training / Publications for Latin America Spanish Bible	\$63,011
39 <sup>th</sup>	Musical Assistance for New Congregations / Christian Information Center in Puerto Rico	\$59,723
40 <sup>th</sup>	Vicars in Mission Settings / Adopt an Orphanage	\$56,108
41 <sup>st</sup>	Hispanic Outreach in Anchorage, AK / Apache Vicar Project	\$70,348
42 <sup>nd</sup>	Mormon Outreach Website / Apache Mentoring Program	\$59,162

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Portions of personal interviews were used for portions of the text. The following people contributed to the body of information: Ewart, Marilyn; Riege, Mary Jo; Taticek, Beth.