

Gumm, Alan W. Voices from the Prairie: Stories of God's Grace during the 75 years of the Dakota-Montana District

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE
STORIES OF GOD'S GRACE DURING
THE 75 YEARS OF THE DAKOTA-MONTANA DISTRICT

PRESENTED AT
IMMANUEL EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
ELGIN, NORTH DAKOTA

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BY
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GILLETTE, WYOMING

TO THE GLORY OF GOD
&
DEDICATED TO
THE PASTORS & THEIR FAMILIES OF
THE DAKOTA-MONTANA DISTRICT
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Grandma Gumm used to tell a story from her childhood of when her family would be coming home from church, her father would stop the horses, hand the reins to his wife, and then challenge his children to a footrace to their home about a quarter of a mile down the road. Great-grandpa John Frank would kick his legs so high when he ran that he would kick himself in the back of his thigh. Grandma said that he would always outrun his children even after he was in his 40's.

This is in an insignificant story, but what makes this story special is that that story was told by my grandmother. It was about my great-grandfather, whom I never met and my grandmother took part in that minor, historical family event. She lived it and her eyes sparkled when she told that story from a long time ago.

What does all this have to do with the 75th Anniversary of the Dakota-Montana District? Well, there are recorded histories that are statistical filled with dates and places, names and sterile accounts of historical events. And then there are recorded histories that are alive, personal, inciteful, and interesting because the history is related by those who lived it. In this paper you will have statistics, dates, places, names, and personal accounts of people and events from some of the people who lived the 75 years of God's grace in our beloved district.

Almost 30 people responded to the request for personal stories from their days in the service of our Lord in the Dakota-Montana District. You will hear their love for their Lord,

love for their members, and love for their district. You will see the sparkle in their eyes as they relate their stories. Some of the stories are amusing. Others are thought-provoking. These are the voices from the prairie.

PRE-DISTRICT YEARS

If I had a time machine, I would use it to go back in time to meet a missionary who, by the grace of God, did a tremendous amount of mission work. He did outreach work without any handbooks, programs, mass media promotions, or doorknob hangers. He brought the Gospel to people who desperately needed to hear it. He did it without complaint even though he would be gone from his family for six weeks at a time.

Since there is no such thing as a time machine except in the movies, I will have to wait until I reach heaven to meet the Rev. Christian Boettcher. He was a mighty proclaimer of the Gospel, even though he was a quiet man. He valiantly extended the Christian faith and the Lutheran Church.

Christian Boettcher came to Minnesota in 1878 to help the general missionary of the Minnesota Synod, Pastor J. Hunziker. Pastor Hunziker quickly realized the large mission field that laid before him and he requested help. Christian Boettcher was that help in Western Minnesota and the Dakota Territory.

Christian Boettcher lived in Marshall, MN for about a year and half. He moved to Minneota, MN, about 29 miles west of

Marshall because the Germans in Marshall were not interested in the Gospel and because the cost of living in Marshall was too expensive. He and his family homesteaded on 80 acres near Minneota, MN and the Minnesota Synod built the Boettchers a house.

Christian Boettcher served the Lord in Minnesota and in the Dakota Territory as far west as Redfield, SD. His field of labor covered an area that was 180 miles long and 100 miles wide. At one point in time he had 27 stations in Minnesota and 8 in the Dakota Territory. He covered his "circuit" once every six weeks with his horse and buggy. His travels were hindered in the wintertime. If he couldn't take his horse and buggy, then he would take the train. For the most part there were no roads, no fences, and inhabited homes were few and far between. Yet, Christian Boettcher didn't bemoan the fact that the work was demanding and that he was away from his family for a long time.

From mission board reports, Christian Boettcher had a rugged life. Once he traveled 150 miles with his "miserable conveyance," across bottomless roads, and without much feed for his faithful mission horse, he came to the James River near Redfield, SD, and brought the Word of God to the people before turning around and heading home. Once he traveled west and north of Watertown, SD, for 45 miles and only saw 3 houses. The Methodist ministers of the time were well-versed at stealing sheep from the Lutheran faith. This did not sit well with Pastor

Boettcher.

In 1885, Pastor Boettcher resigned from the ministry because of the workload and according to the mission board report, he closed his final report by saying that he was resigning because "My faithful horse has sore feet."

Some of the congregations that owe their birth to Pastor Boettcher are: St. Paul's, Argo Township, SD; Emmanuel in Grover, SD; Trinity of Hendricks, MN; St. Paul's in Henry, SD; St. John's in Rauville Township, SD; Our Savior's in South Shore, SD; St. Martin's in Watertown, SD; and Immanuel in Ward, SD. There were many more churches that he helped start.

Christian Boettcher was a faithful servant of the Lord. He accepted a Call to Omro, MN. Because of the tremendous amount of work, much of the Dakota Territory was turned over to the Missouri Synod.

In 1887, Pastor Johann Johl and Pastor R. Polzin assumed the mission work in the Dakota Territory. According to the 1970 Anniversary book these two men were involved with 12 congregations. Sometimes they even served a congregation twice.

These two pastors were followed by Pastors Luebbert, Lahme, and Volkert, when the field of missions was extended to Bowdle, SD. Pastor Lahme began at Bowdle and established a church at Theodore, SD, in 1888. He also did some outreach work in Hein, ND. (Zeeland)

Life for the early pastors of our district was not a bed of roses. Maybe tumble weed. It wasn't even sage brush. A

missionary living out in the middle of nowhere was forced to bury his own wife who had died very suddenly because there was no brother pastor to be found near enough to perform this service of love for the grieving pastor. Pastors were away from home for weeks at a time. The pastor's families lived in sod houses. Fuel was provided by cows who deposited "prairie pudding". This "pudding" was stomped down by a horse near the barn. It was then dried, cut and stacked. (And we complain when we have a fuzzy picture on our televisions.)

The German Russians who had come to the prairie could be difficult people to work with. At times they were somewhat pietistic. Once a missionary was conducting a worship service when he set his Bible down on the desk in front of him. As he was going on with the service he sat back on to the desk and sat on his Bible. After the service he was told that he did not have to return, because they did not want a pastor who would sit on the Word of God with his "behind."

It was tough for those early "Reisepredigern." Many couldn't put up with the hardships of the prairie, but many stuck to it, receiving strength from the Word of God and from the Lord of the Church. We can give thanks to God for these early, faithful pastors of our district, who have given us all an example to follow.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

There were many dangers to which the missionary, Pastor Julius Engel, was exposed on his long journeys. One evening he fell

asleep. The horses soon strayed from the road. Suddenly they were in a quandary. He was still dreaming perhaps of that warm meal at the house of a member. When the cradle-like buggy came to a halt, when the song of the rolling wheels died away and all the noises of the squeakish moving vehicle ceased, he awoke. He reached for the whip, reflected in haste, stepped out and sought to find the unexplained reason for delay. He was enveloped in total darkness. He had arrived at the brink of the Missouri River at a point where the city of Mobridge stands today. A few steps farther would have sent him plummeting into the rushing river, to certain death, horses and all. For without the help of God they all would have perished.

-Rev. Otto Engel, about his father

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We briefly touched upon the difficult work the pastor had to carry out. He spent many hours with his horse and buggy. He probably spent more time with them than with his wife and family. The pastor's wife often lived in a sod house, far away from family, in a land that was often less than hospitable. For the most part she had to raise the children by herself because her husband was riding his "circuit." Those early, pioneer, pastors' wives had to fend for themselves, and literally had to keep the home fires burning while her husband was proclaiming the Gospel. Often she worried about her husband's safety. Was he properly fed? Was he warm enough? Would the Indians harm him? Christian Boettcher did mission work out here only 2 years after Custer lost his life at Little Big Horn. We admire the early missionaries of our district. We should admire their wives and families more because of their sacrifices, faithfulness, and commitment to the Lord. The pastor had college and seminary classmates and schoolmates to visit with at conferences, but the pastors' wives sacrificed more. They

left family and friends behind only to try to make new friends in their mission area. And that didn't always happen. Someone once said, "The most difficult profession in the world is being a pastor's wife." That may not necessarily be true today, but it sure was in the early days of our district.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

It was into this sod house that Julius Engel brought his bride in August of 1894. When she got out of the wagon in which they had been riding and saw the sod house which was the parsonage and was to be her future home her husband said that she made a long face. He explained to her that these types of homes are in South Dakota a common thing. When they opened the door and she had a chance to view the inside, he says her face lit up again. For this is what she saw. Two rooms had wooded floors and were complete with finished walls and it even had a heavenly blue ceiling. There was a kitchen, dining room, and study all in one. The other room was used for teaching school. They lived in the sod house until the spring of 1895 when they moved into a parsonage at Mound City and Pastor Engel continued to serve the congregation at Hein from Mound City.

- Rev. Otto Engel, about his father

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The missionaries in the Dakota Territory took the Great Commission seriously. If there was a town or village, there should be a Lutheran Church there. Even if there were a couple of houses near each other, there was a place to hold services.

To find out what congregations had their start before our district was formed, please look at Pastor H. Birner's history. From my study there were about 48. The earliest was about 1880. From the Minnesota Synod mission board records there were many other congregations that were formed, but didn't exist too long. Many souls heard that Jesus Christ was their Lord and Savior.

Pastor Frank Wittfaut was another Christian Boettcher. He was the real pioneer in Montana after he had served at Flasher and Carson. According to the 1970 history of our district, Pastor Wittfaut had a hand in starting churches at Terry, Ismay, Olanda, DeGrand, Mildred, Crow Rock, Circle, and Wolf Point, MT and Elgin and Carson, SD.

In a letter Pastor Wittfaut wrote about one of his trips. He drove 600 miles in one month in a model T over almost uncharted territory. He went from ranch to farm to ranch to farm. He took all of his earthly possessions and survival provisions in the back seat. He baptized, married, buried, taught, and conducted services. The finest church he ever had was a country schoolhouse. The first church in Montana was built in Circle, after Pastor Wittfaut's death.

In 1906-1907, the Indian reservation west of the Missouri was opened to the public, or to anyone who was lucky in the lottery at Aberdeen. Two cattle companies leased the reservation. A fence which ran from the Little Cannonball River to the Grand River divided the reservation. The Indians picked their land first - a section of land for each husband and wife and a half section for each child. After the Indians chose their land then the lottery winners homesteaded on their choice of land.

The Milwaukee Railroad built a bridge across the Missouri River to extend its line to the West coast. The congregation at Evarts, SD moved to Mo. Bridge, later called Mobridge. The

town of Evarts moved too. Once the bridge was built the pioneer missionaries quickly went to the villages, towns, and cities west of the Missouri. The Gospel spread. At this time there were about 30 preaching stations which were served by 8 pastors. And that was just west of the Missouri.

The missionaries on the east side of the Missouri were also very busy. The Lord granted rich blessings to them and there was rapid growth in churches and in number of souls.

The zeal of the missionaries never ceased. The opportunities for sharing the Gospel were abundant. As time went on, the roads got better, cars were more reliable and more faithful missionaries came west. In less than 25 years of its existence, the District had by the grace of God been able to extend its borders from Sioux Falls to Rapid City to Linvingston to Bismarck to Valley City. Remember, many places were only preaching stations.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

Pastor Birner mentioned in his paper a Pastor Max Kowalsky. In the history of our District of 1970, this pastor's name was spelled Cowalsky. Any way, it's pronounced the same. Pastor Birner writes: "I mention Kowalsky because he was more of what the Germans called a 'Seelsorger,' a carer of souls. His name was Max. He never married. He started work in the area west and south-west of Mobridge and stayed till his death in the '30's. At one time or another he served nearly all the congregations there. In one report, the mission board rejoiced that he was a single man, who was satisfied to live with members in a single room so they would not have to provide a parsonage. Here was an unselfish man. In another report the district actually thought of starting a 'Fordfond' (Ford fund) so people like Kowalsky would not have to use horses. Kowalsky was mentioned, but he had to later buy his own Ford."

- Pastor Herb Birner, 1920-1969

WE BECAME A DISTRICT

In 1920, there were 32 pastors serving 82 places. Please remember that this was back in the "olden days" when travel was not easy, automobiles weren't reliable, and a pastor served multiple parishes many miles apart. Those early pastors were truly "Reisepredigern."

The Minnesota Synod had formed 4 districts. The 4th district was formed in Lemmon, SD, in 1912. It was thought then already that a separate synod be formed. In 1915, a constitution was written for the "Northwestern Lutheran Synod" and taken to meetings of the Minnesota Synod. In 1917 the Minnesota Synod amalgamated with the Wisconsin Synod. The Dakota-Montana District was formed in June, 1920, at Mankato, MN. Pastor W.F. Sauer was elected our first District President. Pastor J. Paul Scherf was elected 1st V.P. and Pastor Edward Birkholz was elected 2nd V.P. Pastor F.E. Traub was elected Secretary. I have Pastor Scherf's grandson in my congregation in Gillette.

- There were three reasons for the formation of our District:
1. "It would save the congregations and pastors traveling expenses & burdensome trips because conferences & Synod conventions would be held in its midst."
 2. "District officials, president & superintendent of missions would live in our midst, which could only be advantageous, because our district consisted almost exclusively of mission fields."
 3. "The pastors and missionaries would remain longer at their station for experience teaches that comparatively few pastors are called out of their districts." (1920 Synodical Report)

Forming a district of our own did not keep the pastors

in our district longer. There were reports that a pastor stayed at his church about a month. One pastor left because someone burned a cross in his front yard. Another man left after 18 months. A pastor's wife never unpacked the dishes because she was not going to live in the "middle of nowhere." Life was tough for the early pastors and their families.

Even in 1980, there was an attitude prevalent in our district that this district was a good place to be trained, "get your feet wet," and then move to bigger and "better" fields of service. In 1980, President Wayne Schulz wrote me a letter after I was ordained in which he said that many pastors come from the East and then soon want to return to the East. He asked me to give the prairie and the people a chance and not leave at the first Call.

There is only one pastor in Western Conference of our district who was in the Conference when I started in 1980. That's Pastor Paul Heiderich. Of all the pastors in the district now, only G. Blobaum, W. Rouse, G. Johnson, P. Heiderich, and T. Meyer are still active in the full time ministry and never left the district in 14 years. Pastors D. Neumann, D. Hayes, C. Lindeman and myself, were here in 1980, but then left the district and then came back. Pastor R. Weimer was here in 1980 and then retired. Pastor A. Schulz is semi-retired now, but was active in the full time ministry back in 1980.

There still is a certain turn over of men in our district, but there seems to be a desire to remain longer in our district.

There are some pastors who used to be in our district who would love to return. There is also a growing number of pastors who never served in our district, but who would love to come and serve the Lord in the wide-open spaces of the Dakota-Montana District. It's a good thing that the Lord is the final Authority of where and when His servants carry out His ministry.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"After the services, the pastor went for dinner, not where he was invited, but where he was told to go, to one of the sod houses which had been kalsomined every year with the favorite "Himmelblau" and white-washed outside. The homes were immaculately cleaned. They did not have the comforts and conveniences of our homes; the kitchen table, straight backed chairs, steel beds, no rugs, no rockers, no radios and of course, no phones; but their warm hospitality made up for any lack of conveniences. At the dinner table, only men were permitted and the pastor's wife when the pastor had to hurry to his next preaching place. The table was set with plates, knives, forks, spoons, and cups. The food served was a bowl of potatoes, a plate of roast pork with the hide and immense slices of bread, no butter and no jelly. When tea was served a slice of lemon was added. The bread had been kept in refrigeration between the feather beds, serving as a "bread box." The fuel used was the cow chips, prepared by the horses stomping on the manure near the barn, dried, cut in squares, and stacked. There were no outhouses which caused some problem before the church was dedicated. One member offered to build one and sell it to the congregation after the dedication. A meeting was held and an equal amount of cash, collected (after the second service) from each member, and the church and the outhouse paid for with cash at a total cost of \$2,100. The outhouse was not usable by noon."
- Pastor E.R. Gamm - 1917-1938 (Paradise Cong. History)

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1920-1930

The boys who went over to Europe in World War I were now home. Farming and raising cattle were the major livelihood of our new district. 32 pastors and 20 lay delegates met at

Grover, SD in 1922. A constitution was adopted. Between 1920 and 1922, four candidates from our Seminary and two from Springfield were received into our district. One of those young "whippersnappers" was Karl G. Sievert. Another was Walter T. Meier, who would later become district president. Herbert Lau came out here also. He would become district secretary.

Congregations that were formed in the 1920's are as follows: Glenham, SD, Clark, SD, Willow Lake, SD, Hazelton, ND, Tolstoy, SD, Gary, SD, Tappen, ND, Watauga, SD (Closed in 1983), Florence, SD, (Closed in 1960's), Ipswich, SD, (Joined CLC in 1958), Streeter, ND (Closed 1936), Winsor, ND (Closed 1950), Aurora, SD, (Was LC-MS, joined WELS, and went back to LC-MS in 1948), Faulkton, SD (joined CLC in 1958).

Our district's one Christian Day School in 1921, was at Elgin, ND. One of the members paid for the school. It was open only one year. The Synod didn't have enough funds to take over the school.

Eight Seminary graduates came to the district between 1922-1924. Five candidates came to the district between 1924-1926; 6 came between 1926-1928 and 4 came between 1928-1930.

In 1923 a young seminary student came to the Dakota-Montana District. Pastor Erich Penk served Faith and Dupree, SD. It so happens that he is the oldest WELS pastor and by God's grace he is still living in Oakdale, MN.

At the district convention in 1928, Pastor J. Paul Scherf was elected District President. He was quite an imaginative

businessman When he was pastor at Balaton, he sold pianos and tombstones. In Bowdle he opened a grocery store. He even served as banker to his Roscoe members when finances were tight in the 1930's. Pastor Scherf was the right man to lead the district during the 1930's.

NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN ACADEMY

The District Pastoral Conference met at Raymond, SD in 1927, and made an appeal to Synod for the Synod to open a prep school in our district. The Synod authorized the founding of an academy at its meeting in August of 1927. The District could select the site. The Synod elected the Board of Control for the Academy. Synod gave the district \$5,000 for the biennium.

Offers for land, buildings, and money came from various locations in our district. At a January 1928 meeting in Watertown, SD, offers were made from Bowdle, Elgin, Mobridge, and Roscoe. Out of 64 votes, Mobridge received 51.

The Academy began its first year in 1928 with 24 students. Professor K. G. Sievert was the school's first professor. An architect and the board chose the 28 acres overlooking the Missouri River.

The financial crash of 1929 affected the enrollment and the support of the Academy. The professors housed the girls. The District took a special offering and paid for 1/2 of a professor's house. Within a few years everybody was affected by the "Depression." Banks closed and professors and missionaries had their salaries reduced by 20% and then a few

months later the salaries were lowered by another 10%. The Lord withheld His blessing from the fields. Sweet clover and Russian thistles were fed to the cattle; and housewives canned the thistles as vegetables. Yet the Lord took care of His people. The entire enrollment at the Academy dropped to 12 students. It looked as if the Academy would be closed, but the "tree planted by the water" would continue to grow and flourish.

The 1920's saw prosperity in our district. Roads were improved and cars were more reliable. Preaching stations were closed because people could not come to church every Sunday. The District had the Academy. Everything looked great until 1929 and the "crash." The "Dirty Thirties" were here.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"I began my teaching call to the Academy in Mobridge at the end of the "Thirsty Thirties," in August of 1939. One piece of evidence of the dust storms was a fence somewhere between NLA and Main St. down town. We walked right over that fence; no problem. The wind-driven "Tumbling Tumbleweed" had piled up against the fence. The drifting sands then were blown into the tumbleweeds until they formed a solid mound as high as the fence. So - no gate to open; no detouring around the fence; just walk right up and over it. A dust storm joke: Who likes to do dishes? Certainly not a bachelor. So, instead of washing his cooking and eating utensils, a bachelor out here just held them up to the keyhole of an outside door and sand-blasted them clean."

-Pastor Henry G. Meyer - 1939-1954

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1930-1940

I've already mentioned how the "Depression" affected life at the Academy and how it affected the pastors and their families. Life was tough. Crops were non-existent. There was

no money. Mile producers poured their milk on the ground. Farmers shot their pigs and cattle and buried them in long trenches.

Mission work was still being done. President Scherf encouraged the district to keep on reaching out with the Gospel.

The congregations established in the 1930's are as follows: Circle, MT, Clear Lake, SD, Valley City, ND, Terry, MT, Hettinger, ND, Mandan, ND, Estelline, SD, and Bison, SD.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"After graduating from DMLC, NWC, teaching school for four years, and graduating from the Seminary in 1939, I was assigned to be tutor at NLA in Mobridge. Some previous tutors had had the privilege of living with their wives in the boys' dorm. But I, at the tender age of 31, was told: celibacy for you: it's our new policy. After finishing my year of tutoring I married Irene in August 1940 and promptly returned to NLA as a professor. Before we had our firstborn, my wife became the mother of 6 high school girls, who lived in three rooms upstairs by us at 716 7th Ave. West - in the Traub house (built by Prof. Traub) after we left in 1954, it was known as the Meyer house; after that it became the Nolte house. The girls from the Meyer dorm got their 3 meals a day in the Academy dining hall, a little more than 2 blocks away - in rain or snow, or sunshine or darkness of winter mornings. But when they were sick, "nurse" Irene Meyer would care for them and bring them their meals, reimbursed by the Academy at 15 cents each. The first year the girls had to use our bathroom for a bath, after that, a shower stall was installed in their toilet room upstairs. But, we had no automatic gas heater or electric hot water tank. Ours was an uninsulated 30 gal. tank with a coil running through the lignite-burning furnace. In addition there was a stove with a water-jacket to heat water for this 30 gal. tank. This stove I had to stoke constantly for the girl's weekly shower. In the end, when the number of our girls had grown to 10, we had to have a few take their bath on Friday and the rest on Saturday. Our privacy was restricted to my study, our bedroom, and part of our kitchen. The girls had to walk through our livingroom and dining room to get to the stairs leading up to their quarters. Our girls were good girls; hard-studying, cooperative, happy. Every spring before the end of the school year my wife and I enjoyed having a party with them at our home,

starting with dinner and ending with games. In spring of 1949 all this came to an end. Except for our two children, the "nest" was empty. The 10 had moved into the new girls' dorm. Fond memories."

- Pastor Henry G. Meyer - 1939-1954

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In 1934, the district minutes were written half in German and half in English. The 1936 Proceedings were written in English except for the mission report. Pastor Edgar Gamm became District President in 1934. In 1936, 20 Seminary graduates waited for Calls. Some would wait 3 years before getting a Call. In the decade of the '30's 26 seminary graduates and 2 men from other districts came to our district. One of those candidates was Pastor Wilbur Dorn.

In 1938, all of the convention proceedings were in English. That same year, Pastor Walter T. Meier became District President.

During the Depression years there wasn't a lot of movement out of our district but as soon as 1940 rolled around, pastors started moving out of the district again.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

In the fall farmers and gardeners from congregations surrounding Mobridge brought truckloads of surplus produce as well as some canned goods to the Academy. (In those days it was still legal to serve home-canned products for the Academy meals.) Such donations helped reduce the Academy's food budget. One year, when God abundantly blessed the pumpkin harvest, the Academy could not possibly use all the pumpkins given to its kitchen. So many of them were distributed to faculty families. My wife used all the different pumpkin recipes she could find (A pumpkin pie is good; but too much of a good thing...) Then she found a recipe for pumpkin ice cream. Um! Yum! (Oh, yeah?) My wife was thrifty and diligent and resourceful, doing all she could to use up our pumpkin supply. When she came up with a "batch" of pumpkin ice cream, (Have you ever tried some?!?!?), I was

not going to let her down. So "I ate the whole thing." Day after day I chipped away - sometimes disguising it with maple syrup or other cover-ups. All the pumpkins were used up. Three cheers for, and in memory of, an industrious, frugal woman. (She went to heaven 4/28/85) - And a Bronx cheer, or should I say: raspberries, for pumpkin ice cream.

-Pastor Henry Meyer - 1939-1954

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1940-1950

The 1940's were fabulous years for the people and the pastors of our district. God opened His hand of grace and rich blessings showered down. Literally showered down. It rained. The prairie was green, crops were bountiful, and lost farms were bought back and paid off. God was good.

Pastor Birner tells us in his history of the district that Missionaries in the early '40's were paid \$57.50-\$67.00 a month. In 1942 the Synod Mission Code was \$75.00 a month for a single man. He even received 3¢ a mile for one trip a week. A married man would have received \$1,200 a year. "A child was worth about \$3.50 extra a month." Later the car and child allowances were dropped. Pastors had no car insurance or health insurance. They opted out of Social Security and didn't pay income tax. Most doctors treated pastors and their families for free.

The huge debt that the Synod had was paid off. Pastor John Brenner was the Synod President. The Mission Board did not give out any money unless the money was in the Synod's coffers. World War II was in progress. Many of our district's young men fought for their country. Most came home alive. Many did not.

Pastor Birner stated that Clark Cable went with the wind to Clark, SD, to go pheasant hunting. I wonder how he did.

During the 1940's many young people moved to the bigger cities for well-paying jobs. The congregations gradually became smaller. Some things never change.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"Christian fellowshiping among pastors and teachers is important. One of the ways in which that need was met in the Dakotas was by having a "Singstunde." Once a month pastors with their families and teachers would converge on Mobridge. They came from a hundred miles around. Many would come in early afternoon, drop off their kids at Professor and Mrs. Schuetze's, Pastor and Mrs. Bast's, and Professor and Mrs. Meyer's homes, and then go shopping in the metropolis (population, 8,000) for things not available in their hamlets. For the evening meal they returned to these homes. They always brought along something for the meal. In the evening we went to the Academy and there sang (mostly in four part harmony) the sacred and secular music I had chosen and laid out for the "Singstunde." We concluded the evening by going to the dining room for a cup of coffee - to keep drivers awake on the way home. When these musical fellowship evenings were begun in about 1943, it was "donuts and coffee," of course, over the years the donuts became more fancy. That gave us more time to discuss and settle all the Synodical problems! O happy days of long ago!"

- Pastor Henry Meyer - 1939-1954

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In 1942, Marshall, MN, finally left the district and joined the Minnesota District. In the 1940's every preacher had a vacancy some place. From 1942-1944, seven men left the district. Vacancies were used to pay off the debts of the pastors. Again, some things never change. It was tough getting gasoline and tires because they were rationed during the War. In 1946, Pastor Paul Albrecht became the District President. 22 missionaries served 45 stations.

In 1948, 44 congregations were receiving Synod subsidy. Sixteen Seminary graduates were installed in our district. It was also reported that there was a shortage of pastors. Doesn't that sound familiar? The Lord took care of it then and He will tak care of it now.

Zion in Mobridge opened their Christian Day School in the 1940's.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"Ice Cube Hill" "Where is Ice Cube Hill? Let me tell you. During a vacancy at McIntosh, Watauga, and Morrystown, SD, I was to serve our congregations there one super-hot summer Sunday. Having left Mobridge about 7:45 a.m. we arrived in McIntosh (65 miles west) about 7:45 a.m. in time for the 8:00 a.m. service. (We seemingly made it in no time flat, that's because we had gone from Central Standard Time to Mountain Standard Time.) After church my car wouldn't start. A member offered to let us use his, which would have required transferring all the supplies my wife had taken along, especially for the kids; food, drink, toys, games. But just at that time another member brought a pail of water from a filling station across the street and poured it over the carburetor, thereby ending the vapor lock, and we were on our way. After church at Watauga, 10 miles further west, again: vapor lock. But my wife's provision came to the rescue. She had filled a gallon insulated jug with ice cubes and filled in the spaces with cold water - for drinking by the two of us and our two youngsters. But now some of it was used to cool down the car. At the end of the service at Morrystown (10 miles west of Watauga) I thought I could possibly force the vapor lock to disappear if I coasted the car down the hill on which the church stood, and, at a good coast, put the car in gear. But no! We had to apply more our precious cold water to the obstinate engine. When we got back to McIntosh, I made a couple shut-in calls. As before, after every stop: vapor lock. Fortunately, we could preserve our water supply by pumping and using well water. Now we were on our way home, 65 miles east. But we hadn't gone half that distance when, while driving: vapor lock, again and again! The air temperature was well over 100 degrees F., perhaps even over 110! What was it under the hood? In this barren land there were no trees, under which we could find shade from the torrid heat, and no farm yards where we could find relief and a fresh supply of water. We dared not slake our thirst with our water.

The car needed that. Though we had been using our coolant as sparingly as possible, the jug practically empty; there was no more water, only the remains of a once robust ice cube. We were approaching the last hill before dropping down into the Missouri River Valley. (This was along the old highway over the so-called wagon-bridge, which was torn down and the highway rerouted to higher ground when Oahe Lake was formed.) Again the car stalled. There went our last ice cube. I said that if we got over the hill and the car vapor locks again, I'll let it coast up on the other side of the bridge as far as it will go and then walk into town for help. We got home without further stalling. Ever after, in our family that first hill west of the river was known as Ice Cube Hill."

-Pastor Henry Meyer - 1939-1954

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The congregations that were organized in the 1940's were located in the following places: Sturgis, SD, Rapid City, SD, Isabel, SD, Linvingston, MT, Wolf Point, MT. New fields of endeavor would include Baker, Ekalaka, and White Sulphur Springs, MT.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"A young bachelor was installed in October of 1936 to be pastor of three congregations, one in ND and two in SD. Three years later, in October of 1939, he and I were married and I became a new bride in a new land. Having grown up in Wauwatosa, WI, where grass and flowers grow abundantly, my first spring in SD, I planted flowers, not realizing that clouds do float over, but rain rarely falls. Also greedy grasshoppers appear, eating everything in sight but the stones...and I'm not too sure about that. At one choir practice while chatting with the ladies (we did practice too) I mentioned that I had planted flower seeds along the side of the house. Every morning I'd walk out to see if the flowers had sprouted yet. This went on for several weeks. One gal at choir kept asking about the flowers and saw I was becoming discouraged. Then one fine morning I was surprised to see colorful flowers in full bloom...plastic flowers. We had a nice chuckle about it at choir practice. Actually, the seeds never did germinate due to lack of rain and water was too scarce to use for flowers. We had no well. There was only a town well. A tank of water on a horse-drawn wagon was brought up to the parsonage. There was a water pipe leading into the basement. Once on my down the basement stairs

to do wash, I happened to glance up at the pipe overhead and was shocked to see a great big, large, fat, huge, massive, gigantic and extremely vicious looking snake. Needless to say, I screamed. My husband came running. In his usual cheerful way, he laughed and explained, 'Oh, that's just a bullsnake. You don't have to worry about rattlesnakes in the basement when there is a bullsnake.' One Sunday, after a confirmation service, we had been invited to a confirmand's home for dinner. Arriving there at the same time as the family, we followed them into their home which was built like cave into the side of a hill. The first thing the mother did upon entering the home was chase out all the chickens. Then she proceeded to set the table and serve the dinner. With the sunlight shining through the glass windows in the door, we could clearly see the chicken feathers and the dust floating in the air, which could have, but did not, deter our appetites. The warm hospitality shown by these people greatly overshadowed the unusual conditions of the home. And that's one of the things I remember most: The warmth and kindness of the people. Although the people had very little and received food from the government because of the terrible drought years, yet they were uncomplaining and cheerful, generous and thankful for what they had."

- Mrs. Leah Hahm, wife of Pastor Benjamin R. Hahm who served his Lord and our district from 1936-1949.

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1950-1960

Our congregations lost members during the 1950's. Many grain farmers converted to raising cattle. Another reason for small growth in our congregations was due to the decrease in the number of children born in our congregations.

The lack of growth was the least of the district's problems in the 1950's. The major problem, which would change the course of history in our district, was the doctrinal struggle with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Volumes have been written about this controversy. In his history, Pastor Birner condensed it to seven pages. I hope to condense it even more.

It was a very difficult time for the pastors and members

of our district. Professor K.G. Sievert in his history wrote that our district was more affected by this controversy than any other district in the Synod. He wrote: "It seemed then, and I still think, that our District felt the brunt of this controversy, felt it much more than others. The officers of this district were involved on a personal basis in the opposition to the stand of the General Synod. This was not the case in the same degree in most of the other districts of the Synod."

How and when did this all start? The American Lutheran Church was formed around 1930. At that time the ALC invited LC-MS and the WELS to join them. Missouri drew up a statement about union which was called the "Brief Statement." It was firmly founded on God's Word, but the ALC thought it to be too strict and rigid. In 1938, the ALC wrote up their own document called the "Doctrinal Declaration," which was to compromise any differences between LC-MS and ALC. With their "Doctrinal Declaration" they denied the truth of Holy Scripture. WELS pointed that out to Missouri.

In 1941, LC-MS drew up another document called "Doctrinal Affirmation." They began to support scouting and agreed to commune ALC servicemen. Throughout all of this the WELS protested.

In 1950, LC-MS and ALC adopted "Common Confession." Missouri stuck to the document even though the WELS pointed out that there were words in it that could be taken two ways.

District President W. T. Meier began a study club in the

Eastern Conference in 1950 to study all of the documents mentioned above.

In 1952, the WELS delegates at the Synodical Conference meeting in St. Paul, MN. declared themselves in a "state of confession." These were just WELS delegates at the Synodical Conference. 1953, the WELS, at convention, approved the "state of confession" of the delegates from the Synodical Conference. Most of the "run of the mill" pastors and members were confused by all of this - who to fellowship with and who not to fellowship with.

In 1955, the Synod's doctrinal committee was ready to break with Missouri. They brought this recommendation to the Synod Convention at Saginaw. The Floor Committee brought two reports - a majority report and a minority report. The majority report requested that any break with Missouri wait until they had their convention in 1956. It was adopted 94 to 47. Pastor Birner, who was a delegate at that convention, felt that the pastors would have voted for the break in 1955, but he feels that the delegates felt their heartstrings yanked. The break with Missouri would divide families, friends, congregations, schools, and even our joint work at Bethesda. It was truly troubled times in our Synod and district.

At their 1956 convention Missouri withdrew "Common Confession" as a union document. They did not disavow it. Our doctrinal committee felt that LC-MS was coming to their senses and there was the hope that Missouri would go in the

right direction.

At the recessed Synod Convention those who felt that the WELS should have split with Missouri in 1955 protested the stand of the Synod. They felt that according to Romans 16:17 that if after a false doctrine was pointed out to a church body that a break should be made. The other side of the coin says that once a false doctrine has been pointed out, there still is time for admonition in the hope to eliminate the false doctrine. To this day, this interpretation of this doctrine and passage keeps us out of fellowship with the CLC.

The District met 2 weeks after the Synod Convention. The floor committee agreed with the District President, who called for a split with Missouri. After this special convention, every conference discussed the controversy and was dominated by those who wanted to split with Missouri. There was a rumor saying that the district president was filling call lists with men who agreed with his position to split with LC-MS. All other district business came to an almost dead stop - maybe a slow crawl.

At the 1957 Synod Convention, our District President Albrecht wanted our Synod to split with Missouri. The Eastern Conference memorialized the Synod to "declare the termination of fellowship with the LC-MS." It did not pass. President Albrecht spoke on the floor of the Convention and opposed the decision of the Synod. He said that he no longer could serve the Synod in any way. He said that he could not fellowship

with those who advocated continual admonition of the LC-MS. He could not fellowship who opposed him and supported the Synod.

As I said above, the vote to split did not pass. The vote was 61 to 77. Three men on the doctrinal committee resigned: Prof. Reim of the Sem and Rev. M.J. Witt, the Pacific NW President severed ties with the WELS. Pastor Albrecht, our president discontinued fellowship with those who still tried to lead Missouri back to the fold.

At one point in time there was discussion of forming our own Synod. NLA could serve as the new Synod's prep and college. Bowdle would be the location of the Seminary.

In the fall of 1957, the Eastern Conference had requested a special district convention. The convention was held at Aberdeen. President Albrecht was hoping that the district would join him in disavowing the course the Synod took. It didn't happen. The district voted to stand with the Synod. President Albrecht resigned from the presidency. His resignation was not accepted. He continued to be president.

The district praesidium met in Aberdeen in January of 1958. At this meeting 12 letters were read - 11 from pastors and 1 from laymen which protested the district's stand with the Synod. The letters asked for another district convention. February 11, 1958, a meeting was held at Bowdle. This meeting only split the district more. Semi-secret meetings were held to draw up plans to oppose the stand of the district and Synod. Unfortunately, the district president was behind many of these

secret meetings.

NLA hosted the 1958 district convention. This was the regular convention. Those who supported Pastor Albrecht sat on one side of the gym. The opposition sat on the other side of the gym. The district elected Pastor Walter Schumann, Jr., president.

At this district convention a Committee of Three and Three was elected to work out the problems, but they failed. That's what they reported at a special district convention on January 26-27, 1959.

I heard a story that a young pastor who entered the ministry in our district in 1952 was elected president at the district convention in 1958. He declined saying that he was too young and inexperienced to be president. About 30 years later he would become district president. I'm talking about Pastor Reginald Pope. I don't know if it is a true story, but, after knowing Pastor Pope for 25 years, I would not be surprised if it happened.

How did the split affect our district? Five congregations, seven pastors, and more than 800 communicants left the district. Pastor Schumann, Pastor Pope and Pastor Birner spent much time and energy to keep men in our Synod. We're glad they did. Pastor K.G. Sievert concluded this portion of his history by saying, "Now the air was cleaned and a new spirit took over in the life of the District."

In 1961, the WELS broke of all ties with Missouri Synod.

VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"On May 28, 1938, my bride and I arrived in Raymond, SD, and I was ordained and installed as Pastor of Bethlehem Ev. Lutheran Church. This was our home until January, 1945. Our first years in Raymond were typical of the dust and drought years of the James River Valley, but the people were wonderful. At that time there were about 12 young pastors and their wives in the area of Watertown. All of us were appreciative of having a Call and eager to work. Calls were rare in those days. Two of our class of 26 had Calls on Graduation Day. I taught school for year in Milwaukee before my Call to Raymond. Some really great friendships were made during those years. In January, 1945, we moved to Mobridge, SD, to serve Zion of Mobridge and St. Jacobi of Glenham. These were exciting and busy years with the Academy flourishing - the enrollment increasing and new buildings being added to the campus. During this time Zion opened its Christian Day School and shortly thereafter added a second room to accommodate the growing enrollment. During these years Zion also began to look to the future by beginning a building fund and purchasing a whole city block for future expansion. In November, 1954, we were given a peaceful release to accept the Call to Eastside Ev. Lutheran Church, Madison, Wisconsin."

- Pastor Karl G. Bast - 1938-1954

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The decade of the '50's saw lots of men leave the district and many candidates enter the district. The opening of new churches slowed considerably. The congregations that were opened in the 1950's are as follows: Good Shepherd, Sioux Falls, SD, Aberdeen, SD, Bethlehem, Watertown, SD, Melstone, MT, Winnett, MT, and Lavina, MT. A couple of other churches were started in the 1950's. Faith in Billings organized in 1954, and then amalgamated with a LC-MS church that joined the WELS. Trinity in Ekalaka was organized in 1956 but closed between 1986-1988. Messiah in Glendive organized in 1958, but closed in August of 1980.

VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"For Want of a Compass A Trail Was Lost:" "I had persuaded the Montana contingent of the Dakota-Montana District Pastoral Conference how important it was to begin our homeward trip to the land of the shining mountains as soon as possible. As usual, the Fall Pastoral Conference had been most enjoyable, but this one also had caused me to miss the first two days of the big game season, and I was determined not to miss another. So the long trip began. After hours of night driving I remembered hearing of a 40 miles short cut. This involved getting off the main highway and driving winding dirt prairie roads and trails which had very few markings. After about 15 minutes of driving we came to a tiny settlement. We all noticed a light colored care parked at the fence surrounding a white house. Civilization! Soon the winding trail led us to a familiar looking sight - a light colored car parked at the fence surrounding a white house. Undaunted and determined not to make the same mistake twice we continued our prairie driving. It was getting near dawn now and the sun was beginning to rise - but in the West? The moral is that if you want to drive the unfamiliar winding trails across Montana prairie at night you better have a compass."

- Pastor Alfred Walther - 1945-1952

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1960-1970

One of the benefits of the controversy with LC-MS is that it caused our men and even our lay people to study the doctrines of God's Word. I don't know of any other period in the history of our district when such mega-studying of God's Word took place. It allowed, maybe forced, the pastors to teach God's Word with more clarity and sensitivity. When it comes to teaching and preaching the different doctrines of God's Word we should never take anything for granted.

From 1958-1960, there were 30 changes in pastoral positions in our district. We started work in Canada. But that wasn't the first time the WELS tried to spread the Gospel in Canada. The Synod sent Pastor F. Bredlow into Alberta in the 1890's.

But it didn't work out and he joined the Manitoba Synod which later joined the Lutheran Church of America.

Our district has always been classified as "conservative." We still are, by the grace of God. Just like every individual, our district needs a conscience. In 1962, "evangelism" was introduced to our district, even though we had been doing it since the 1870's. Needless to say, it didn't find a warm reception in our district.

We always had an agreement with Missouri that we would never enter a town where there was a Missouri Synod church. After the break with Missouri, we didn't have to stick to that agreement. The district mission board had the goal to enter and do work in the larger cities and towns. The mission board passed a rule that said that no church would be built unless there were 50 communicants.

In 1966, at the convention, a new district president was elected because Pastor Schumann took a Call to Trinity in Watertown, WI. Many of us had the opportunity to hear him preach while we were at Northwestern. The new District President was Rev. A.P.C. Kell. Someone once told me that A.P.C. mean "Always Preach Christ." And Pastor Kell did. You will hear more about him as we go on.

In the 1964-1965 biennium, we started work in Calgary, Canada. But that didn't last long. We would have to go to Calgary later and try again. We also did work in St. Albert, Alberta, Canada. We had problems there also. We also entered

Wetaskiwin. We still have a congregation there.

In 1967, the student work begun in Brookings, SD, would develop into a congregation.

Fifteen candidates came to our district from 1962-1968. One of them was Pastor Wayne Schulz, whom you will hear more about later on.

Evangelizing the unchurched, as I said, was always here, but it took on a new form in 1970, or maybe a little earlier. The district started out gathering displaced German Lutheran into congregations and then later other Lutherans. Now the District was reaching out with Gospel to those who had never heard about Jesus.

Pastor Schumann summed up the decade of the '60's with his President's report of 1964. Granted it was in the middle of the decade, but he said applied to all of the decade. He wrote:

Once again we are happy to report that the work of our District has progressed in the last biennium under the blessing and guidance of the Lord. After the unsettling events of recent years our pastors and congregations are zealously dedicating themselves to the task which the Lord of the harvest has set before them. In the biennium considerably fewer pastors than usual have accepted calls into other districts of the Synod. This has had a salutary effect on our congregations and district life. Our mission growth is again proving the truthfulness of the Lord's promise that His Word shall not return unto Him void. Our people are evidencing a growth in sanctification particularly evident in the realm of stewardship. Our Academy continues to serve us and our Synod well. It was a good biennium and one for which we are truly grateful to the Lord.

It was a good decade and one for which we are truly grateful to the Lord.

VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"I was installed and ordained (after teaching school a year in Fond du Lac) near the end of June, 1944, by Prof. K.G. Sievert, and served from then until November 1948, at Morrystown, Watauga, and McIntosh, SD, and a preaching station at Miner, ND. We lived at Morrystown after our marriage November 4, 1944. Yes, our golden anniversary is upcoming this fall. Looking back on them, those were really great years with wonderful people and little pressure. After that I served 13½ years at Oakfield, WI, and for 31 or so years here at Grace in Oshkosh until my retirement. We loved the people out there and I declined several calls to the Eastern Conference and also the first call to establish a mission congregation in Livingston, MT, just before coming back to Wisconsin. One representative anecdote I could share: I married a couple at Morrystown and they came to Wisconsin on their honeymoon. Having been partial to our home state we wondered how they would enjoy the trees and lakes and greenery here as compared to the treeless plains of the Dakotas. But we got the putdown of our lives when we asked them. Groom Robert Bubbers (who died earlier this year) said this: "When we crossed the state line from Minnesota into South Dakota, I turned to my wife and said: 'Now we're back in civilization!'"

- Pastor Clarence Koepsell - 1944-1948

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The congregations that were organized in the 1960's are as follows: Bismarck, ND, Great Falls, MT, Moorhead, MN, St. Peter in St. Albert, Alberta, Canada, Wetaskiwin, Canada, Spearfish, SD, South Shore, SD, Billings, MT, Brookings, SD.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"The one service I missed was Easter Sunday afternoon, 1941, at Date. It rained a lot that morning. After church at Bison I was invited to dinner at Harry Larson's. After dinner I headed west on a gumbo trail that would take me to the Bixby grade and south to Date. Enroute the gumbo made it impossible to move on. In my Sunday clothes I had to jack up the hind wheels to put on chains in order to proceed in the mud. It was 4:00 p.m. by the time I got to the grade and instead of going South I headed North for home. (Church was to be at 2:00 p.m.) A memorable afternoon. Roy Reede, my successor, never made it to Date for months the following winter, snow and more snow. The weather was usually pretty nice, children playing marbles outside in January. By the way, when I got back to Bison that Easter afternoon I got the chains removed, changed clothes and drove to Hettinger to see the lady who later became my wife.

What a day! In May, 1942, I was installed in Hazelton. I served there until Thanksgiving 1949. These were perhaps the most enjoyable years of my ministry. The war years had its effect on many things. There was increased activity in the community, and in the church. Crops were good, as was also the economy. In our small church it got to where we were having three services on Sunday morning, two English and one German. Instead of German attendance getting less, we were having as high as 50 per Sunday. Later in the new church we would see as many as 250 in a special service, - average of 175. In those years we were having as many as 25 baptisms and 15 confirmations per year. Getting the new church built is a whole story in itself. Materials were hard to get. We got to go shopping in a 200 miles radius. Many things came from back in Wisconsin. We started early in 1946 and dedicated on December 7, 1947, a very memorable day. The Hazelton congregation grew in those years from a mission with 60 communicants, paying \$25.00 per month towards salary, to a self-sustaining congregation with over 230 communicants. St. Paul's, Hazelton, was a pleasure to serve. So why did I leave and take a \$50.00 a month cut in salary to go back to the missions? The only answer I can think of is that at that time at my age one accepts other opportunities to serve in the kingdom."

- Pastor G.J. Ehlert - 1940-1949

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P.P.F.A.

The year was 1962. (Maybe) Pastors Werner, R. Zimmerman, D. Zietlow, K. Lenz, and maybe C. Spaude, R. Strobel, and N. Meier, and there may have been others, went fishing in the pristine mountains of Montana. To locate the best stream for the best fishing, they hiked a long time. They crossed a mountain. And there, right before their eyes was the stream of their dreams. God's creation was truly spectacular! They discarded their coats and unneeded equipment. God filled their creels. But then the fun and frolic came to an end - abruptly! A game warden quickly pointed their attention to a sign that said: "No fishing! Yellowstone National Park." He then made the statement: "Only dumb preachers wouldn't be able to read the

sign." You see, the sign had been hidden by their coats. Fines were not levied. Fish were not taken. There was no jail time served. But Poaching Pastors Fishing Association was born. This story has come to me by way of a nameless, reliable source. If it isn't true, so what. If it is true, then great! If it is partially true, then it is a legend.

Over the years certain men have received a special mantle (not Mickey, but maybe Coleman) and have served as Guide Supremes for the austere Association. Having been part of this I recall names of great Guide Supremes. Men who proved their tracking skills in finding big fish, cool drink, and good food. There was D. Neumann, J. Engel, B. Leersen, M. Lindloff, R. Froehlich, G. Blobaum, and D. Biebert.

Over the years great campfires heard great stories of Elk hunts, long walks, bearbells, bear sightings, Michael Keaton, guns, knives, B.B.Q. skewers, and special songs. One such song is printed in the Appendix of this paper. There have been men who have driven thousands of miles to be with fellow brothers in the ministry. Everyone is greeted with a warm handshake and farewells are quiet occasions. Only the Lord knows if we will each other again on this earth.

PPFA is more than fishing and not washing for four days. It's therapeutic. To see deer, elk, moose, and eagles among the lodgepole pine and mountains and to fall asleep to the babble of the Boulder River is what the tired soul needs. For five

years I drove from Wisconsin, a round trip of 2,800 miles to enjoy the therapy of the mountains and the warm fellowship.

I want to thank the "early" pioneers and founders of PPFA. They have handed down to us a wonderful tradition. Since 1962 to the present, by God's grace, no one has ever been seriously injured. There were some close calls, but God is always good. To my knowledge, we are the only district in the Synod that has such a tradition. To God be the glory!

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"On the first or second annual PPFA we left Billings and headed for a fabulous lake up in the mountains near Red Lodge, MT, that Norb Meier of Billings had heard about. In our jeep were: Meier, driver, Rollie Zimmerman of eastern SD (Goodwin?) or Bismarck ND, Dick Strobel of Mandan (?) and yours truly. Our "good" (according to Meier) mountain road turned out to be the road around Jericho as the walls came down - nothing but rocks and boulders. Bumpy? I don't think the bones in my body ever got such a good loosening up before. But the shaking up wasn't the worst of it all. The jeep had an angle iron frame supporting the cab overhead. The back seat occupied by Strobel and yours truly was very shallow because it sat high over the gas tank and rear springs (I really don't think the blasted jeep had any springs!). So, naturally, Strobel and I also sat high - and close to that overhead angle iron support network. Whenever Meier couldn't avoid the boulders (or so he said), the poor little jeep went up with a groan and came down with a painful cry punctuated with "curses" emanating from the two backseat riders. The pain came not so much from their bruised posteriors (and they were bruised sore and good!), but from the two to three inch lacerations on their scalps inflicted by the angle irons. After about the fourth attempt at our craniotomy, Strobel and I begged Meier to stop at a nearby stream so we could wash the blood out of our eyes that we might continue enjoying the peaceful beauty and verdor of this quiet mountain road. Nary a fish was caught up in them thar mountains but we drank a lot of - well fresh air. Also, upon arrival home, both Strobel and yours truly had some explaining to do that we might be able to make the next PPFA."

- Pastor Cyril Spaude - 1954-1966

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1970-1980

Since I am now getting into "uncharted waters", so to speak, since a history of our district from 1970 to the present has not been written I would like to briefly discuss what God's grace gave to our district by biennium.

1968-1970

These were tumultuous and rebellious years in our country. Our country was entangled in the Vietnam War. Riots ruled the streets. Drugs dragged many of our young people into unholy living. There was Woodstock, "acid rock," long hair, short skirts, bra and draft card burnings, flower power, the peace sign, psychedelic graffiti, and drugs and much unrest in our country. The men returning from 'Nam were unwelcomed and called "baby killers." Every position of authority was challenged. We walked on the moon. Communes were set up and "free love" was encouraged among our young people. There were daily news reports from Vietnam flashing the destruction and carnage across our television screens. Draft dodgers fled to Canada and some those "artful dodgers" enrolled at Northwestern College to avoid the draft. God knew that they were there for the wrong reasons. He kept them out of the ministry.

It was a time of unrest and rebellion. Being on the prairie of our district kept all of this social unrest from our youth for a while. But it did reach our wide-open skies and our "amber waves of grain." The only mention that there were social problems is in President Kell's report. He alluded to national

unrest when he wrote: "There have, of course, been many other blessings. Only since our last Convention in 1968 have the incidental blessings which we enjoy here in the form of Lebensraum and fresh air have been brought forcefully to our attention by the news media of the country."

It was a time of unrest in our country, but it was a time of celebration in our district. In 1970, the district praised God for 50 years of grace. Rev. W. F. Sprengeler preached the sermon of the 1970 convention opening service. He was there when our district was born. Professor K.G. Sievert wrote a history of our district entitled "Preaching The Gospel On The Dakota-Montana Prairies."

In his report, Pastor Kell used John 15:16 as the basis for his report. He wrote: "The important thing is that we continue to preach the Gospel for the salvation and nourishment of our souls, and that we do so humbly, but faithfully, always remembering, 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.'"

Faith and Lamb of God in Billings merged to form a new congregation - Apostles. Trinity at Sturgis and Hope at Spearfish formed a dual parish. First at Winnett, Faith at Melstone, and Holy Trinity at Lavina formed a tri-parish.

The Mission Board reported 29 congregations served by 16 missionaries and 1 vicar. There was 1 vacancy. The 29 congregations had 1,445 communicants and 2,434 souls. Yankton,

SD; Minot, ND; Bozeman, MT; and Barrhead, Alberta, Canada were exploratory. 50-75 people were attending the services at Barrhead.

What I found amazing was the number of WELS students at some of the colleges in our district. There were 27 WELS students at Rapid City; 30 at Spearfish; 32 at Vermillion; 60 at Aberdeen; and 100 at Brookings.

The Mission Board was seriously looking at Mitchell and Huron, SD; Grand Forks, ND; Missoula, Butte, Helena and Kalispell, MT; Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Regina, and Winnepeg, Canada.

The Evangelism Committee reported that the first evangelism workshops in the district were held in 1969-1970. There would be a Synod-wide evangelism effort (program) in 1971. The Committee formed a district evangelism library. Each pastor in the district would receive the material presented at the 1970 Mission Fair at the Sem. The Committee also encouraged pastors to use the Synod's Soul Conservation Commission by sending names of military personnel and college students to them.

1968-1970 biennium saw 14 candidates ordained. Two of them were Joel Frank - Nebraska District President and our Dennis Hayes. Five other pastors transferred into the district. There were 2 colloquies, 1 resignation, and 1 retirement. Eleven pastors left the district. The convention was held at the Academy and Pastor Kell was re-elected District President.

VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"We were the second class to graduate from our Seminary in the year of our Lord 1945. The graduation date was December 13, 1945. I was assigned to serve as a tutor at our Academy in Mobridge. The assignment included teaching Algebra I & II, Geometry, Religion, serve as coach and as tutor in the boys and girls dormitory, (same building) all for \$75.00 per month. By the grace of God and the help of Prof. K.G. Sievert the students and I made it through a year and half of Algebra and Geometry. In 1989 my wife Ruth and I attended the LWMS Convention in Bismarck. To our great surprise many of my former students were also present and these ladies introduced their children to us. This proved to be a most enjoyable experience for us. My years at the Academy were good years. The faculty consisted of three professors and two tutors. From January to June, Henry Paustian and I were the tutors. The following year I worked with Leonard Bernthal. In those days the farmers were still able to donate produce to the Academy. Beets were plentiful. Mrs. Burk, our cook, served them in 97 different ways. One weekend while at the Academy I preached for Walter (Boots) Schumann who lived at Lemon but served a total of four parishes. This was in the fall of the year. He had arrived in the summer. In the course of our conversation I asked him how many members he had in his four congregations. His response was: "I won't know until the spring thaw." We did have the opportunity to preach especially at Mission Festivals from time to time. The dinners the members served were outstanding. The tables were literally covered with food and I still recall that there was no less than four different kinds of meat to satisfy one's hunger. The members had a high regard for the office of the Ministry and their life centered around the activities of their church. South Dakota was a great training ground for my 43 years in the ministry. I'm thankful I had the opportunity to serve in the Lord's Kingdom of Grace in the Dakotas from January 1946 to June 1947."

- Pastor Edward C. Renz - 1946-1947

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1970-1972

As the District met in convention at the Academy in Mobridge, June of 1972, there were torrential rains and sudden flooding at Rapid City. News reports stated that hundreds would lose their life and destruction of property could reach one hundred million dollars. Pastor Kell mentioned that in his report and then he asked, "How many more biennial conventions lie in the future for us?" Of course, only God knows the answer,

but signs of the times point out that the end is near.

Pastor Kell used II Corinthians 4:5 as the theme for his report. "Nor do we preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." He reminded the delegates, and especially the pastors of the district of why they were there and what their calling in life was all about. What Pastor Kell said 22 years ago hold true today. May we take them to heart. He said, "We are to remember, 'We do not preach ourselves.' For we certainly are not to proclaim our own ideas and ideals or our own opinions and convictions and then perhaps proceed to rationalize and defend them and pass them off as the very essence of Christianity. No, we have but one call and that is to proclaim Christ Jesus the Lord."

During the biennium many congregations joined together to form new congregations or parishes. St. Paul's of Argo Township, SD closed and joined Our Savior's of Brookings. Good Shepherd at Presserville Township in Montana moved to Wolf Point. Eight families of Good Shepherd in Sioux Falls, SD were granted a peaceful release to form a new congregation in Sioux Falls. St. Paul's was formed in December of 1971. Good Shepherd in Wolf Point and Salem in Circle formed a dual parish. First in Gary and Trinity in Hendricks, MN did the same. Bethlehem in Watertown and St. John's of Rauville Township became a dual parish. Christ of Morrystown; St. Paul's of McIntosh, Bethlehem of Watauga and St. John's of Paradise formed a 4 star parish. Immanuel of Elgin, Zion of Burt, Trinity of Carson and St. Luke's

of Leith also became a 4 star parish. St. Matthews of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada was suspended from fellowship because of false teaching of the Scriptural truths of Fellowship, Unionism, and the Public Ministry. This took place April 15, 1971.

There were 6 ordinations in this biennium. Robert Weimer and Carl Lindemann were two of them. Four pastors transferred into our district. There was 1 colloquy, 2 resignations and 2 retirements. Professor K.G. Sievert retired after 50 years in the ministry on June 3, 1971. He had spent 43 years at the Academy. Rev. Sprengeler departed this life and entered eternal life on April 2, 1971. Seven men left the district.

The Mission Board reported that there were 26 mission congregations and 1 exploratory field. 16 missionaries cared for 2,086 souls, 1,349 communicants. The congregation at Pierre finally was given a name - Redeemer. Barrhead, Alberta, Canada disappeared from the Mission Board report. Pastor Gilbert Bunde from Willow Lake, SD, was doing exploratory work in Huron, SD.

Some familiar words were written in the District Mission Report in 1972. "Because of a backlog of requests and shortage of funds exploratory work has been reduced in all areas of the United States. Approval of the GBHM is now necessary before trial services can begin. The normal period for such services is 6 months with approval necessary for all extensions."

There were 116 WELS students at Brookings in 1972. The Lutheran Collegians at Brookings canvassed several areas for the District Mission Board. The Board was awaiting guidelines

from the Synod's student services committee.

The District Stewardship Board was in the process of studying stewardship policies, objectives and guidelines in connection with a directive from the Synod Stewardship Board, which was reorganized at the 1971 Synod Convention. Pastor James P. Schaefer, the Synod Stewardship Counselor, came out and explained the new stewardship program for the fall of 1972.

It seems that in the early '70's programs for congregations were being drawn up. Stewardship programs were entitled "Love Cares" and "Walk Together." Pastor Norm Berg even wrote an essay for the "Stewardship Handbook." "Lending to the Lord" program encouraged members to lend to the Synod for Kingdom work. The Synod's Evangelism Board was also drawing up programs for congregational use. Each congregation was encouraged to form an Evangelism Committee.

Twenty-four district congregations conducted religious surveys. 4 children and 6 adults were baptized; 4 adults confirmed; 14 families and 5 adults were in BIC; there were 250 prospects. Even with these blessings from our Lord, there were still congregations who refuse to have an organized Evangelism program in their congregations.

In the fall of 1971, the Academy had the largest enrollment in its history up to this time. There were 121 students. At the time of the Convention 115 students had enrolled at the Academy. A new president's house, garage, football field, and landscaping were accomplished.

Our district memorialized Synod to stop supporting Bethesda and provide a "home" to care for the exceptional children of the WELS.

Pastor Kell was re-elected President. Pastor Richard Strobel and Pastor David Krenke were the Vice-Presidents and Pastor John Engel was elected Secretary.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

Pastor Roy Reede was a native of Bowdle, SD. His first parish was Bison, Date, and Athboy where he was ordained in 1942. We were married in 1945. He also served 3 vacancies for several months at Lemmon, Hettinger and Reeder. I remember we would go to those 3 congregations ever other Sunday. The Lord blessed us in many ways there. In 1947, he accepted the Call to Zion in Hidewood and St. Paul's in Argo - both congregations were north of Brookings. In 1953 he accepted a Call to Gary, SD. He served there until 1956 when he accepted a Call to Wausau, WI. He retired in 1983 and passed away to his heavenly home in December of 1988. We used to attend the Ixonia fellowship when we lived at Madison and it was a joy to hear of the many blessings of God."

- From Mrs. Roy Reede, wife of Pastor Roy Reede - 1942-1956

"My husband, Kurt Eggert, was assigned to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Valley City, ND. We were married in June and bought some secondhand furniture in Watertown, WI, packed up our wedding gifts and traveled to our new place. We arrived before our moving van and so stayed a couple of days with some members by the name Kienitz, very warm and helpful people....I remember the installation service. We got to the little white frame church and there was no organist, also no chair to place in the center of the aisle for the pastor-to-be to sit in for the service. So the president of the congregation ran across the street to his house and brought one of his living room chairs and set it down facing the congregation. Well, my husband politely turned it around and then waited and waited for the organist to arrive. She never did, so the service started with my husband at the organ (a pump organ located in the front) and then alternating from his chair to the organ and back again. We laughed about it later... The time my husband was pastor at Valley City was from August 1948-March of 1950. He had received several calls and after the second time he left to become pastor at Farmington, Wisconsin. The pastors out there had a monthly "winkel" and the wives came along to visit and

enjoyed a potluck meal. Pastor G. Ehlert, Loren Schaller, Otto Heier, Henry Lange, Kurt Eggert were in the group. Some of them traveled 60-90 miles for the get-together. I believe that the first area Reformation Rally was held in 1949. As you probably know, my husband, who was the project director for the new/revised WELS hymnal was called to eternal life June 22, 1993."

-Mrs. Ruth Eggert, wife of Pastor Kurt Eggert-
1948-1950

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1972-1974

The 27th Biennial Convention of our District was held at the Academy at Mobridge, June 18-20, 1974. This was the WELS' 125th Anniversary. Pastor Kell used Ephesians 5:20 as his theme for his report. "Giving thanks always for all things....unto God and Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." He encouraged the delegates to "give thanks always for all things as a church."

As a district of the WELS we have much to thank our God for and Pastor Kell briefly lists how God richly blessed our district from its earliest days to the early seventies. He lists many of the preaching stations that once existed in the district but were no more. Pastor Kell also pointed out the great blessings God gave to our district through the Academy. The 1973 enrollment at the Academy was 131. An all-time high! He noted that the Academy was now receiving more support from the district. It seemed at the time that more pastors were staying in the district.

From reading Pastor Kell's report of the biennium I got the impression that there was some serious discussion then

already about closing the Academy. Unfortunately, five years later the Academy would close.

This was a very quiet biennium in our district. Seven men began their ministry in our district. Pastor Paul Heiderich was one of them. He has always had a close relationship with his car or whatever he drives. His first Call consisted of McIntosh, Morristown, Watauga, and Paradise. He has always had more than one congregation to serve.

Four men entered our district. There was 1 colloquy and 1 teacher resigned. Ten men left the district. Many pastors from the district moved to other congregations within the district. For the first time congregations did not amalgamate (there that word is again) or form large parishes.

The old dormitory was torn down at Northwestern College in 1973. Northwestern Prep had its own separate faculty and president in 1974. Professors L. Umnus and R. Sievert retired at Northwestern. Prof. Victor Voecks passed away in New Ulm. He taught at DMLC for 43 years.

Ten new Christian Day Schools opened in our Synod. Two school closed. 26,507 students were in our Christian Day Schools in the WELS. There were 9 area Lutheran High Schools.

A new lectionary was drawn up by the Synod's Commission on Worship and the floor committee at Convention encouraged that this lectionary be studied at conferences.

Mission work in the district progressed steadily. June 9, 1974, 27 people attended the first exploratory service at

Mitchell, SD. Pastor John Engel and family moved to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, to begin exploratory work there. He is our District Missionary.

Mission Board Chairman, Pastor Wayne Schulz said that there were 23 mission congregations and two preaching stations. 15 pastors cared for 2,119 souls and 1,304 communicants. By the way, those 1,304 communicants gave \$197,488 in offerings in 1973.

The stewardship program was entitled "In Joyful Response." "Lending To The Lord" showed total loans of \$3,745,249.39 as of March 31, 1974.

There were two major Evangelism developments. "Talk About The Savior" was introduced. It is a Law/Gospel presentation. The second development "was the decision of the Executive Committee of the Synod's Commission On Evangelism to seek a Coordinator of Evangelism." (Another Administrator!?!)

Here's an interesting note: "The 1973 Synod Convention authorized the Academy to draw up a master plan for its facilities, envisioning an ultimate on-campus enrollment of 200 students."

A quiet biennium ended. The District Praesidium remained the same after elections. Yes, it was a quiet biennium, but soon things would change.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"I was ordained and installed at St. John's, Altamont, SD on Sunday, June 29th, 1947 by the sainted Pastor Adelbert Hellmann who at that time was serving as vacancy pastor. That same morn-

ing I was also installed as the pastor of Trinity in Clear Lake, SD by the sainted Pastor Willian Lange who was serving Trinity as their vacancy pastor. In November '51 I received a call to serve Mount Zion in Kenosha, Wisconsin...which I accepted. I believe I held my final services at the two parishes in your district in and around the middle of December '51. I know we moved into the Kenosha parsonage on December 20th."

- Pastor Friedel C. Schulz - 1947-1951

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"Regarding my years of service in the Dakota-Montana District. I began my service in July 1941 at Timber Lake and Isabel. By the time I left in November 1943 two more places were added, Trial City and Athboy. What had happened was that the ALC pulled out of the West River country and abandoned three congregations that came to us: Isabel, which merged with our group there, Trail City which merged with a group we had there and which I had begun to serve several months after I arrived and Athboy, a congregation that met 30 miles west of Isabel in a schoolhouse. My second stay in Dakota was from January 1948 to July 1956 as professor at the Academy at Mobridge. During those years I preached in many of the western churches, often also serving as vacancy pastor. On one occasion when I was preaching at Flasher and Carson, ND, I left early on Sunday morning with the sun shining and a comfortable April day. When I arrived at Flasher it started snowing. By the time I had preached at Carson it was beginning to become a blizzard with heavy wet snow. I had a carful of students from the area who were returning with me from their weekend at home. We came through Rawley, ND, put on chains so that we'd be sure to make it. But only two miles further south we drove into such a heavy bank of wet snow so that we couldn't move forward or backward. Fortunately a man from Rawley had driven out to help another car. He had a jeep which with its four-wheel drive could still get through. He piled us all into his vehicle, took us to his home, where we had to stay until Wednesday before we could get back to Mobridge. That's the only time I lived in my clothes without changing for three days and my chin sported three-day's worth of stubble. The students didn't mind the three-day vacation. Since the regular telephone lines were down I had to notify my wife via the railroad telephone lines that I wouldn't be home. The railroad agent in Rawley called the agent in Mobridge who relayed the message to my wife."

-Pastor Armin Schuetze - 1941-1943, 1948-1956

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1974-1976

The writing on the wall was becoming more clear. NLA was

in trouble. In his report NLA President Daniel Malchow gave some disheartening news.

The Synod did give permission for NLA to look at remodeling and fixing up the campus to house 200 students, but the Synod would not have the money to do the necessary work. The CHE stated that the Educational Institutional Building Fund projected a deficit, so there would be no money for improvements. The hope was that the district congregations would contribute more to the Academy. From April 1, 1975-March 31, 1976, the school received \$8,789.49 from the district. There was a plea for more money.

NLA President Malchow reported that August of 1975 saw 115 students enrolled at NLA. He urged each congregation to send more students to NLA. He clearly pointed out the need for more students. He wrote: "It should be apparent that if our school is going to continue as a worker training institution of the Synod, we need students....If we want this school to continue and to flourish, we should demonstrate this by the students we send. If few students come from our district, we are only paying lip service to the purpose our school is intended to serve. Then others might justifiably contend that a worker training school of the Wisconsin Synod located in Mobridge, SD, is not a sound investment."

The 1975 graduating class sent 11 to DMLC. 8 enrolled at NWC. That sounds great, but only 3 juniors, 6 sophomores and 1 freshman were enrolled in the pastoral course at the

Academy. The floor committee brought a resolution to get more students and more money from the district congregations for NLA.

The handwriting on the wall was becoming more clear. The closing of our beloved Academy was drawing near.

This District Convention met at the Academy. There were 63 lay delegates, 45 pastors, 2 professors and 3 teachers present for the opening of the Bicentennial Convention. No, it wasn't the 200th anniversary of our district. It was the 200th anniversary of our country. President Kell urged the convention to give thanks and praise to our gracious God for all of His rich blessings upon our country. The freedoms of speech and worship and all the other freedoms that we enjoy are blessings that we should never, ever take for granted.

In this biennium 6 young men were ordained. Pastor Wayne Rouse was one of them. Three pastors and three professors came into our district. There was 1 resignation and 10 men left the district. Four of them went to the Western Wisconsin District - Kloehn, Dengler, Russow, and Strobel. That district has never been the same since then. Pastor Kell (8/17/75) and Pastor Wilbert Schulz (6/6/76) celebrated their 40th year in the ministry. Pastor Kell was elected District President. Pastor Ed Werner and Pastor David Krenke were the vice presidents and Pastor John Engel was the Secretary.

We had four schools in our district in 1976. Billings had 16 pupils; Rapid City had 23 students; Mobridge had 56 pupils

and Watertown had 115 pupils. Synod-wide, 16 new schools opened in 1975 and 20 schools were scheduled to open in 1976. There were 11 area Lutheran High Schools. A youth newsletter entitled "Generations" was begun.

The District Mission Board's prayer was that "God would give our missions and missionaries an extra measure of boldness to meet the requirements of preaching the Word of the salvation of souls in our area of responsibility."

Bismarck and Brookings went self-supporting and Mitchell, was granted manpower in July of 1975. Church sites were being purchased in Huron, Mitchell, and Bozeman. Yankton's chapel was being built. A new parsonage in Brookings was dedicated. Huron and Mitchell would soon have parsonages. There was hope to start new missions in Calgary, Lethbridge, Regina, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg. Missoula is another place that has a good nucleus of WELS people. There were still 23 mission congregations in the district.

Nine pastors from our district brought a Memorial to the District requesting that we ask Synod to appoint a committee to study the "expediency of the current practice of the WELS requesting and applying for gifts, grants, and matching funds from any source outside of WELS." This committee was to report to the ten district in 1978. The District made the request.

This discussion concerning money received from outside the WELS, especially AAL, would go on for a number of years. My first conference in 1980 spent lots of time, hours, in fact,

discussing a conference paper about AAL.

There would be lots of discussion about AAL money, but the main topic of discussion for the next three years would be the closing of Northwestern Lutheran Academy. Another controversy would yank at the heart strings of our district's people. All those feeling that the people would have in 1979, would be resurrected in 1993 when the decision was made to close our school at Prairie du Chien, WI. But that story will come later.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

On July 13, 1951, I was ordained and installed as Pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Mound City, SD. The following Sunday, I conducted 2 regular church services, and one or 2 hours after each service, meeting and talking to my members. Since my congregation was relatively small in number, I was able to remember many new names and began learning to recognize many new faces. About 3 days later, I walked about 3 blocks to the village Post Office to pick up my mail, (I wasn't married yet). As I left the Post Office, after chatting with 2 or 3 members, I looked across the highway, which was also the only business section of Mound City, and noticed a man staggering out of the local tavern and bracing himself up against a tree near the curb. To me it seemed rather early in the day for such activity, but I did recognize the man to be one of our fellow members in church the previous Sunday. Fully aware of the man's situation I thought about going to his aid, and yet, felt that I would certainly shame him half to death, if he should recognize me, his pastor. Well, in the same moment, another man came out of the tavern, went to the man leaning up against the tree, and took care of him. His coming to help the brother was all that I needed to ease my conscience and make me feel good. Now I felt that I would not be needed. Now, I would not put him or myself into an embarrassing situation. So, I went on my merry way - home. Going home that day was not the end of the story - three days later I buried that same man. His obituary said, 'He died of an heart attack.' Here ends the story, but its lesson lives on. For I'm sure you too will recognize the similarity with the story that Jesus Himself told about the Levite who passed by."

-Pastor Henry Juroff - 1951-1953

1976-1978

In 1975, the Synod at Convention voiced its approval of the master plan for building construction at NLA. They wanted the school to be able to have an enrollment of 200 students. Some construction needed to be done. The Synod recommended that Phases I and II of the master plan be undertaken when there was enough money in the Synod's coffers. Building contractors and consultants were hired. The actual construction was not begun but preparations were being made. Building could start as soon as the money was available.

This exciting, hopeful time in our district was crushed at the August, 1977 Synod Convention. Shocking news spread across the district. The 1977 Synod Convention of the WELS "called for the removal of NLA from its present location to a new site, with preference to be shown toward the Southwest or West Coast." All plans for expansion, building and even the future of NLA were abruptly stopped.

From the reading that I have done, the reasons the Synod decided to close NLA were as follows:

1. Small enrollment
2. A large percentage of students did not enter NWC or DMLC.
3. Not enough financial support for the school from the district.

What was the district going to do? A special convention was called by the Praesidium at Mobridge on January 25, 1978. The purpose of this convention was "to hear the proposals of the CHE in respect to NLA and to study their implications for

our district." Because of a severe snowstorm many of the pastors and delegates were unable to attend the Convention on the 25th so the Convention was extended another day.

There were 6 resolutions formulated at this special Convention. It was a call for some serious action. Two years before there was also strong encouragement for action to save the Academy, but now there was great urgency to save the Academy.

Here I will summarize the resolutions.

1. Agree that there is an urgent need for more pastors and teachers.
2. Maintain Synod's historical commitment to training future church workers through the academy system.
3. Recognize the need for NLA to continue.
4. That the District assume the responsibility to carry out the master plan for NLA.
5. That every congregation in the district study the needs and plans of NLA; declare financial support to replace the music facility; and that each congregation inform the District Secretary how much they will give toward NLA.
6. That district set goal of 42 freshmen for the fall of 1978 and the Praesidium and faculty carry out a district recruitment program.

Each congregation was given a survey to fill out concerning financial support. Financial support for 1978-1981 promised by the congregations totaled \$177,500.00. There were 72 congregations in the district. Five congregations gave no commitment and 3 congregations did not contact the District Secretary.

The Special District Convention called for 42 freshmen. In June of 1978 there were only 8 enrolled. They were hoping for 24. The numbers of those who were enrolled in the pastor or teacher courses also declined at NLA.

NLA President Malchow concluded his report by encouraging all the district to pray for NLA and that at the same time the district should remember to pray "Thy will be done."

On May 25, 1978, the Academy celebrated it's 50th Anniversary. The theme for the Anniversary and for the Convention in June was "A Tree Planted By The Rivers Of Water."

In Pastor Kell's President's Report he pointed out that the Campion Campus at Prairie du Chien, WI might be purchased by the Synod for a new school. He told the Convention that NLA is like a tree that is planted by the rivers of water. If a person didn't quite believe that then they should go out of the gym and look at the river below the Academy. Later he said, "The Living Word of God, the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ, that is the river from which every child of God and from which also Northwestern Lutheran Academy draws its life-giving strength to grow and to blossom and to bring fruit a hundredfold."

The Synod was to have a special convention in July 1978 to discuss the future of NLA and MLA and the possible purchase of the Campion Campus. The District resolved to thank the congregations of the District for their financial commitment to take over the responsibility to carry out the master plan for NLA and that we seek Synod's approval to proceed with the implementation of the master plan for NLA. The District was also encouraged to recruit more students and to pray. Our district recommended that because the housing at MLA in New Ulm was overcrowded and because the Campion Campus was up for

sale that the Synod purchase the campus. The district felt that the Synod needed another prep school, not an amalgamation. (Don't you just hate that word?)

The 50th Anniversary of the Academy should have been a time of rejoicing, thanksgiving and praise. To be sure there was much of that, but dark clouds were overhead, and the tree planted by the rivers of water was in danger of being hit by lightning. The lightning would strike at the special Convention of the Synod in July of 1978.

Professor Richard Strobel was the essayist for the 1978 District Convention. The title of his essay was "The Role of the Prep School in our Educational System." What he wrote in 1978 was not only prophetic about what happened at NLA but also what took place in 1993 at the Synod Convention. Maybe it is prophetic of the future.

Here is his last paragraph:

"While it may seem to some that I have been belaboring a point and tilting at windmills, since we all, or at least most of us, agree that NWC needs the prep schools and that DMLC is better off with them, I do not think that I have done so. For this reason: before us is the Champion issue, but I firmly believe that behind this there is something even more weighty, namely the question of whether we need the prep schools at all. Granted, today, at least ostensibly, we as a Synod are all for the prep schools. But when one observes the Synodical scene, the question arises: How about 10 or 15 years down the road? If we should one day lose our prep schools, this would have dire consequences for our pastor-training course. It would mean, ultimately, downgrading this course at NWC and at the Seminary. Would we want that? But even more is at stake. In 1969 CHE stated: 'The history of many a church body that has lost its confessional position indicates a close connection between such loss of confessionalism and a growing dependence on schools outside its control for the training of its public ministry.' This is indeed the case, for the

loss of the prep schools had this result in other church bodies going back to colonial times. Secularization began on the prep school level with the loss of the prep schools and then spread to the colleges and seminaries. This, I submit, is a price we cannot afford to pay."

There were six men who came to our district from our Seminary. Two pastors transferred into our district while 2 transferred out. Two pastors resigned and 3 retired. Pastor Kell was elected to his final term as District President. The other three officers remained the same.

Apostles in Billings, and the dual parish of Sturgis and Spearfish became self-supporting. Parsonages were erected at Huron and Mitchell. Chapels were constructed at Yankton and Huron. Plans for a chapel at Bozeman were underway. Exploratory services were being held at Helena and Missoula, Hot Springs and Jamestown. The Mission Board Chairman, Pastor Wayne Schulz added this to his report: "This represents a high in the recent history of our district." How true!

The 1978 District Convention would be the last District Convention held at Northwestern Lutheran Academy at Mobridge, SD. August 1, 1979, the Academy doors would be closed.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"On the Sunday of my installation at Circle and Presserville the congregations had arranged a welcoming party. One custom we were not familiar with was the removal of the bride's shoe which was auctioned off. Each bid was collected and stuffed into the shoe. It became a gift to the new pastor's new bride! They had changed the rules! We lived to learn from experience that usually each bid made was rewarded with a shot of Seven Crown, Rye, or whatever was on hand. Bidding at other wedding receptions we attended was considerably more lively than ours had been....On January 2, 1949, my wife, baby Lynn, and I were returning from a German-English double-header in Terry, MT via

Glendive since the 60 mile gravel shortcut through Brockway to Circle was impassable. We were in a blizzard, whose swirling snows often obliterated the road. The car started to miss. I opened the hood and saw that snow was blowing over the motor, melting and causing it to short out. I tied a blanket to each end of the bumper ends so snow could not so easily be pulled through the grill. In that short 5 minute job my ears were frozen. We inched on. Just as we were about to cross the divide (Missouri and Yellowstone) the missing increased and the car died! How all alone we felt. Not so. The Lord was with us! A highway supervisor was inspecting the road in his pickup. He helped me push the car off the road on an approach. He gave us a ride to Circle, MT, our home, otherwise we might have been a different kind of statistic."

-Pastor Harry Wiedmann - 1947-1957
He graduated from NLA in 1940

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The following congregations were organized in the 1970's:
Pierre, St. Paul's in Sioux Falls; Bozeman, Yankton, Huron, Mitchell, Missoula, Jamestown, and Hot Springs.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"My father, Sam Baer, served this area from Streeter in Stutsman County and then organized the congregation in Hazelton, ND in 1923. I was born near Streeter and later as a young child lived in Hazelton and then in Zeeland where my father served Zion congregation until 1937. During this time it was my privilege to attend the Academy for three years. In the early '50's it was also my privilege to serve on the Academy Board for a few years. I have only happy memories of my years of living and serving in the Dakota-Montana District."

- Pastor George Baer - 1950-1955

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"I served Zion in Burt, ND; St. Luke's in Leith, ND, and Immanuel in Elgin, ND from 1955-1960. Of interest (maybe) - I'm feeling like a museum piece for: The parsonage at Elgin has been replaced. The Leith and Burt congregations have disbanded. The church building of Burt has been restored in a museum in Regent, ND. The church building of Leith is being restored in a museum in Elgin, ND. Though some have suggested I should also be in a museum somewhere, I am still actively taking nourishment everyday."

-Pastor G.F. Cares - 1955-1960

1980-19901978-1980

I began to collect resource materials for this paper and for the official District History after the 1993 Synod Convention which voted to close our school at Prairie du Chien and amalgamate (I hate that word) it with Northwestern Prep in Watertown, WI and to move Northwestern College to New Ulm, MN and amalgamate it with Dr. Martin Luther College. As I read through President Kell's 1980 report, I realized that what he said is definitely apropos for us today. He reminds us of some very basic things. He also points us to the future. Here is part of his report to the 1980 District Convention in Watertown, SD:

"And since that time a certain spirit of gloom has become noticeable in the district. Some members are not participating in the synodical committee meetings any longer. Here and there one gets the impression that the Gospel has been taken from us. But isn't that a rather human reaction? Is it all that bad? If you think it is, what do you think the apostle means when he says, 'All things work together for good to them who love God?' Does he not mean to say that all things, even those which are highly disagreeable to us, under God will turn out to be the greatest blessing we may have experienced? And is that Scripture principle not applicable here too? We certainly must realize that the Lord of the Church has permitted our school to be closed. What is stopping us from praying and looking for those blessings He has promised? As a matter of fact, there is evidence for us to believe now that we are on the way to receive those blessings that will be ours if we but believe the promises of God. As a first step in that direction, an area high school committee has been organized and has been hard at work for about a year. Our failings in the past have been noted. They have been debated and vows have been taken not to repeat them in the future. The cause of Christian education as against the present humanistic training of our youth in our public school system is being high-lighted on many an occasion. The fact is also being emphasized that this

cause is worth sacrificing for. We don't know exactly when this regional Lutheran high school will be started or where in the district it will be located. But we do know that here lie the blessings which the Word of God promises. We know it is not too late for we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. Trusting in God's promises, we are confident that what looked like a great calamity to us only two years ago may well under God turn out to be one of the greatest blessings the Dakota-Montana District has yet experienced. May God grant it."

Martin Luther Preparatory School had a first year enrollment of 360 students which was 160 more than anticipated. Four new area Lutheran High Schools opened in 1979 bringing the total of LHS to 18.

The Mission Board reported that exploratory work was being done at Hot Springs, Jamestown, Missoula, and Helena. Mission status was granted to Missoula, Hot Springs and Jamestown. Work was begun in Calgary, Canada. Chapels were purchased for Jamestown and Bozeman. Construction was to begin for Wetaskiwin, Alberta. Names of WELS members living near Gillette and Casper, WY were requested. There were 19 mission churches in our district served by 14 men. There were 1,536 souls and 1,015 communicants.

Evangelism Commission began arranging an Evangelism Convocation in each conference during the fall of 1980.

In 1980 the Synod was doing mission work in 11 foreign countries - 50 missionaries.

The full stewardship program was entitled "Love Gives." A special post-Easter Synod offering collected \$150,000 by the end of May, 1980. A 15% increase was needed for the 1981 PBS

to carry out the Synod's work. In 1980, the Synod had already run up its borrowed total to \$31,027,043. Our district warned Synod to be cautious and use restraint in borrowing money.

A new hymnal called "Lutheran Worship" was being looked at and studied by our Synod's Commission on Worship. This is Missouri's new hymnal. Our Commission is studying it for possible recommendation to be used in our Synod.

1978-1980 saw Pastor Gerald Blobaum and 4 other men began their ministry on the prairie. Four others transferred in and mostly because of the closing of NLA, 14 pastors and 4 teachers left the district. There were 2 resignations and Dr. Paul Peters died on September 3, 1979. Zion in Reeder closed its doors and joined Redeemer in Hettinger.

Pastor Wayne Schulz was elected President; Pastor John Engel and Pastor Ed Werner were the Vice Presidents and Pastor Dennis Hayes was elected Secretary.

PASTOR ARTHUR PAUL CARL KELL

Most of the pastors in our district never had the opportunity to meet Pastor Kell. He was a faithful servant of God, born in Pomerania, Germany in 1906. At the age of 20 he entered DMLC - their high school department. He went to Concordia College in St. Paul, MN and from there went to our Seminary, graduating in 1935. He served the Lord at Hutchinson, MN, East Fork Indian Mission, Battle Creek, MI, St. Clair, MN, Bethlehem at Watertown, St. John's at Rauville, and for a while Grover, SD. From 1974-1980 he served St. Paul's in Hazelton,

ND. He served the Church at large in many capacities in many places. But what he will be remembered for is his time as President of the Dakota-Montana District from 1966-1980.

Those are the cold facts and stats about Pastor Kell. Pastor Kell was a gentle giant with a booming voice who often ended potentially long discussion at meetings, conferences, and conventions with only a few well chosen, wise words. He loved the people God gave him to care for. He loved his family, his work, the Word of God, his Savior, and his district.

The first time I met him was on Call Day at Seminary. At the meal the night before, Pastor Kell got up, as all of the Assignment Committee did, and introduced himself, talked about the district, and then said with his German accent: "My next door neighbor told me that I was the biggest Lutheran minister she had ever seen. Well, she hasn't seen anything yet." I had a feeling I was going to the Dakota-Montana District. When my name and assignment to Hazelton was read, the assembly chuckled and I hunted for a map.

Afterwards we talked at length about the congregation and the district. His eyes sparkled as he talked about the district. I asked him, "What kind of men are in the Dakota-Montana District?" He said, "Well, I'll tell ya'; the more perverted you are the better you'll get along with them boys." I knew then and there I was going to love the Dakota-Montana District.

I could tell you more stories about Pastor Kell, but I won't. This paper is too long already. Those who knew Pastor

Kell loved him. I attended the Christian Victory Service at Trinity in Watertown, WI. Pastor Kell left the District and Hazelton, ND on July 1, 1980. He entered the glory of heaven on November 18, 1980. Pastor Walter Schumann, pastor of Trinity and former president of our district, based his sermon on II Timothy 2:1 & 3: "You, then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus."

As we were walking away from the graveside, someone said to me, "It's a shame we didn't bring along any dirt from the Dakotas to sprinkle on his casket, so he would feel at home."

The last paragraph in Pastor Kell's funeral bulletin sums up the life of this humble, faithful servant and the life of every Christian. "Pastor Kell always looked upon his life and the events here chronicled as an uninterrupted and unmerited blessing of his Lord. Sola Deo Gloria!"

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"Art and Will Bauer from Bismarck were attending a meeting in Mobridge, SD., and on their way home were engaged in a lively conversation. As they were coming closer to Hazelton, in order to have more time to finish their discussion, they slowed down considerably. Soon they could see in the rear view mirror a red light flashing. The cop was there to stop them. The cop felt that anyone driving so slow in a 65 mile per hour zone, must be having some kind of problem, maybe inebriation. Will Bauer was quick to present his IRS credentials and the cop was soon convinced that these men were just stalling for time before reaching Hazelton and let them continue on their merry way. Our Hazelton members got a charge out of this incident, to such an extent that they re-enacted this scene in a program they presented at our farewell in Hazelton. I recall that in our first congregation, 1935-1941, Art's salary was \$85.00 per month. One of our faithful members told us how another member had said, 'Da kann er noch dabei sparen.' (with that amount he should

be able to save money.) It was a struggle getting settled in our first home, making car payments, coming out even at the end of the month. One Thanksgiving time we bought a duck for a dollar and wondered if we should have settled for hamburger at \$.18 a lb. How times have changed! But there are no regrets having lived through the 'good old days.'"

-From Mrs. Art Kell, wife of pastor and former District President Kell -1957-1980

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1980-1982

Since this was my first district convention I was thankful that it had been a quiet biennium and a peaceful convention. Pastor Wayne Schulz was our district president. He too, was thankful that it was a peaceful biennium.

Some of the concerns brought forward were the \$10 million dollar "Reaching Out" offering, the feasibility of the Synod publishing its own hymnal, the pension plan and adding a Canadian to our District Mission Board. We also heard the report of the Synod's Committee to Study the Matter of Guidelines For the Formation of New Districts. (How do you like that title?) There was a possibility that the 1983 Synod Convention could adopt the report and have the Dakota-Montana District chopped up and amalgamated (I hate that word) with other districts. In essence, wipe our district off the face of the earth. Our district vehemently opposed that idea and it never happened. Thanks be to God!

It seems as if we have always had difficulty with the Legislature and State Education people in South Dakota. There was a bill in the SD House that if passed would have forced parents

of our Christian Day School children to obtain permission each year from their local school board for their children to attend a non-public institution that is non-accredited. Teacher Dan Schmal would serve as our liaison between our District Board for Parish Education and the State Department of Education.

There are six schools in our district in 1982. They are at Billings, Watertown, Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Mobridge, and Aberdeen. Total enrollment was 322.

The Dakota-Montana Lutheran High School Association meets annually and is gaining support for an area Lutheran High School.

Seven new Christian Day Schools opened in 1981. There are now 373 Christian Day Schools in our Synod.

Chapels were dedicated at Missoula, Hot Springs, and Bozeman. Exploratory work is being done at Minot, ND, Red Deer, Alberta, and Milbank, SD. Requests for exploratory work have been made for Sidney, MT and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Evangelism Seminars were held throughout our district. These seminars were for pastors and lay people. The pastor and teachers at Good Shepherd in Sioux Falls wrote and taught a completely new VBS course on sharing the Savior.

The District Special Ministries Board informed the district that "Luther's Catechism - Simplified Version" was available to congregations who had mentally handicapped children. I've used this course and it is very helpful in teaching the Word of God to those who have a difficult time learning.

Tim Meyer and myself entered the district along with 3

other pastors during this Biennium. There was one colloquy, 1 retirement, and 1 resignation. Five men left the district and 8 entered the District. Two of those 8 were Pastor John Ruege and Pastor Reginald Pope. He had been out here during the '50's and '60's. At my ordination in Hazelton, he and Mrs. Pope reminisced about their days in the district. Their eyes sparkled and they hoped that they could return one day. At my first pastoral conference, Pastor Wayne Schulz asked for names to put on the Call list at Mitchell. I suggested Pastor Pope. President Schulz asked, "Is he a theologian?" I told him that he had nothing to worry about. Pastor Pope would be a reliable pastor. The rest, as they say, is history.

Professor K.G. Sievert, Pastor A.P.C. Kell, Pastor Walter Hermann, and Pastor Gerhard Geiger entered eternal glory during the biennium.

Messiah in Glendive, MT, closed its doors in 1980 and joined Trinity at Terry, MT.

The Praesidium remained the same after elections.

1980-1982 was a quiet biennium. By God's grace it would stay that way for a while.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"We had served in the Apache Indian Mission until February 1952 when we accepted the Call to Trinity, Hendricks and St. John's, Arco, MN. Because I had served in the Indian Mission, I had quite a few invitations to preach at mission festivals and lecture on our work in Apacheland. In late November, 1952, I was invited to speak at Emmanuel, Grover (Hazel), SD, the home church of Carl Mischke. At the time the going "stipend" for guest preachers was three cents per mile - mileage, nothing more! The treasurer had asked me how far I had traveled. I

"Seventy-one miles." He later gave me an envelop which I did not open until I got home. The check amounted to \$2.10. He had paid me for a one-way trip....We had an evening meal at the church and remained for a time to visit with Pastor H. Rutz and some members. Soon after we left for home, it began to snow. Within a matter of minutes it had become a full-blown blizzard! I could see nothing through the windshield. I stuck my head out of the window with slightly better results. We crept along at a snail's pace, stopping frequently to see whether or not we were still on the road. After a couple of hours, we finally got to Clear Lake. The streets were almost impassable but we did manage to get within a few blocks of the parsonage before the car got stuck. I got out and struggled through the deep snow to reach Dan Gieschen's house. I pounded on their door and yelled until they finally heard me above the sound of the shrieking storm. I went back to the car to get my wife and our two small children, Gloria, 3½ and Dan, 2. The Gieschens had an extra double bed into which all four of us gratefully crawled. Dan and his wife had come from the Sem in the summer of 1952."

- Pastor Frederic Nitz - 1952-1955

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1982-1984

Usually, the President's report is in the Convention folders. At this convention there was a reason why the President's report was handed out. President Wayne Schulz requested that he be not considered for another term as President, because he had served as chairman of the Mission Board and had served as President for two terms. He wanted to spend more time with his growing congregation and school.

We were stunned, but we could understand. The District President is still a parish pastor with souls to nourish and souls to bring to the Savior. We need not forget that. Pastor John Engel was elected District President, but he declined it. Later he would say that he did not have enough time to properly consider the position so he thought it best to decline it.

Pastor Ed Werner was elected President. Pastor Pope and Pastor John Engel were the Vice Presidents. Pastor Wayne Rouse would be elected Secretary. An office he would hold until 1994.

The theme of the convention was "Sing Aloud Unto God Our Strength." This theme was appropriate for our convention. We discussed the increase in the decrease of offerings. Serious financial cuts would have to be made if offerings do not increase. This scenario would be repeated for the following 10 years. The offerings from the Synod did not even come close to what the delegates at the Synod Convention had budgeted since 1981. Pastor Schulz encouraged us to urge our congregations to meet the challenge of higher offerings with God's help.

Another area where we would need God's strength and guidance is how to best serve the smaller congregations where they and their towns are dwindling in population. President Schulz urged these congregations and pastors to be flexible if there is realignment.

The District Mission Board was looking into the possibility of additional congregations in Billings, Fargo, Sioux Falls, and Rapid City. The Board was looking at churches in Minot, Milbank, Red Deer, and Lemmon. Livingston went self-supporting and became a dual parish with Bozeman. Much work was being done in Calgary, St. Albert, Wetaskiwin, and Red Deer. There was hopeful thinking of getting something started in Saskatoon.

Some Synod activities from this biennium is worth mentioning because they would affect all of us. The committee appointed

to study the role of man and woman completed their assignment. Pastor Kurt Eggert, a D-M Alumnus, will serve as the project director for the new/revised hymnal. A large number of DMLC graduates were not assigned, but there will be a shortage of teachers in the future. The CHE authorized the seminary to proceed with plans for a new auditorium/gymnasium. Two new homes were erected on the MLPS campus. MLS initiated a new program entitled "Taste of the Ministry" which gives seniors an opportunity to assist teachers and pastors. This program is popular with all of our Synodical schools now in the '90's. We were encouraged to get involved with the D-MLHS Association. Travel/Canvass/Witness teams were introduced during this biennium. The 1983 Synod Convention authorized the Synod office of Executive Secretary of Evangelism. Pastor Paul Kelm accepted the Call. "The People's Bible" began during this biennium. We voted to recommend to Synod that District Presidents receive a vicar or a graduate assistant because of the tremendous work load of the District President.

Pastor Doug Free and 3 other seminary graduates entered the ministry in our district. Nine men left. There was one colloquy, 2 resignations, and Pastor Robert Weimer retired for the first time. Eight men entered our district, three of them are still here - Pastor Peter Naumann, Pastor Steve Persons, who would leave and then come back, and Pastor Norm Seeger.

It was another quiet biennium. Again our thanks to God.

VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"My wife, Carole, my daughter, Carrie aged two months, and I moved to Winnett, MT, fresh from the Seminary in 1958. When I walked into the church, an old one room school house moved into town from the prairie with school desks for pews, I cried. The parsonage was worse. It was an old sheep barn that had been moved in from a ranch and a pile of manure that was scraped out during the minor renovation was still in the backyard. The next day I installed a hot water heater in the parsonage. When my folks, from LaCrosse, WI, came out for my installation, my mother adamantly declared, 'You're not staying, you're going home with us.' But we could not be dissuaded from the Call that had been given to us. Monday morning following installation, the president of the congregation came in from his ranch and we started building an addition to the church. We had no plans, and didn't need any either. We had no money to build with either, but we figured on asking people to donate, and when we needed money they did donate. They would write checks on money they would borrow from the PCA (Production Credit Association), a kind of bank that forwarded ranchers loans when they needed groceries or had other needs. Funds would come from their sale of calves in the fall. We started digging with two shovels in the hard, dried out gumbo. We went out the end of the church 4 foot, but decided that wasn't enough. "Let's go 8 foot." And then we decided on a foundation 12 foot out the end. And then, "we might as well go around the side and put a shed roof on that addition." Since plywood comes 4' wide, we decided on going out 16' along one side. In two months we were done with the additions and had an altar area, a sacristy, a bathroom, a kitchen, and an assembly area. Now there was electric heat to replace the old wood burning stove in the corner. We hauled out from Wisconsin and from my old church where I attended as a youth, a pump organ. We got seats from a movie theater and re-upholstered them and we were on our way to be become the biggest church in town and the whole county. We also started and built churches in Grass Range and Melstone and held services in a one room school in Sand Springs. I had 4 churches in 4 counties and the least I could drive on a Sunday was 160 miles plus hold the services, confirmation classes and Sunday School and Bible Classes. It was great! I served there from 1958-1967. During this time I received many other calls, but none was such a challenge until the call came to start our first mission in Alaska."

- Pastor David Zietlow - 1958-1967

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1984-1986

This would be Pastor Ed Werner's first District Convention as President. The theme for this Convention at St. Martin's

in Watertown, SD, was "The Word Is Now." We heard how God's Word is our great heritage and out of love for God, who loved us first, we will share that saving Word with the people of the world.

The "Reaching Out" offering totaled '\$20,011,962.00 by April 11, 1986. We thanked the Lord for opening the hearts of His people. Yet we also heard offerings for Synod's work was dramatically dwindling. The administration of the Synod was instructed by the 1985 Synod Convention to operate on a balanced budget. Commission on Communication and Financial Support (CCFS) was born at the 1985 Synod Convention. Board for Parish Services also had its birth at the same Convention.

Fourteen pastors were serving 16 missions and one exploratory which was Custer, SD. CEF and "Reaching Out" dollars paid for land, parsonage, and WEF unit at Calgary. The same for Helena, MT; a parsonage at Bozeman; land and parsonage at Milbank; and the purchase of an existing church at Hot Springs. Moorhead, Valley City, and Jamestown went self-supporting.

An "Evangelism Handbook" was produced, along with "Precious Is The Child," "A New Beginning" and groundwork for a Mass Media assisted outreach program.

We still have 6 Christian Day Schools in 1986, although their name has been changed to Lutheran Elementary Schools. Total school enrollment in our district was 339 students.

Pastor Doug Free was our district's first CCFS chairman, a post he still holds. The CCFS is responsible for encouraging

Gospel-motivated "mission offerings" from the congregations of the district, "so that the important mission work and worker training that we carry on as a synod may enjoy increased financial support."

The District Stewardship Board, in a lengthy report, urged every pastor and every congregation to actively utilize stewardship materials and programs.

One particular resolution has a special place in the hearts of Pastor Jim Bolda, Pastor Bob Weimer and myself. It was at this District Convention that Christ Our Redeemer Ev. Lutheran Church of Gillette, Wyoming left the Nebraska District and joined the Dakota-Montana District. Thank you!

Our district urged the Synod to move the "Bethany Program" from Mankato, MN, to NWC in Watertown, WI.

Another executive secretary was desired for Parish Services. We recommended that the Synod keep doing what it had been doing and not create a new position in Milwaukee. They didn't listen!

The "Sampler" would be introduced the first Sunday in Advent of 1986. We would test the service, which, in some form, would be in the new hymnal.

Elections were as follows: Pastor Ed Werner, President; Pastor Reginald Pope and Pastor John Ruege, Vice Presidents, and Pastor Wayne Rouse, Secretary.

Eight new Seminary graduates came to our district. Pastors Paul Marggraf, Tom Rawerts, Dean Biebert, and Ron Kruse are still with us. Five men entered our district from other

districts. Pastors Jim Bolda, Curt Seefeldt, and I think, Bill Dorn, are still in our district. Nine men left our district. There was one resignation.

There was a lot of realignment of congregations in our district during this biennium. Milbank and Summit dissolved their dual parish. Faith and Dupree became a dual parish and Isabel and Timber Lake became a dual parish. The 4 of them used to be together. Flasher, Paradise, and McIntosh became a tri-parish while Morrystown called a semi-retired pastor. They all used to be together.

Another quiet biennium with many changes in our district. We thank God for that peace.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"A slightly bow-legged, crow's feet at the eye corners, hands scarred and rough, describe a man who did not know Jesus. He had ranched all of his life. His second wife brought him to church. After five months of instruction he confessed his faith and received the Lord's Supper with tears of joy splashing across the weather-beaten face. By grace he now knew Jesus as his Savior from sin.....The father drove for 75 miles with his little daughter lying in the back seat of the new car. He arrived at the hospital in 40 minutes. The little daughter died from a rattlesnake bite. At the funeral the father said: 'My car motor is junk; my daughter is gone, but Jesus has her in his arms forever.....A woman who was 80 years old and blind for the last 20 received the Lord's Supper regularly, but only after singing all the verses of 3 or 4 hymns with the pastor who needed the hymnal. She knew about 40 and loved to sing them all as she patiently waited to see Jesus and to join the heavenly choir in singing His praise."

- This was submitted by a pastor who asked not to be identified.

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1986-1988

In his report, President Werner urged the district to "strive to practice sound stewardship of time, talent, and treasure." Pastor Werner very clearly defines each of those gifts from God. "Treasure is the physical blessings which can be measured in dollars and cents. The Lord has given everyone something....Talent is a bundle of unique blessings which makes each of us an important and useful part of the body of Christ.....Time is given us to reach a goal....Since much time is wasted, much talent unused, and many treasures could be put to better use it becomes obvious there is a need for 'Spiritual Renewal.'"

Pastor Werner informed the district that "one of our congregations was reduced from a position of 'ready for self-support status,' to a stressful economic situation when nearly half of the congregation chose to abandon the Biblical doctrine of church fellowship." A little over 30 people left the congregation, but as time went on, the Lord blessed the congregation with renewed growth. We give thanks to God for His grace.

There were no vacancies in the preaching ministry at the time of the Convention and for several months before the convention. All vacancies on the faculties of our Christian Day Schools had been filled.

In this biennium seven men came out here to the prairie. Pastors D. Reichel, J. Carer, S. Nowicki, and P. Paustian would

find souls to care for at Great Falls, Watertown, Hazelton, and Terry respectively. Pastors M. Enderle, D. Hayes (returned to the fold), T. Johnston and J. Kenyon came from other districts. Eleven men, including myself (lapse of sanity) left the district. One teacher resigned. Wilmot and Summit became a dual parish.

The 1987 Synod Convention passed a resolution that said that 'the Synod conduct a Mission Outreach Program to establish a \$10 million endowment fund to be used exclusively for mission outreach.' Thus the conception of "Lift High The Cross" offering.

We had once opened 20+ new missions and assigned all of our Seminary graduates. Not in 1987. Call Days used to be joyous occasions, but not in 1987, 1988, etc. because not all the men were assigned. It was bittersweet to see. And I did.

The Planned Giving Program was taking off, so more Planned Giving Counselors were called. There have been lots of financial blessings from our Lord through this program.

We had 18 missions, served by 16 men in 1988. There were 872 communicants in those congregations. From reading the history of our district there once was a time when the communicants and mission congregations were doubled. Lack of money curtailed mission work quite considerably. Missoula went self-supporting. A chapel was being built at Milbank. Custer, SD, purchased an existing building to worship in and Hot Springs received a parsonage. CEF dollars have given all of our district missions land, parsonages, and chapels. Places for exploratory

were Saskatoon, Regina, and Kalispell. Groups in Sidney, Dickinson, Redfield, SD, and Webster, SD, were being served by local pastors.

The District Board for Parish Services was formed to offer assistance to the parish pastor as he trains and encourages the congregation to render God-pleasing service. The 1985 Synod Convention set up the Board for Parish Services. Pastor Curt Seefeldt was elected chairman of our district's board. He was the first chairman. The Board for Parish Services are there to help congregations with Evangelism, Parish Education, Special Ministries, Stewardship, Worship and Youth Ministries.

Total enrollment in our Christian Day Schools in our district in 1988 was 364. Mandan was planning to open a school in the fall of 1988 in rented facilities.

The Evangelism Committee present "Gearing Up For Evangelism" to 161 participants in 8 of 9 workshops. The 1989 theme would be "Getting Everyone Involved."

Special Ministries developed the Committee on Counseling for Called Workers. The reason for the establishment of this committee is to help called worker and their families cope with all the stress and strain of the preaching and teaching ministry in the society in which we live.

The Synod felt in 1987 that there was an urgent need for renewed zeal for spiritual growth and thus have renewed zeal for serving the Lord. I attended the presentation in the Southeastern Wisconsin District. There were 10 of us at the table. Eight of us had been in the D-M District. President

Mischke was one of the eight. A couple of times the presenters reminded us to keep quiet and pay attention. We were "spiritually renewed." Simply and seriously, to be spiritually renewed spend more time in God's Word. The Holy Spirit will make your faith in the Savior grow.

AAL started giving block grants to Synod instead of giving grants to specific programs. The Coordinating Council set up guidelines so that we would not become dependent on those grants.

"Reaching Out" reached into our hearts and by June 30, 1988, there was \$20.9 million.

The District Praesidium would remain the same as in 1986. This too, would soon change.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"From the '56-'57 school year I tutored at Northwestern Lutheran Academy. I was assigned to Trinity of Sturgis in the summer of '58 and stayed until the spring of '64 when I took the Call to Our Savior's in Bismarck. I left there in the spring of '71."

- Pastor George Rothe - 1956-1957, 1958-1971

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The churches that were organized in 1980-1989 are as follows: Helena, MT; Calgary, Canada; Gillette, WY; Milbank, SD; Custer, SD.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"I installed Pastor A.P.C. Kell on the evening of Easter Sunday. It was a beautiful day, but that evening a blizzard blew in during the fellowship hour following the service. It was so bad you could hardly see the road. I knew that a few miles down the road if you missed the turn to the main road it go quite curvy. I, therefore, asked some of the members who knew the road better than I did to lead the way. Wouldn't you know it, we lost sight of them and, sure enough, we realized that we had missed our turn and we were on the curvy road. Well, we rolled down the windows. I looked out one side and my wife on the other side so that we would stay on the road as we inched

our way along. We did make it home okay, but found out later that the car we were trying to follow went off the road and we passed them by and didn't even know it. I heard that many of the other cars also went off the road. After hearing this we were doubly thankful to have finally, after a long time of driving, to have gotten home that evening safe and sound. I think that it was one of the longest 30 miles I have ever driven in my life."

-Pastor Raymond Ziebell - 1969-1974
He also served as "poet laureate" for the Eastern Conference.

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1990-1995

1988-1990

The theme for our 35th Biennial Convention of our District at Watertown, SD, was: "Heirs Together Of The Grace Of Life." This theme, taken from I Peter 3:7 was chosen to bring to the foreground what Holy Scripture says concerning the right relationship between husbands and wives. Christian men and women are "heirs together" of the gracious gifts of God - forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus Christ alone. Jesus died for the sins of men and women alike. Professor Wayne Mueller of the Seminary presented a paper properly entitled "Heirs Together." The devotions throughout the Convention carried that theme that all Christians are "Heirs together of the grace of life."

District President Reginald Pope gave his report and outlined all the work before the Convention. Discussion would be held concerning the feasibility (another word I don't like) of our current prep and college locations, "Lift High The Cross" offering, the Mission-Vision Statement, and a possible

arrangement with the Lutheran Home at Belle Plaine, MN, to purchase the Prairie Home in Watertown, SD which could be used as a nursing home and an area Lutheran High School with dormitory space.

Pastor Pope reported that Candidates K. McKinney, B. Mueller, J. Heitsch, and R. Rardin were ordained. Three pastors entered our district. Pastor P. Vander Galien was one of them. Twelve pastors left the district and three pastors and two teachers resigned.

Notice that I mentioned above that Pastor Pope was the District President. Instead of going into lengthy detail of what happened, may it suffice to say that Pastor Ed Werner had gotten into serious trouble with the law. The Vice-Presidents, Secretary and involved Circuit Pastors dealt with the situation in a Scriptural manner. In his explanation of the situation, he urged the district to keep the Werner family and the affected congregations in their prayers. They should still be included in our prayers. It was a difficult time in our district's history, but once again, the Lord provided a wise, strong, faithful District President in Pastor Pope and our Lord once again, preserved His Word and His Church.

In 1990 we had 20 mission congregations out of 78 congregations in the district. Mitchell became interest-subsidized congregation and Wetaskiwin became a self-supporting congregation. The Organization/Planning/Accounting Manual was introduced to the mission congregations. Mission

congregations could now request operating subsidy through the "Mission Program Grant Agreement."

Some of our District's mission congregations were not making their monthly mortgage payments to CEF. The Board for Home Missions and the WELS Board of Trustees began looking for solutions to the lack of monthly mortgage payments. They came up with the A.D.A.M. Project, in which congregations throughout the district take an offering for a district mission congregation, which was designated by the Mission Board. The money is sent to the DMB. This money would then be used for that designated mission congregation's mortgage payment to CEF.

Professor Jerome Spaude took a "Sabbatical In Ministry" and assisted the pastor and congregation at Calgary, Canada. God blessed this effort.

Pastor Wayne Schulz became our District Mission Counselor.

"Builders For Christ" would assist congregations build a parsonage, church or some other building in the hope of saving the congregation money. They are in the midst of a two year pilot program.

The Commission on Evangelism reported that 151 people attended the 1990 workshop entitled "Prospect Witness and Nurture." "Locating the Lost" would be the 1991 presentation. A district-wide outreach effort entitled "Go '91" would provide prospects for our congregations, make our members personally aware of the Great Commission, and inform the public about the WELS.

Evangelism "School of Outreach" was being held at the Seminary in June of 1990. Pastors would receive materials for Evangelism Sunday and congregations were urged to subscribe to the "Prospect Newsletter." The congregations were encouraged to plan "Festivals of Friendship." "Precious Is The Child" will be a Christmas greeting to the nation from the WELS on Television for Christmas 1991.

The Stewardship Program for 1990 was entitled "Encourage One Another."

The Commission For Communication and Financial Support reported that they were suggesting a 4.2% increase in offerings in 1991, 1992, and 1993. In 1989, of our 77 congregations, 35 exceeded their mission goal, 17 met their goal, and 25 were unable to meet their goal. Five of the 12 districts had a Planned Giving Counselor. "Lift High The Cross" offering was doing well.

Northwestern Prep and Northwestern College celebrated their 125th Anniversary on September 13-15, 1990.

Our District said that the amalgamating of our two colleges "would be precipitous." We also encouraged the Synod to keep the prep schools where they were at.

Our District recommended more study on the 50/50 balance of voting delegates at Synod Convention, the establishment of a new synodical conference, further study of "staff ministry" by the Board for Worker Training to see if it is really needed. The name of the Alberta-Montana Conference was changed to the

Rocky Mountain Conference with two circuits.

Pastor Pope was elected District President. This time he accepted the vote of the District at Convention much older, wiser, and more experienced. Pastor John Ruege and Pastor Bill Russow were the Vice Presidents and Pastor Wayne Rouse was elected Secretary, again!

The sun was again shining on our district. But there would be weighty matters to consider in the future.

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"It was about three o'clock in the morning. The NLA student had safely boarded the Hiawatha in Bismarck, headed west for a family emergency. Now it was time to head home through the Standing Rock reservation. Suddenly something moved across the road. The car swerved. But there was a thump from the front wheel. My wife awoke with a start: "What was that?" "I'm not sure, but the car seems to be OK and still going." The answer appeared the next morning at home as I pulled porcupine quills from the sidewall of the tire. On all our travels to get students here or there we were always grateful to see the protecting hand of guardian angels."

-Pastor Paul Wilde - 1970-1979

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1990-1992

The major thrust for our 36th Biennial Convention was "Christ-The Cornerstone Of The Christian Family." Mr. Fred Matzke from Wisconsin Child And Family Service discussed this matter with the delegates. It was really quite enjoyable. Mr. Matzke's presentation was only strengthened by the devotions of the Convention: "Christ is the Cornerstone in marriage, in establishing priorities, in discipline, in forgiveness, in crisis, in death, in how the Church grows." Pastor Pope even

mentioned the U.S. Vice President and how much trouble he got in when he said the problems of society can be traced to broken homes.

God richly blessed the outreach efforts of the District. Many congregations had "Friendship Sundays." Our South Dakota State Fair Booth handed out an amazing amount of material. The high point of this biennium was "Go '91," which was a monumental outreach effort with the Gospel. A good number of prospects were found for Adult Information Class. Our district grew by 46 communicants during the biennium.

At the time of the Convention there were two pastoral vacancies. One was at Mandan. The other was Clear Lake. There was one teacher vacancy at Billings.

Pastor Pope reminded the Convention that the mission offerings were steadily decreasing. Many congregations, mission as well as self-supporting were having a difficult time meeting their budgets. Re-payment of CEF loans was a particular problem of our mission congregations. It still is.

The district convention was videotaped and a 15 minute video highlighting the convention was available for viewing. Speaking of videotapes. "The Promise" was shown to us. This video presents the Lord's work that He wants us to carry out.

Eight men came from the Seminary to our District. Pastors Hohenstein, Reich, Hadler, Oehlke, Nelson and Weigand are still serving our Lord in our district. Pastors R. Eggert, D. Lemke, Niermeier, Ristow, and J. Schultz entered the district from

other districts. Pastor D. Neumann and myself returned to our district. Eight pastors left, one teacher and one pastor resigned. Three pastors sort of retired. One teacher moved into our district while 3 left the district. Two congregations closed during this biennium - Bethlehem of Hauge Township, Willow Lake, SD, and Christ of Wilmot, SD.

The congregation at Terry, MT, went self-supporting. Jamestown and Valley City were "non-subsidized" missions. Missoula, Mitchell, and Yankton went interest subsidy. Those on Mission Status were Bozeman, Great Falls, Helena, Melstone, and Winnett, Hot Springs, Custer, Huron, Milbank, Pierre, Calgary, St. Albert, Saskatoon and Gillette. We had two exploratory missions - Calgary II and Edmonton, Canada.

Only because of the "Lift High The Cross" offering and special gifts designated for mission expansion were new missions begun. "88% of our District's SMO is returned to our own district's missions in some form of subsidy."

The "Parish Leadership" magazine is a consolidation of "Tell," "Youthink," "Partners," "Notes and News," and "Focus On Worship." As a pastor, I am thankful the Synod's Board for Parish Services consolidated all of those publications into one, because it was getting ridiculous with all these specialized publications coming to my mailbox.

1,450 copies of our district's newsletter is printed each time. When I was in another district, I subscribed to the D-M Newsletter and learned more about what was going on in the

Synod then I did from that "other" district's newsletter. Keep up the good work!

The Commission on Evangelism stated in their report that during the 5 year Evangelism workshops 40 separate workshops were held. More than 800 attended the workshops. The Evangelism Commission were working on the "best of the best" workshops to be used in our congregations. "Soul Search," a video to be used with prospects was shown.

401 students attended our Christian Day Schools in our district. The District's Commission on Parish Schools presented their "Purpose Statement and Objectives." They are here to assist our congregations that have early childhood educational programs, Lutheran Elementary Schools and to help our district High School Association. The CPS is also established to administrate the Student Aid Fund, work with government officials as a liaison for our congregations, and promote and procure materials for our schools. Much work went into fighting the state rulings which often hinder the God-given mission of our SD LESS. God blessed our efforts and positive results were enjoyed. Because of our dealings with the SD state government a SD Christian School Association was formed which included other church bodies. The first president of this Association was Teacher Dan Schmal. The main purpose of this Association is to provide communication cooperation, and representation among the non-public schools in SD as they monitor the state educational government rulings.

A preschool conference was held in 1991 at St. Peter, MN. About 36 people attended.

"Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal" - our first WELS hymnal since 1916 is completed, but will not be available for sale until after the 1993 WELS Convention. Each delegate at Synod Convention was given a free copy of the new hymnal.

The Commission on Youth Discipleship reported some amazing statistics. 67% of those children we baptize, we confirm. Only 43% of those we confirmed remain in the church through their 20's. Only 29% of those children we baptize will be lifetime members of the WELS. 70% of those who attend LES remain in the church. 9% if they attend public school. "Our kids do need better training."

The 1992-1993 stewardship program was entitled "My Heart And My Home." The 1993-1994 stewardship program was entitled "We're HIS Disciples."

The Great Plains Lutheran High School Association reported that at their May, 1991, Annual meeting, it was voted to "Call a Director of Institutional Advancement when the general fund reaches \$45,000.00." This Biennium saw the following activities take place in the GPLHS Association: May, 1990 - "Train-A-Child Land Fund" drive was adopted. June, 1990-The site sign was unveiled at the District Convention and a presentation was given at the Minnesota District Convention. September, 1990-an informational meeting was held at Marshall, MN. January, 1991-Special Education Sunday Service held in many congregations. First land payment made. March, 1991-student enrollment survey

taken. May, 1991-name of GPLHS chosen. August, 1991-GPLHS literature at WELS Kingdom Workers' Mission Fair at New Ulm. City of Watertown makes proposals for constructing detention ponds for storm drainage control. January, 1992-another Education Sunday. Second land payment made. February, 1992-The Directors viewed the Gary School facility. March, 1992-New logo ideas viewed. Throughout all this time many presentations were given at district congregations.

The fall of 1992 saw Northwestern Prep drop the 1st year of Latin, so that the students have only three years of Latin.

Our District encouraged the Synod's members to return to God's Word for spiritual renewal; that the Long Range Planning Committee "re-list the objectives of the MOV statement, placing the recruiting and training of candidates second instead of fifth;" that MOV 2000+ not be used by our Synod when it comes to decisions concerning worker training; that all the members recommit themselves to support the Synod with increased SMO's, that CC restore the lost portion of the Synod budget to Worker Training; that we, as a Synod recruit more young men and women for the preaching and teaching ministry; and that we encourage the BWT to establish a committee to monitor school staff needs. Our district "affirmed" the Feasibility Committee's report that stated that NPS and MLPS be amalgamated in Watertown, WI and that NWC and DMLC be amalgamated in New Ulm, MN.

The district praesidium became younger with the election. President - Pastor Pope; V.P.'s Pastor Peter Naumann & Pastor

Doug Free. Pastor Wayne Rouse is elected Secretary, again!

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VOICES FROM THE PRAIRIE

"It was the Fall of 1978, the new pastor and family had just moved in the summer before from the Seminary. The pastor had already departed for his first pastoral conference. While away the young pastor's wife and two small children were confronted at the door by two 'cowboys.' 'We'd really like to see your house' seemed suspicious at best and certainly scary. They asked for two items - beer and bathroom! Finally, the wife caught on that they were two 'west river' pastors passing through to conference. Oh, by the way, the two 'cowboys' were Bill Russow and Carl Lindemann."

-Pastor Mark Johnston - 1978-1984

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Before I get into the 1992-1994 Biennium I would like to mention some of the events and decisions that took place at the 1993 Synod Convention. It was my first Synod Convention. It was an historical Convention, not because I was there, but because of what took place there.

President Carl Mischke, a Dakota-Montana son, retired from the ministry. Pastor Karl Gurgel was elected Synod President.

"Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal" was dedicated and presented to our Synod. Pastor Kurt Eggert who served as the Hymnal Project Director, joined the saints and angels of heaven before the Hymnal was dedicated. He once served the Lord in the Dakotas. His wife tearfully accepted our Synod's thanks on his behalf. This, too, was an historical event.

The biggest decision at Synod Convention was not the moving of Convention from the 1st week in August to the last week in July. For some this change will affect their attendance at

PPFA. Pastor Bill Leersen and I were at the microphones when someone called the question. Obviously, that gentleman never heard of PPFA.

The biggest decision made by our Synod was to amalgamate NPS with MLPS on the Watertown, WI campus and to join NWC and DMLC on the New Ulm campus. There was much discussion, comments, and glances toward heaven. The vote was so very close. Less than 20 votes separated the two sides. The votes passed to amalgamate the schools. I voted against the amalgamation. Later on, Pastor "Jeb" Schaeffer would write that "no one danced on the grave." There were 500 people in that gym. When the results were read, it was so quiet in that gym that you could hear tears running down the faces of some of the men present. I, too, cried. The Watertown Campus was my home for 8 years, as it was for many of you. What has helped me resolve my feelings about this historical change was what District President Kell wrote in 1980. The Gospel wasn't taken away from us. "If we think it is that bad," he wrote, "then what do you think the apostle means when he says, 'All things work together for good to them who love God?'" He wrote that a year after our beloved Academy was closed. Trusting in the Lord in every matter of life is not always so easy because of our sinful nature. Only by God-given faith can we and will we say "Thy will be done."

1992-1994

"Sing To The Lord A New Song" was the theme of the 37th

Biennial Convention of the Dakota-Montana District at St. Martin's School in Watertown, SD. It was time to sing a new song. The new hymnal was being used in most of our congregations. We were on the eve of our district's 75th Anniversary. Our district spread through the Dakotas, Wyoming, and Montana up to the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Soon, by God's grace, we would be in Manitoba, Canada.

It was time to sing a new song to our Lord because there were no controversies to deal with. It was time to sing a new song to our gracious and loving God because Great Plains Lutheran High School Association resolved to Call a director and with God's blessings open our high school in Watertown, SD, in the fall of 1995 - 15 years after our Academy was closed. It was a time to sing a new song to the Lord for all the exciting happenings in missions in our district - telecommunications and exploratory work in Sheridan, Cody, Powell, and Lovell, WY; the "storefront ministry" in Red Deer, Canada; exploratory work in West Fargo, ND; the increase in God's Kingdom in Calgary, Springbank, and Carstairs, Canada, and the assistance of summer vicars in Springbank and Wyoming. It was time to sing a new song because the South Dakota LESSs were going to have their accreditation reinstated. It was time to sing a new song to God for leading 411 children into our district's schools. It was time for us to sing to the Lord a new song. And we did!

Pastor Pope pointed us to our 75th Anniversary. He reminded us of what anniversaries mean to us Christians. He wrote:

"Anniversaries by their very nature are a time to pause and consider our course. They afford us opportunity to remember the past and consider the future, however, God may lead us...For 75 years our gracious God has kept our Dakota-Montana District a confessing Church, may it be our resolve and our prayer that our God and Lord will preserve our district in this manner to His glory alone. How will our district be strong in its confession? Only by its constant study and restudy of God's Word. God's Word will keep a church from seeking the things of the world. Our Lord has said for all time, 'Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.' Such study should be zealously pursued by us all." May we take these words to heart, act accordingly, and ask God to keep us strong in our confession of His Word.

Pastors Tony Hanson, Jon Baumann, John Hildebrand, and Ken Bittorf were the latest crop of Seminary graduates to come to our district. Pastor Pieter Reid was Commissioned as a missionary to Indonesia on January 31, 1993. 13 teachers were installed. Three pastors transferred into our district while we said farewell to 6 men. Two teachers left our district. A Christian Victory Service was held for Mary Sue Pless. One teacher resigned. Milbank and Summit formed a dual parish as well as Bowdle and Roscoe. Mound City, Akaska and Tolstoy formed a tri-parish. The exploratory in Edmonton was discontinued.

Councilmen's Conferences will be offered throughout the district in January and February of 1995. 1,700 copies of the

newsletter were being printed.

The School of Outreach was changed to the satellite School of Outreach. "Presenters travel to different Districts to provide the School of Outreach to a broader base of congregations."

In March of 1994 the first Principals' Workshop was held in Pierre with 5 of the 6 principals in attendance.

Work has begun on the "Altar Book" and "Occasional Services." Plans are being made for a national conference on worship and music for the summer of 1996.

Pastor and Mrs. Tony Hanson are developing useful lessons for young children. These lessons are available for free to congregations of our district.

The stewardship program for 1994-1995 is entitled "Christianity: A Whole New Way Of Looking At Things."

CCFS reported that 28 congregations of our district had not sent in any offerings through the first quarter of 1994. May we storm heaven in asking God to open the hearts of our people so that our mission offerings may meet the needs of the opportunities to spread the Gospel.

Our district's Long Range Planning Committee discussed eight ideas, but they felt that the District Council would "have a better understanding of the needs of our district and the direction in which our district is headed."

We encouraged the Synod's Board for Ministerial Education to continue to study the concept of "regional centers," and

proceed with caution so our Prep School isn't hurt by them. As a district we supported the Synod in amalgamating the schools and that we agreed with the COP that a special convention not be called to reconsider the amalgamations.

God willing, we will celebrate 75 years of God's grace July 9 and 10, 1995, at Mobridge, SD. Pastor Pope will be the guest preacher. The service will be at Zion Ev. Lutheran Church in Mobridge. An anniversary book will be prepared. The thanks offering project will be the district's Student Aid Fund.

Thus far in the 1990's, only two congregations have been organized. They are Abundant Life in Saskatoon, Canada in 1992 and Mighty Fortress in Red Deer, Canada in 1993. St. Paul's in Carstairs is a preaching station.

We have always been called or classified as a "mission" district. The early pioneers of our district, like Christian Boettcher and Pastor Wittfaut, went to every little hamlet, village, town, and city with the Gospel, because they knew there were lost souls in those places who needed to hear about Jesus. They didn't consider cost. If they did, they would not have spent weeks away from their families and literally spent hours bouncing in a buggy over unpaved roads for hundreds of miles just to bring the Word of God to people saved by Jesus Christ and to those who didn't yet know Him.

These early pioneer pastors and their families put up with a lot of hardships and made great sacrifices for their Lord. Sometimes I think we have it too easy in our day and age.

The unchurched are still with us. As Christians, we are responsible to go and tell the "good news" of Jesus Christ. Because of our modern conveniences - automobiles, paved roads, phone, faxes, telecommunications, and computers, we should be able to reach even more people with the saving Gospel than our early pioneers did. But are we? When we compare the number of pastors in our district back then with now and the population back then and now, we will see that we are not reaching out to more people, but to less.

History can help us live the future. Things really haven't changed. There are lost souls. By God's grace we have the Gospel. The Great Commission hasn't changed. We need to pray to God to give each pastor, each teacher, each member of our congregations an ever greater zeal for the Gospel and desire to proclaim that Gospel.

I know that I am walking on thin ice when I say this, but money should not dictate where we take the Gospel. Yes, we are to be good stewards, but wasn't it Jesus, our Savior, who said, "Go, and make disciples of all nations....And lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the age?" Wasn't it Jesus who sent His disciples out without any gold and silver, bag or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff? The Almighty Son of God has not changed. He keeps His promises to be with us. In order for us for us to continue to be a "mission district" we need to ask the Holy spirit to increase our trust in Christ's power, promises, presence, and blessings, as we go and proclaim

the Gospel with the people of our district and our world.

Pastor Peter Naumann was elected District President. Pastor Doug Free and Pastor Wayne Rouse were elected to serve the Lord and our District as Vice Presidents. Pastor Paul Marggraf was elected Secretary.

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PASTOR REGINALD E. POPE

As you can see from what took place at the 1994 Convention, Pastor Reginald Pope was not re-elected District President. After 42 years in the full-time ministry, he retired. To my knowledge he is only the second District President to do that. Pastor Kell was the other president to retire as our District President.

Pastor Pope entered the ministry in 1952 in our District. Over the last 25 years I have often heard him and his wife, Pat, speak of their love for our district, their district. Their eyes sparkle when they tell stories of their years on the prairie.

Pastor Pope is a theologian, a pastor's pastor. Every time I called him for advice and guidance, and there were many such calls, he always listened. He always gave me advice that turned out to be the right advice. He never made me feel foolish or stupid.

When we served the vacancy at my home church when I was a senior at Seminary, he talked me out of quitting because I felt that I didn't have the intelligence to be a pastor. That

discussion took place as I was about to teach Adult Information Class. He asked me, "What do you have in your hand?" I said, "The Bible and the Catechism." What he said reassured me that I could serve the Lord in the ministry, by God's grace. He simply said, "What more do you need?"

After I had been elected circuit pastor, which took place 10 days after I returned to the district, I talked to Pastor Pope about resigning as circuit pastor because I felt I didn't have the qualifications to be a circuit pastor. Once again, he gave me a helpful piece of advice. He said, "As long as you are on the side of Holy Scripture, you are always right."

Pastor Pope served his Lord well. Pastor Pope was on the side of God's Word during the troubled '50's and early '60's. He was instrumental in keeping many of the pastors and congregations in the WELS during those trouble times. God made him the right man to lead our district during those troubling times in 1989 and 1990. Over the years he practically served on every committee in our district. God certainly used His humble servant, Pastor Reginald Pope.

Pastor Pope and his family have been friends for many years. The Dakota-Montana District was their home. My wife and I visited them as they were loading their moving truck for their move to Wisconsin. Before we said our farewells, I thanked Pastor and Mrs. Pope for all of their advice, concern, guidance, and Christian love that they had shown to me and my family. Pastor Pope said, "Oh, but we want to thank you for suggesting

our name for Mitchell. If it hadn't been for you, we would never had the opportunity to come home." No thanks necessary, except to the Holy Spirit, who alone brought this all about. How fitting it was at the Convention, after Pastor and Mrs. Pope had received the District's thanks and gift, that we sang, "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow." It was time to sing to the Lord a new song.

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THE FUTURE

What does the future hold for our District? The small rural congregations will become multiple parishes or close their doors. We've seen some of that already in recent years. Some of our pastors will once again become "Reisepredigern" - in essence, circuit riders. Great Plains Lutheran High School will become the jewel of our district as the Academy once was. It won't be easy, but then, anything worth while isn't easy. There will still be a larger than normal turnover of pastors in our district. History tells us that. By the grace of God, we will still remain a "mission" district because reaching out with the Gospel is so important to us. Because of the close fellowship of our brethren in the District we will remain the envy of many districts. PPFA will survive even though Synod Conventions will be held at the same time. By the grace of God, we will continue to serve as the best training ground for young "whippersnappers." And, by the grace of God, we remain firmly founded in God's Word and the conscience of the Synod

amid Satan's attacks to lead us into false doctrine and heresy. We don't know what the future holds but we know who holds the future, so let us trust in the Lord to be with us and bless us.

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CONCLUSION

This paper is too long, but 75 years is a lot to cover. I want to thank all of the former Dakota-Montana people who sent me their stories and for their love for our district. Did you see the sparkle in their eyes as they talked about their beloved district? Every year, at the end of January, former Dakota-Montana pastors and wives gather for a meal. When we lived in Wisconsin we attended a couple of those get-togethers. It was fun to hear all those stories - to hear all those voices from the prairie. My heartfelt thanks to all of them for preserving our history. Thanks to Pastor H. Birner for his fine recollection of the first 50 years of our history. I borrowed much of what he wrote for this history. He did a fine job. I want to thank the Seminary Library and Pastor Wayne Rouse for providing me with the District's Proceedings from 1968-to the present. I can't forget to thank my wife, Carolyn, and our son, Joey, for helping me print and put this paper together. Special thanks to the copier repairman who fixed the copier on such short notice.

In 1920, when our district began, there were 55 congregations in our district. 7,000 souls, 3,500 communicants

were served by 32 pastors. In 1970, there were 11,275 souls, 8,061 communicants, and 40 pastors serving 72 congregations. The 1993 statistical report says that there are 12,256 souls, 9,276 communicants in 77 congregations, served by 54 pastors. There were 4 vacancies recorded in the 1993 Statistical Report. We have grown, but there are still many who need to hear about our Savior.

In July of 1980, I was ordained and installed in Hazelton, ND. In October of 1986, I followed the Call to Wisconsin. In June of 1992, I was brought back to the District. I am thankful to our Lord that He did bring me back to the Dakota-Montana District. A day after I accepted the Call to Gillette, Pastor Wayne Rouse called me to inform me that I was going to be a delegate to the Synod Convention. At the end of the conversation he said, "Al, we are looking forward to welcoming you home." At the District Convention in 1992, many brothers welcomed me with the words, "Welcome home." I am home.

This love for the District has infected my family. There is a young man walking the campus in Watertown, WI, that if you ask him where he is from, he will say, "The Dakota-Montana District - Gillette, Wyoming!" Our second oldest son, whenever he sees a car with an eastern state license plate driving around our state, or in the Dakotas or Montana, he will say, "Go home! Go back to where you came from." We, as a family, give thanks to God that He brought us to this District

The Dakota-Montana District is like a beautiful woman.

Look at her beauty - from western Minnesota, across the plains to the Black Hills to the Big Horn Mountains and Yellowstone to Missoula and Glacier National Park to Banff to the Badlands to the Red River Valley. A beautiful woman. Her heart is full of love for her own. And those who stay here, in essence, marry her. Some fall in love with her, but soon leave her for another district. Most of the time, they don't return to their first love. A few come to their senses and by God's grace, return to her. She is a special woman and we should never take her for granted.

Pastor Otto Engel, who sent me a letter about his father's work and the work of our early pioneers, wrote something in his letter to me that is worth retelling. He said that as we review the "labors of our fathers" that an old proverb comes to mind. He wrote the German, I will provide his English translation. "What you have inherited from the fathers, acquire it anew, in order to possess it." He continues by saying, "Let us study it for the sake of acquiring it anew, thank God for it and ask Him to help us to guard it jealously and pass it on undiminished to our children. Grace received is grace to share." Let's hold on to what we have in our District and by God's grace pass it on to generations to come.

It's time to say, "Amen." May our Lord preserve our beloved district that we may always glorify His name. The Holy Spirit will always build His Church and use us to proclaim the Gospel, so that the borders will be extended, and the stones will be

added. My dear brothers, "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction...Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." II Timothy 4:2 & 5.

SOLI DEO GLORIA!

APPENDIX A

This poem talks about the hardships that the early pastors of our district endured. This poem was written in German about the Pastor from Hein, which is now Zeeland, ND. The poem was sent to me by Pastor Otto Engel. The poem is about his father.

A PREACHER COMES FROM HEIN

1. A preacher comes from Hein
Ariding o'er the prairie
To serve his congregations
A faithful shepherd he.

REFRAIN: Indeed! Indeed! a joyful spirit must be thine
To preach at this place, Hein, To preach at this place, Hein.

2. His trips he makes with speed
In weather warm or cold
Alone he travels on the way
No one does he behold.

REFRAIN: Indeed! Indeed! a lonely spirit must be thine
To preach at this place, Hein. To preach at this place, Hein.

3. Though stormy weather strikes,
He still must leave his home,
Year after year is but the same -
There is no change to come.

REFRAIN: Indeed! Indeed! A hardy spirit must be thine
To preach at this place, Hein. To preach at this place, Hein.

4. The saddest part is this -
When 's efforts are despised.
When so-called Christians laugh
At all that he has prized.

REFRAIN: Indeed! Indeed! A sturdy spirit must be thine
To preach at this place, Hein. To preach at this place, Hein.

5. Yet he delights to do
What pleases God above
Who health and strength provide-
The gift of perfect love.

REFRAIN: Indeed! Indeed! a grateful spirit must be thine
To preach at this place, Hein. To preach at this place, Hein.

6. Christ shed his precious blood
 As offering for my guilt,
 Why shant I please Him now.
 Who thus His blood has spilt.

REFRAIN: Indeed! Indeed! a thankful spirit must be thine
 To preach at this place, Hein. To preach at this place, Hein.

APPENDIX B

This poem was written at the 1994 PPFA gathering in Box Canyon, MT.
 It was sung around the campfire. I am not too sure who the authors
 were.

PPFA

Now we've had our fun together - PPFA
 Whether Storm or sunny weather - PPFA (tune of "Go My Children")
 Drawn here by the rushing trout streams
 Mountain Peaks and campfire meetings
 We are one in heart and spirit - PPFA

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to Thee we pray
 Let your great Creation cheer us, on our homeward way.
 Thank you for your Son who saved us
 Gave His life a ransom for us
 Now we've had our fun together - PPFA