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The history of Lutheranism in Canada
EKK505

THE HISTORY OF LUTHERANISM IN CANADA

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INTRODUCTION

The history of Lutheranism in Canada, like the country of Canada, is unique. Many Americans fail to see this. Some fail to see any difference at all between the United States and Canada. Some portray Canada as a weak sister who needs the guidance, help and protection of a big brother like the U.S. Others picture Canada as a vast, frozen wilderness. What they fail to see, however, are the historical, cultural, political and geographical differences that distinguish Canada from the U.S. It is true that Canada is dependent, to a degree, on the U.S. But Canada is exercising its independence more and more. Norman J. Threinen states in his book entitled In Search of Identity: "Canada is a country seeking to find its identity. It is divided into geographical regions that are not conducive to political or cultural unity. It was settled by a host of immigrant peoples with a wide variety of cultures, language and religions. It is officially committed to a bi-lingualism of French and English. It is torn by regionalism." ¹ In spite of these difficulties Canada is emerging as its own nation. With the recent Patriation of the Constitution, Canada has officially severed itself from the apron-strings of Mother England. And if you are observant you will notice an ever-widening gap developing between Canada and the U.S. Canada is indeed a country seeking to find its identity.

What does this have to do with the history of Lutheranism in Canada? There are certain similarities. Canadian Lutheranism, to a greater degree, has been dependent on Lutheranism in the U.S. But it, too, is exercising its independence more and more these days. Lutheranism in Canada is seeking to establish its own identity. And to do this, it draws back on its own history.

I shall attempt to sketch this history for you. I hope to capture the distinctive nature of Lutheranism in Canada. I will depict its struggles, its triumphs and defeats, and, hopefully, illustrate what makes Lutheranism in Canada as unique as the country it dwells in.

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THE HISTORY OF LUTHERANISM IN CANADA

OFF TO A BAD START

The first Lutherans to set foot on Canadian soil are the Danish Lutherans. They arrived aboard the frigate Unicorn and the sloop Lamprey. Both ships had a combined crew of 65 men. The majority of them were Lutherans. A Lutheran pastor, the Rev. Rasmus Jensen of Aarhus, Denmark, served as chaplain for the crew. The expedition was commissioned by King Christian IV of Denmark under the leadership of Jens Munck. The purpose of the expedition was to discover the Northwest Passage, which was believed in those days to be the shortest route to India.

The expedition left Denmark in May, 1619. They entered Hudson's Bay and experienced considerable difficulty with ice flows. Unable to turn back because of drifting ice, they looked for a safe harbor to sit out the winter. They sailed across to the western shore of Hudson's Bay and landed at the mouth of what is now called the Churchill River. They stepped ashore on Sept. 7, 1619, one year before the Mayflower landed in America. Jens Munck claimed the land for Denmark and called it Nova Dania (New Denmark). Rev. Rasmus Jensen has the distinction of being the first Lutheran (and Protestant) pastor known to have set foot on the North American continent. He arrived 19 years before the Swedish pastor Thorkillus (first Lutheran pastor in America) came to Delaware.

Jens Munck kept a diary in which he recorded the grim details of that ill-fated mission. Christmas Day turned out to be the last real service Rev. Jensen conducted. After that, a violent sickness spread among the crew increasing daily. Rev. Jensen was among those who were bed-ridden. He preached his last sermon to the crew from his bunk on Jan. 23, and died quietly on Feb. 20. Munck was one of only three survivors from the expedition. Munck's diary records the heroic courage and Christian faith of the first Lutherans to set foot on Canadian soil. Excerpts from his diary can be read in Carl Cronmiller's, A History of the Lutheran Church in Canada, Vol. I pp.13-19.² The story of the Danes' tragic expedition describes how the history of Lutheranism in Canada got off to a bad start.

THE FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH - HALIFAX, N.S.

The history of the first Lutheran church in Canada actually begins in England during the late 1600's and early 1700's. Many German immigrants were fleeing from the battle-stricken region of the Palatinate (that part of Germany east of the Rhine R. to the border of France). England offered them refuge. They were readily welcomed and treated rather well in England, primarily because the Queen's husband was a Lutheran. So many immigrants fled to England that conditions soon became overcrowded. It was also around this time that the French & Indian War came to an end (1748). Under the terms of peace, Nova Scotia came under British and Protestant influence. England quickly saw a way here to kill two birds with one stone; settle Nova Scotia, and relieve the overcrowded conditions in England.

King George II started a campaign to settle Nova Scotia. He promised each immigrant who settled there 50 acres of land free of taxes for ten years, 10 more acres for each member of the family and more privileges in proportion to the number of acres cleared and cultivated. The British government also promised to maintain settlers for the first twelve months after their arrival, provide them with arms and ammunition for defense against Indians and supply the necessary tools for cultivation. In June of 1749, 2576 immigrants landed in Halifax. Among them were many German Lutherans, farmers and winemakers from Wurttemberg and Saxony.

These early settlers organized a congregation, perhaps as early as the year of their arrival. The first documented proof of the congregation is dated Oct. 12, 1752, in which some land was deeded over to the Evangelical Lutheran Church.³ In 1761 they erected St. George Church, the first Lutheran church built on Canadian soil. They didn't obtain a minister, however, until 1783, over 30 years later. Ministers were far and few between in those days on this continent. The few available were not too anxious to move to the wilderness of Nova Scotia and risk being scalped at the hands of the Indians.

Finally, Rev. Bernard Michael Hauseal (Hausihl) left his pastorate in New York City and came to Halifax. He was a Lutheran pastor and a devoted Loyalist. His loyalty to Britain wouldn't permit him to remain in America after the Revolutionary War. He spent one year in Halifax and then left for England. He was ordained there at the hands of the Bishop of London (Anglican). He returned to Halifax and served for another 14 years. But whether he served as a Lutheran or an Anglican isn't clear. His successor, the Rev. George Wright, was without a doubt Anglican, a Church of England pastor. In his first year the Lutheran congregation passed quietly out of existence. The property was acquired by the Anglican Church and the Lutheran congregation in Halifax ceased to exist. It wasn't until 1915, 115 years later, that the Lutheran Church reentered this field.

THE LONGEST CONTINUING LUTHERAN CHURCH - LUNENBERG, N.S.

The history of the Lutheran church at Lunenburg is similar to that of Halifax in many ways. The town of Lunenburg was founded on June 7, 1753 when 1450 immigrants arrived. A large number of them were German Lutherans. From the beginning their existence was fraught with danger. A vast majority of these immigrants met with a tragic fate. Indians murdered everyone on whom they could lay their hands. Added to that were the dangers of exposure, small pox and other fatal diseases. Seven months after the date of their arrival 1089 of the settlers were dead and buried. That left some 360 survivors.

The Lutherans who survived were anxious for a pastor, but, like Halifax, were forced to wait. Twelve years after the founding of their settlement, Rev. Paul Brysellius was sent to them as a German - English missionary to the colony. He was originally ordained Lutheran, then reordained by the Bishop of London in 1767 (again like Halifax). Within a year he started instructing the children in the Anglican doctrine. A rupture occurred in the congregation

when this was discovered. He had masqueraded as a Lutheran, but was really an Anglican.

They wrote twice to Rev. H. M. Muhlenberg of Philadelphia for a pastor, but received no reply. During this time they built a church, completing it in 1770. About this time a man named Kolback made a trip to New York. He wasn't a member of the congregation. He was German Reformed, but proved to be a friend to the Lutherans. He was authorized by the congregation to secure a pastor for them. He went to a Rev. J.S. Gerock in New York City. After many lengthy negotiations, correspondence and consideration of candidates, Rev. Frederick Schultz agreed to come to Lunenburg. He arrived on Oct. 7, 1772. According to the church record of 1775 there were 185 families connected with the congregation. This church, named Zion, would later serve as the birthplace for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Nova Scotia (July 10, 1903). Zion has the longest continuous history of any Lutheran congregation in Canada.

LUTHERAN LOYALISTS

The next major wave of Lutherans entering Canada came after the Revolutionary War. These were Lutherans who remained loyal to the British crown during and after the American Revolution. Their roots go back to the Palatine Germans who fled their war-torn country for England during the late 1600's and early 1700's. Their staunch loyalty to the British crown stems from the fact that they were well cared for in England as Norman J. Threinen writes:

The Lutheran churches in London interested themselves in the physical and spiritual well-being of these immigrants. The German Lutheran clergy, who had considerable influence at the English court due to the fact that the husband of the Queen was a Lutheran, arranged for army tents to be supplied and vacant warehouses to be opened to take care of the Palatines. In addition money was provided for their daily needs and collections were taken up in the churches for their benefit. Thus a strong loyalty to the English Throne was established among the Palatines.⁴

Many of these Palatines emigrated to Canada and the United States. Around 3000 of them were granted passage to New York by the Queen in 1710. The majority of them settled along both sides of the Hudson R. in up-state New York. Many of these immigrants refused to take up arms against England during the outbreak of the American Revolution. Lutherans in general were divided as to their loyalties. For example, Henry Muhlenberg was, at first, against the war and sided with the English. Later he took a more neutral stand, while his sons were avid supporters of the Revolution.⁵

Most Lutherans remained politically uninvolved during the American Revolution. Some were persuaded to side with the Tories and fight for England. One of their leaders was a Palatine German named Sir John Johnson. When he was forced to flee into Canada after the revolution, many German loyalists followed him. They settled around Montreal and along the border of New York State in the present day province of Quebec. Although some of these German Loyalists were Lutherans, there was no Lutheran clergyman in the area. As a result, they drifted into membership in the Methodist and Anglican churches.⁶

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Other Lutheran Loyalists also set out for Canada and settled along the north shore of Lake Ontario. They established 3 Lutheran churches and 4 preaching stations there. The first Lutheran pastor to serve them was Rev. John Wiegant. The Lutheran pastors who followed him gradually left the Lutheran Church and joined either the Methodists or Anglicans. Eventually these congregations disappeared altogether.

A small group of Lutheran loyalists settled along the St. Lawrence River in the Province of Ontario. These loyalists, however, were determined not to lose their Lutheran identity. They held regular lay reading services in the German language. Later they built a church and called Rev. Samuel Schwerdfeger of Albany, N.Y., to serve them. He, along with Rev. Hauseal (Halifax), were devoted loyalists. Schwerdfeger, however, was also a devoted Lutheran. He served this church and helped organized other Lutheran congregations in the area until his death in 1803.

The two Lutheran pastors who followed him joined the Anglican Church. It seemed for a while as if these congregations would also be swallowed up by the Anglicans and Methodists. However, a Rev. Herman Hayunga left his post as a professor at Hartwick College in 1826 and came to serve this area. It is largely due to his influence that there are still four Lutheran congregations in that area.

What made so many Lutheran loyalists defect to the ranks of the Anglicans and Methodists? There are many factors involved. There was a lack of adequately trained Lutheran clergymen available in the U.S. as well as in Canada. There were a number of vagabond preachers who had no theological training preying on the scattered Lutheran congregations. Not only did these Lutherans have to contend with pseudo or quasi-Lutheran preachers, but they also had competition from the government for those Lutheran pastors who were authentic. The government exerted tremendous pressure on these Lutherans to join the state church (Anglican). They offered a salary of 200 pounds sterling per year to every Lutheran clergyman who joined the Church of England. Since these Lutheran immigrants were, by and large, too poor to support their pastors adequately, many of their pastors did join the Church of England taking most of their members with them. This was a major defeat for Lutheranism in Canada.

GERMAN LUTHERANS NEAR TORONTO

A group of some 60 German Lutheran families moved from Genesee Valley in New York and settled about 20 miles north of Toronto in 1793. They organized to small congregations in separate towns the next year. Their first pastor was a Rev. George Liebig, who served them for a great many years. The reason I mention this is in connection with a story about these Lutherans.

After a vacancy of 16 years, the congregation appointed Adam Keffer to obtain a pastor for them. In the spring of 1849 the sixty year old Keffer travelled several hundred miles, mostly on foot, to Kleckerville, Pa., to plead with the Pittsburgh Synod for a pastor. It was noticed

that Keffer arrived at the meeting barefoot. He was barefoot because his feet hurt from walking. Keffer's earnest plea, augmented by his appearance and obvious self-sacrifice, moved the Pittsburgh Synod to send its president, Gottlieb Bassler, to survey the area in September of that year.

Unfortunately, the Synod just didn't have enough pastors to help their Canadian brothers out. Everyone was amazed, however, when Keffer showed up again at a Synodical meeting the next year. Keffer's dedicated zeal, along with his congregation's pressing need, spurred the Pittsburgh Synod into action. They sent Charles F. Diehl, a graduate of Gettysburg Seminary in 1850, to fill the congregation's vacancy.⁷ This is but one example of the patient faith and dedicated zeal that helped many Canadian Lutherans to persevere in the face of the severest of trials.

MISSOURI ENTERS CANADA

The Missouri Synod was very instrumental in the development of Lutheranism in Canada. They came to the Canadian field relatively late, but still grew to become the second largest Lutheran Church body in Canada.

ONTARIO DISTRICT

Lutherans living in Ontario during the latter part of the 18th century came mainly from New York and Pennsylvania. Immigrants with different Lutheran backgrounds also came from Europe. Many of these either joined other church bodies or fell away from the church altogether. There were few Lutheran services at this time. Many fell prey to unscrupulous characters posing as Lutheran pastors. One writer described them as, "conspicuous for their false doctrines, their vices and irreligious life." Before 1850 the only pastors serving Lutherans in this area were sent out by the New York and Pennsylvania Ministeriums. There was desperate need for real Lutheran pastors in Canada.⁸

The first Missouri Synod pastor to serve in Canada was Rev. Adam Ernst. He has been called "The Father of Missouri Lutheranism in Canada." He trained under pastor Loehe in Europe. Ernst came to America where he became a charter member of the Missouri Synod. He helped organize a number of congregations in Ontario. When the Ontario District was formed in 1879, pastor Ernst became its first president. The district was originally called "The Canada District." It changed its name in 1922 to the Ontario District because by then it wasn't the only district of the Missouri Synod in Canada.

Ernst typifies the kind of sound Lutheran pastor that was sorely needed in Canada. One existing church that Ernst helped bring into the LCMS was formerly under the charge of a Rev. F.W. Bindemann. Although the majority of the people he served were Lutheran, Bindemann never hid the fact that he was reformed in name and liberal in doctrine. He was an aggressive and independent missionary, whose church was often referred to as "Bindemann's Church."⁹ After Bindemann's death in 1865, the members of his church in Berlin (present day Kitchener) approached pastor Ernst to serve them. From the start Ernst pulled no punches with the congregation.

LT-MS

In a congregational meeting he first told them what kind of pastor they would get in him. He was a Lutheran pastor who would remain faithful to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Then he laid down what requirements the congregation would have to meet if he were to become its pastor.¹⁰ He set an example for the other pastors who followed him into Canada.

The Ontario District experienced its greatest growth during post-war immigration. Today it is the largest Canadian district in the LCMS. It recently opened a Seminary in St. Catharines, Ontario.

MANITOBA & SASKATCHEWAN DISTRICT

The first work in this district dates back to 1879. A group of Lutherans from Ontario moved to Manitoba and settled around Portage La Prairie (about 50 miles west of Winnipeg). These people were served from time to time by pastors from Minnesota. Rev. H. Buegel was the first resident pastor in Manitoba (1891-93).

With the completion of the first trans-Canada railroad in 1885, Western Canada received its first real wave of immigrants. Many of them came from Eastern Canada and the U. S. Most of them came from Europe. The government in Canada encouraged immigrants from the poorer parts of Europe to settle in the West. They sought the sturdy, hard working folk from Germany and the Ukrainian villages in Austria, from Galacia, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, parts of Russia, and also from Norway and Sweden.¹¹

A continuous list of Missouri Synod pastors served the scattered congregations and preaching stations of Manitoba and Saskatchewan faithfully. The better known among them were Rev. E. Stark (Winnipeg) and P. Wiegner, who later became the district's first president. This district, which organized in 1922, was not without its problems. Many organized congregations were later abandoned because its members moved away to more prosperous regions. The depression years with its crop failures and destructive winds had a devastating effect on the members of this district. It took time for the district to recover from those losses. Rural parishes suffered from the trend to urbanize as more and more people moved into towns and cities. In spite of all this the Manitoba & Saskatchewan District survived and continued to grow.

ALBERTA & BRITISH COLUMBIA DISTRICT

The roots of this district go back to 1890 when a group of Germans from Austria (Swabians) arrived in Dunmore, Alta. They were made up of both Lutherans and Reformed. Because of crop failures there, they moved to better land around the Edmonton Area. The Lutheran group separated and settled around Stony Plain. In 1893 a rift in the congregation occurred and 20 families were unjustly expelled. They eventually appealed to the LCMS for help. In 1894 Rev. F. Eggers of Great Falls, Mt. was appointed to visit the group. He investigated the situation and sided with the 20 families who were unjustly expelled. His report was favorable and candidate Emil Eberhardt was called to serve the 20 families in the Stony Plain area. This faithful missionary served for 48 years enduring, at times, the most primitive conditions. His missionary activity covered much of Alberta and even extended

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as far west as Vancouver, B.C.

Many other faithful pastors served this vast area, which was organized into a district in 1921. One pastor, Rev. J. Sillick, could preach in 17 different languages. One of the best known pastors is Dr. A. H. Schwermann. He too served his entire ministry in Alberta. He and Dr. A. Rehwinkel helped establish Concordia College in Edmonton. Dr. Schwermann served his Lord in a number of capacities, most notable of these being: principal of Concordia College 1921-54, and as the first president of the Lutheran Church - Canada (Canadian counterpart to LCMS).

This district experienced considerable growth during the depression years, because so many Lutherans moved here from the prairies. Immigration and the oil boom are two primary reasons for the rapid growth of this district. John E. Herzer, in his history of the Alberta & British Columbia District, writes:

One of the striking features of a homestead country is the rapid development which a whole countryside often registers - one might say, over night. Last year's raw lands, as by magic, developed into a settled community, where at 12 months before there had been limitless stretches of virgin landscape, there mushroomed in weeks or months established farmlands, villages, towns, and cities, with the distinctive elevators along their railroad siding; and what ten years ago was range or the stamping ground of Buffalo, moose and wolves, is now turned into a peaceful, though bustling community of stores, homes, schools, and churches.¹²

As the growth rate for Canada, and Alberta in particular, exploded, so did the growth of the Canadian Districts of the LCMS.

EARLY LIVING CONDITIONS IN WESTERN CANADA

What was life like for those early Lutheran pioneers? What living conditions did they encounter as they endeavored to spread the gospel in the Canadian wilderness? I'll let those pioneers describe it to you in their own words. Dr. Rehwinkel describes the journey of those first Lutherans to Stony Plain, Alberta:

The railroad at this time was built only as far as Red Deer and there they unloaded and began their trek northward. Few of the settlers had horses, most of them drove oxen. Because of the poor roads the progress of the journey was extremely slow. There was difficulty finding water suitable for drinking. Then there many forest fires burning along the trail, but under the Lord's protection no harm came to them. In one of the wagons even a child was born without in any way interrupting the progress of the journey. The men drove the teams and in such families, where there was only one man but two wagons, the women drove the second one. The boys and girls drove the cattle. In the evening tents were pitched, some slept in tents while others slept in wagons.

Near Wetaskiwin they had to lay corduroy to cross the swamp. After working hard all day and driving back and forth between various sloughs they were only a few hundred yards from the place where they started in the morning. Perfectly good stoves and heaters were sometimes thrown off the wagon and left in the swamps in order to lighten the load when the wagon mired down.¹³

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Pastor H. D. Wehmeyer served the Missouri Synod for many years in the Canadian Field. He describes his first call into the ministry to Pincher Creek, Alta. (SW Alberta) this way:

When I wrote to Pres. Pfotenhauer for installation at Pincher Creek, he answered: The next pastor is too far away, install yourself. So, on Sept. 4, 1904, I introduced myself to my people and had my first service in a small school house. Living conditions were primitive of course in those times, no telephone, no steam heat, no autos, etc. I did most of my travelling on horse-back and by train, when I went alone. When I stayed over night with people I sometimes had to sleep in one room with husband and wife, but not in one bed, we didn't mind that. But boy, how I dreaded the bed-bugs and how they went for me!¹⁴

Rev. O. H. Schmidt relates the living conditions he and his wife had to put up with while he served in Canada:

Living conditions: pretty rugged! The first home we lived in in Wetaskiwin looked real nice, but was terribly cold, with water, bread and jam freezing right next to the stove. The next house, into which we moved in the dead of winter at 40 below, was a bit better, but had other deficiencies. Our last house again was terribly cold. No running water or inside toilets proved quite a hardship.

The roads were largely mere trails, and you had to battle with the cold and snow in the winter, and the terrific mud in the summer. Many of the trails led through the farms, so that you had to open and close gate as you went....Some of the most swampy roads were corduroyed, which made for a bad crossing, the horses often jumping and jerking the buggy in fits and starts. In one such crossing my wife was thrown against the dashboard, this broke and she fell forward under the horses and the wheels passed over her, I was holding our Louise, sleeping on my lap; she had been driving and when she fell the reins dropped down and I could reach only one of them; the horses became frightened, but by means of that one rein I was able to pull them aside into a thick brush where they had to stop; my wife suffered a miscarriage as a result of this.

Hardships for my wife? There you would really have a chapter, although she bore them all with excellent spirit. But the lack of facilities, the ruggedness of the climate, the severity of the burden of the work she had to do about the house, together with the altitude, bothered her more and more.¹⁵

Since we have heard about living conditions from three different men, it is only fair that we hear it from a woman's point of view. Mrs. Njaa, a pastor's wife, describes her first winter in Prince Albert, Sas.:

"Prestehaugen" they called it, that hill on which we built our first home in Saskatchewan. The house was a frame house 16 x 18 in size but with a large room upstairs. Downstairs there was also just one big room with the kitchen, study and living room all in one. A cook stove and a good heater were the most essential bits of equipment for it was bitterly cold. We never saw coal except in railroad stations, but green wood kept a good fire if we were successful in having a good one going...There was another hardship in those days that has been taken care of by D.D.T. Fleas, and flies and bedbugs were an absolute nuisance. Bedbugs were the worst for they were in the lumber

and everyone had them. Where people had given up the struggle against them they literally took over the house, and we often stayed in homes where we could spend the night picking them off.¹⁶

One of the most common complaints of those early pioneers was bedbugs. I assure you that we have the problem well under control these days. This gives you an idea of what life was like for those early pioneers who paved the way for the spread of the gospel and Lutheranism in Western Canada.

REASONS FOR SLOW GROWTH OF LUTHERANISM IN CANADA

In spite of sacrificial labors and exemplary service by some pastors in all synods, the growth of the Lutheran churches in Canada was slow.¹⁷ The progress of Lutheranism in Canada was retarded from earliest times by a lack of both men and means.

For many years there were no locally trained pastors in Canada. Lutheran churches in Canada had to rely on ministers from the U.S. or Europe. It was very difficult to induce ministers from the States to come to Canada - and even more difficult to make a sufficient number of them stay for any length of time. There are many reasons for this. For a great many years the average Canadian pastor had to serve three stations - twice as many as fellow pastors in the U.S. In the prairie provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta) circuit riders served between 6-10 stations. Living conditions in some places were extremely primitive. Travelling in the rigors of the infamous Canadian winter was not much of an inducement to serve in Canada, especially when compared to the U.S., which had a more moderate climate, shorter distances between parishes and better roads.

When candidate Emil Eberhardt was called to the first pastor of the Missouri Synod in Alberta, "many well meaning friends tried to dissuade the young man from going to the "Country of the frozen North." When he made preparation to send his books, the freight agent was unable to find Edmonton listed among the freight agencies and said to the young pastor, "Man, you are going out of the world." But still Eberhardt went."¹⁸

A similar story is told of the Rev. O.H. Schmidt, who was one of eight candidates called to serve in Canada.

Along with other men he resolved to take the call and "stick" in the area. He states that up to that time it had been difficult to get and keep men in Western Canada. When one of his classmates heard about his call to Canada he said: "Hard luck! But, then, you can sit off your year," meaning by this that after his year of "exile"¹⁹ in Canada, he could accept a call back to the United States.

This reveals the attitude many pastors had towards a call to Canada. They regarded it as a temporary call and seldom declined a call back to the States.

Another barrier to the growth of Lutheranism in Canada was the language problem. The mixture of Lutherans from European and Scandinavian countries, with their various language barriers and scattered locations, made it impossible to present a united front. At the turn of

the century Lutheran services were conducted in at least 12 different languages; English, Danish, Finnish, German, Hungarian, Russian, Latvian, Icelandic, Lettish, Norwegian, Slovak and Swedish. Some congregations (and pastors) held tenaciously to their native tongue. This tended to isolate them from English speaking people and hinder growth.

Intersynodical rivalry and hostility, competition from missionaries of other denominations, and a lack of enthusiasm by parent synods in the U.S. are other factors which contributed to the slow growth of Lutheranism in Canada,

THE SHAPE OF LUTHERANISM IN CANADA TODAY

At the turn of the century there were more than a dozen different Lutheran church bodies operating in Canada. Today the vast majority of Lutheran churches belong to one of three church bodies (see below). A small handful of Lutheran churches in Canada belong to such church bodies as the Danish Church Abroad, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, the Church of the Lutheran Brethren and our Wisconsin Synod.

THE BIG THREE

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF CANADA (ELCC)

The ELCC is the third largest Lutheran body in Canada today. Like its American counterpart, the ALC, the ELCC was formed when a number of synods merged together. At first it was a district of the ALC. The ELCC became the first indigenous Lutheran Church body in Canada in Jan. 1967, when it was granted a charter by Parliament and incorporated. Its theology is liberal, basically identical to that of the ALC. It operates a joint Seminary with the LCA-CS in Saskatoon, Sask. (The LC-C pulled out of that Seminary in 1980). It also operates 3 colleges and one high school.

LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA - CANADA SECTION (LCA-CS)

The LCA-CS was organized in 1963, the result of a merger between four different church bodies in the U.S. It is divided into three synods: the Eastern Canada Synod (Ont., Quebec and the Maritimes), the Central Canadian Synod (Manitoba and Saskatchewan), and the Western Canada Synod (Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon). It is the largest Lutheran body in Canada. It operates a joint Seminary with the ELCC in Saskatoon and its own Seminary in Waterloo, Ont. Its theology, like the LCA, is liberal.

LUTHERAN CHURCH - CANADA (LC-C)

The LC-C is a federation of the three synodical districts of the LCMS in Canada. The LC-C was organized in Winnipeg in Sept. 1958 and granted a Dominion Charter by Parliament in June 1959. It has been working slowly ever since toward becoming its own autonomous church body. However, when it does reach that stage of independence, it will remain affiliated with the LCMS. It is the second largest Lutheran body in Canada. It has its own Seminary in St. Catharines, Ont. and operates Concordia College in Edmonton.

WORKING TOWARD MERGER

In 1972 the ELCC extended an invitation to the LC-C and the LCA-CS "to enter into official negotiations to bring about a merger"²⁰ between the three largest Lutheran church bodies in Canada. All three church bodies agreed to study the possibility of merger. There were some problems, however. The LC-C was in fellowship with the ELCC, but not with the LCA-CS. The LC-C insisted that in the merger talks "Primary attention should be given to the achievement of doctrinal consensus sufficient for altar and pulpit fellowship between the LC-C and the LCA-CS."²¹

So far, all merger talks have failed, because the LC-C and the LCA-CS cannot reach an agreement in doctrine. Major differences lie between them in the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures and the Ordination of Women. It remains to be seen what will happen here in Canada now that the LCMS has broken off fellowship with the ALC. Will the LC-C follow suit and sever its fellowship with the ELCC? It seems likely, but I'm sure it will be met with resistance. Since Canadian Lutheran church bodies are smaller than those in the U.S. they have tended to work closer together. One good example of this is an LC-C pastor who serves a congregation that merged with an ELCC congregation in Edmonton. This very briefly sums up the shape of Lutheranism in Canada today and the direction it's taking.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WELS IN CANADA

Past involvement of the WELS in Canada has not always been as bright and positive as it is now. We have had our fingers burned a couple times trying to be helpful in the past. You'll see what I mean as I detail each specific time our synod was involved with mission work in Canada. I will sketch the past. I will present a picture of mission work presently being done. And I will look at what the future may have in store for the WELS in Canada.

WAS HE WORKING FOR US OR WASN'T HE?

I know this sounds like a strange title, but let me explain. There are conflicting reports on Pastor F. Bredlow's work in the Alberta region during the late 1890's. The golden anniversary book of our Dakota - Montana District states:

It is interesting to know that our Synod had done work in Canada in the particular area in which we are now active as long ago as the 1890's.

At that time the Wisconsin Synod had sent a certain Pastor F. Bredlow into Alberta to do mission work. He was a graduate of our college at Watertown, Wisconsin and of our Seminary. Probably his work then was not too successful, because the Synod ordered him to discontinue the work there. Instead he joined the Manitoba Synod, which is now a member of the Lutheran Church of America. He continued to work there until ill health forced him to retire.²²

Pastor F. Bredlow did graduate from Northwestern College and our Seminary. He did serve as a pastor in our Synod at Town Theresa, Logansville and Elroy, Wis. However, the 1895 WELS proceedings (p.17) report: "Pastor F. Bredlow, who has withdrawn from our body, is now doing mission work under the General Council in Manitoba." The 1897 General Council Proceedings

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(p.56) in a "Report of the Board of German Home Missions" states: "Rev. F. Bredlow has charge of six churches and preaching stations. They are Wetaskiwin, Leduc, Red Deer Lake, Bare Hills, Lacombe and Duhamel. The missionary serves 450 baptized persons; the number of the confirmed members is about half as large. The labors of Rev. Bredlow are seriously interferred with by two Moravian missionaries, who also claim that they are Lutheran." The 1895 General Council Proceedings (p.39) in the same report of the Board of German Home Missions states: "Rev. Bredlow labors with great self-denial and serves the church at Wetaskiwin, as well as a number of settlements which are far scattered. His former colleagues in the Wisconsin Synod speak highly of his fidelity, and before calling him he assured the Board, that he had examined and accepted the principles of the General Council." Our Wisconsin Synod has never been in fellowship with the General Council or the New York Ministerium. It appears highly unlikely from the statements above that our Synod sent Pastor Bredlow to do mission work in Alberta. However, Pastor Bredlow's grandson, who is a member of our church in Wetaskiwin, claims that the Wisconsin Synod did send his grandfather to Alberta. Was he working for us or wasn't he?

GRACE - REGINA, SASK.

The next time we hear of the Wisconsin Synod in Canada is through the work of Rev. Oswald Herrmann. He left the state church of Hannover, Germany in 1894 and came to Saskatchewan as a member of the General Council. He was colloquized by Rev. F. Pfotenhauer in 1903 and became a member of the Missouri Synod. In 1905 he accepted a call to Lake Mills, Wis. and joined the Wisconsin Synod. Then he accepted a call extended by a small group of families in Regina, Sask. While in Regina he joined the Nebraska District of our Synod. Our Synod subsidized his work in Canada. He remained pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Regina, till 1924 when he resigned because of advancing age.²³ Rev. Herrmann actually owned the small church in Regina. By the time he was ready to retire the group had dwindled down to just two families. So he sold the church to the Manitoba-Saskatchewan District of the Missouri Synod for a little over \$1600 in 1924.²⁴ Today Grace is one of the largest Lutheran churches in Canada.

OUR SAVIOR - SAULT STE. MARIE, ONT. (discontinued)

The next phase of WLS activity in Canada was conducted in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. Work started in the Canadian "Soo" in 1954 when Rev. Lyle Koenig was pastor on the American side. The first year Vicar Glenway Backus canvassed the area for a mission. Services started then with one WLS family and around 25 people. He was followed by Vicar Schlicht. When the mission was organized Rev. Paul Eckert became its first pastor. He was followed by Rev. Richard Lauersdorf. The chapel and parsonage was built during his pastorate. He was followed by a Rev. Gartman, who developed into a charismatic. He was the cause of a split in the small congregation. He took one group and started up some sort of Bible church. One more pastor ^(Rev. Robert Weimer) was called, but it wasn't very long after Gartman left that the mission disbanded and the property was sold. The faithful members who were left
 Rev. Wayne Schultz also vicared in Sault Ste. Marie. Rev. Koch^{also} served the congregation
 as Pastor

joined Immanuel Lutheran in the American "Soo."

ST. MATTHEW - EDMONTON, ALTA. (discontinued)

In 1963 a group of people left St. Paul Church (LCMS) under protest and founded St. Matthew Lutheran Church under the leadership of student Dieter Mueller. He was a student at our Seminary. The congregation was accepted into membership by our Synod in its 1963 convention. Most of the work at St. Matthew was conducted in the German language. Rev. Waldemar Loescher was called as its first pastor. These people left the LCMS church because they had a clash of personalities with the pastor. It didn't take them very long before they started giving Pastor Loescher a difficult time, especially concerning our Synod's stance on the doctrine of fellowship. The situation got worse until Pastor Loescher accepted a call out. Pastor Richard Stroebel from Wetaskiwin served as vacancy pastor. Things deteriorated in the congregation to the point where Pastor Stroebel and Pastor Deutschlander, from St. Albert, would no longer serve them. That's when our Synod closed the mission down.

ST. JOHN - WETASKIWIN, ALTA.

St. John's was started when another group of Germans from the Missouri Synod approached our Synod for a pastor who would conduct German services. They left the Missouri Synod Church when it stopped conducting services in German. Pastor Loescher from Edmonton served them until Pastor Richard Strobel accepted the call and was installed in 1967. The congregation bought a parsonage and built a church in 1969. After the church was completed they started conducting services in both German and English and still do today. After Pastor Strobel left, the congregation was served by Pastor Paul Schliesser, who is retired now in Arizona. Pastor John Sullivan is presently serving St. John's.

ST. PETER - ST. ALBERT, ALTA.

This congregation originated when a group of people started questioning the Missouri Synod's doctrine. They left and approached our Synod in April, 1965. Pastor Ernst Klaszus was called to serve them in June and conducted his first service in July 1965 with a total of 12 communicants. They bought a fine chunk of land in St. Albert for \$22,000 and built a parsonage in 1966. Pastor Klaszus resigned from the ministry and left our Synod in 1968. Pastors Strobel and Loescher served as vacancy pastor. Many people left during this period. Pres. Kell and Pastor Wayne Schulz came up and assessed the situation. They decided to keep the mission going because Rev. Daniel Deutschlander accepted the call here and arrived in June 1970. In the fall of 1970 they built one of the most unique chapels in our Synod. Up until this time the congregation had been known as Pilgrim Lutheran. They officially organized and incorporated in 1971 under the name St. Peter Lutheran and was accepted into the WELS. The congregation is presently being served by Pastor Roy Beyer.

TRINITY - BASHAW, ALTA.

This is another one of those German groups who approached the WELS for a pastor. They left the LCA and approached the WELS through St. Matthew's in Edmonton. They

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were served at first by Pastor Klaszus from St. Albert and later by Pastor Strobel from Wetaskiwin. They were organized in 1965. When they closed down in 1972 only a small group was left. One lady from this congregation is presently a member of St. John's, Wetaskiwin.

EXPLORATORY - BARRHEAD, ALTA. (discontinued)

Mission work was begun in Barrhead when a group of Germans from either the LCA or ALC approached Pastor Loescher in Edmonton. This exploratory mission was served on a rotating basis by pastors Deutschlander, Loescher and Strobel. They served this group until it became obvious they wouldn't accept our doctrinal position, especially on fellowship.

KELOWNA, B.C. (discontinued)

When the Missouri Synod dropped German services in Kelowna, they came to us. We told them we would take them only for doctrinal reasons. They went along with that, but only to get their German services as it later turned out. District Missionary Warren Widman went up there in 1968 and served them until Rev. G. Zimmerman accepted a call there in 1970. They started out with 39 communicants. Pastor Zimmerman ran into a series of problems. First he had trouble with government red tape getting into Canada. Then he had a heart attack. Last, but not least, was his problem with the Germans at Kelowna. They made life miserable for Pastor Zimmerman. They wouldn't accept our stance on fellowship. They wouldn't help open the doors for English outreach. Then some of the Germans returned to the Mo. Synod when they started conducting German services again. Those who remained asked our Synod for more money. Pastor Baur, chairman of the DMB for the Pacific Northwest District, went up there in 1972 and recommended that the mission be closed down.

ST. PAUL - OTTAWA, ONT.

A whole paper could be devoted just to this one congregation (and has been by a Seminary student). This congregation came over to us from the LCMS in 1970 for doctrinal reasons. The members of this church are to be highly commended, because they sat down, and on the basis of Scripture, they examined the teachings of the Missouri Synod. They came to the conclusion that Missouri was in error for joining in altar and pulpit fellowship with the ALC. Much of the credit belongs to their pastor, Rev. Thomas Pfothenhauer. He patiently educated them on the dangerous liberal path Missouri was taking. He helped them remain faithful to true orthodox Lutheran teaching.

This large congregation (over 1000 souls) is also to be commended for their mission-mindedness. They helped establish two daughter congregations in Nepean and Orleans, two preaching stations in Pembroke and Toronto, and conducted exploratory work in Montreal. Again, Pastor Pfothenhauer deserves a great deal of credit here. Much could be said about this fine congregation, which has a rich and long history, but time does not permit. One thing should be said, however. St. Paul's serves as a shining example for our congregations to imitate.

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OUR SHEPHERD - POLTIMORE, ONT.

This congregation was organized when a small group of people in St. Paul Lutheran Church, Poltimore, left the Mo. Synod for doctrinal reasons at the same time St. Paul's in Ottawa. left. This small group of 39 people called Pastor Pfothenauer to serve them. Today Pastor Pfothenauer and his vicar serve them from Ottawa.

ABIDING WORD - ORLEANS, ONT.

Abiding Word is one of the daughter congregations St. Paul's, Ottawa established. St. Paul's purchased 8 1/2 acres of land in Orleans, an eastern suburb of Ottawa, in 1972. In 1974, the 100th anniversary of St. Paul's, Pastor David Priebe began work in the Orleans area. In Jan. 1979 Abiding Word dedicated its church building. After pastor Priebe accepted a call to Juneau, Wis., Candidate Ed Spreeman became the second resident pastor at Abiding Word.

DIVINE WORD - NEPEAN, ONT.

When Abiding Word, Orleans built its church building on 4 of the 8 1/2 acres, the other half was sold for a sizable profit and work was begun to organize a mission on the west end of Ottawa. Al Lindke came up here in 1978 as the first resident pastor. Divine Word purchased land in Nepean with a grant from St. Paul, Ottawa. They will dedicate A WEF building on June 6, 1982.

REDEEMER - PEMBROKE, ONT.

St. Paul, Ottawa established a preaching station when some of its members moved to Pembroke, a city about 100 miles west of Ottawa. Redeemer is supported by St. Paul of Ottawa. It has its own church building. A retired pastor, Rev. Fred Zarling, served the congregation for a couple years, but has since moved back to Wisconsin. This small group of ten communicants will receive a summer vicar in 1982 to work the area.

EXPLORATORY - EDMONTON, ALTA. (discontinued)

Mission work started in this large Canadian city when district missionary John Engel was sent up here in 1975. He worked the area hard for well over a year, canvassing over 5000 homes. The response was discouraging for all the work that was done. When Pastor Engel accepted a call to Great Falls, Mt. in 1977, the exploratory work here ceased.

EXPLORATORY - VANCOUVER, B.C. (discontinued)

Work in Vancouver began in 1976 when a summer vicar worked the area. He conducted a V.B.S. which drew 28 children and 30 people for the closing service. We had one WELS family (Schwertfeger) living in this large city of Vancouver. He started working in North Vancouver. For two years we tried to fill the vacant position of district missionary without success. Finally in 1978, Vancouver received a candidate from the Seminary by the name of Steve Korth. He started work with a nucleus of two families. When Korth accepted a call to Bay City, Mi. in 1980, he left a nucleus of 6 families. Some of them left, so the Mission Board decided to close the mission down for the time being.

EXPLORATORY - TORONTO, ONT.

Exploratory work is being done in the Mississauga area, a suburb

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of Toronto. For many years this had been a preaching station served by the pastor and vicars of St. Paul, Ottawa. In 1979, Roy Hefti was assigned out of the Seminary to work the area. Progress has been slow for this small exploratory group. It seems like every time they gain a few members, they lose a few to transfers. Things have been leveling out for them lately and hopefully they will reach mission status in the near future.

ST. PAUL - CALGARY, ALTA.

Mission got started in this fast-growing city when a WELS family moved here from our church in St. Albert. They wanted a church that teaches the pure Word of God, so they approached Pastor Roy Beyer. He got permission from the Mission Board to do some preliminary survey work in Calgary in 1979. Services started in 1979 and the group, which had grown to three families by then, was granted both exploratory status and manpower in May of 1980. Pastors Beyer and Sullivan took turns making the long journey to Calgary each week for services. Candidate William Heiges was installed in Oct. 1980 and started work with a nucleus of 11 communicants and 19 souls. St. Paul was granted mission status recently (Feb. 1982) by the GBHM and presently has 21 communicants and 42 souls.

EXPLORATORY - RED DEER, ALTA.

The situation in Red Deer started the same way Calgary did, with a WELS family moving here. Pastor Sullivan has been spearheading the work here. Preliminary survey work began in the fall of 1981. Services were started in December. Two families now make up the nucleus. The group was granted exploratory status in Feb. 1982. Hopefully, they will receive manpower in the May meeting of the GBHM.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR THE WELS IN CANADA?

The GBHM has set a tentative goal of starting 4 new missions in Canada in the next six years. They have no hard and fast priorities. They look at Canada as a whole, eyeing the larger cities, like Vancouver, Winnipeg, Regina, Montreal and others, as possible targets for mission work. Right now I know of WELS families living in Lethbridge, Alta., Saskatoon, Sask., Winnipeg, Man. and Halifax, N.S. For years we let the Missouri Synod have this mission field to themselves. They are now the second largest Lutheran Church body in Canada. We are just beginning to work Canada. What does the future hold for the WELS in Canada? Who knows? The possibilities are endless. The task that lies ahead of us is to turn those possibilities into realities. And with God's blessing we can do it.

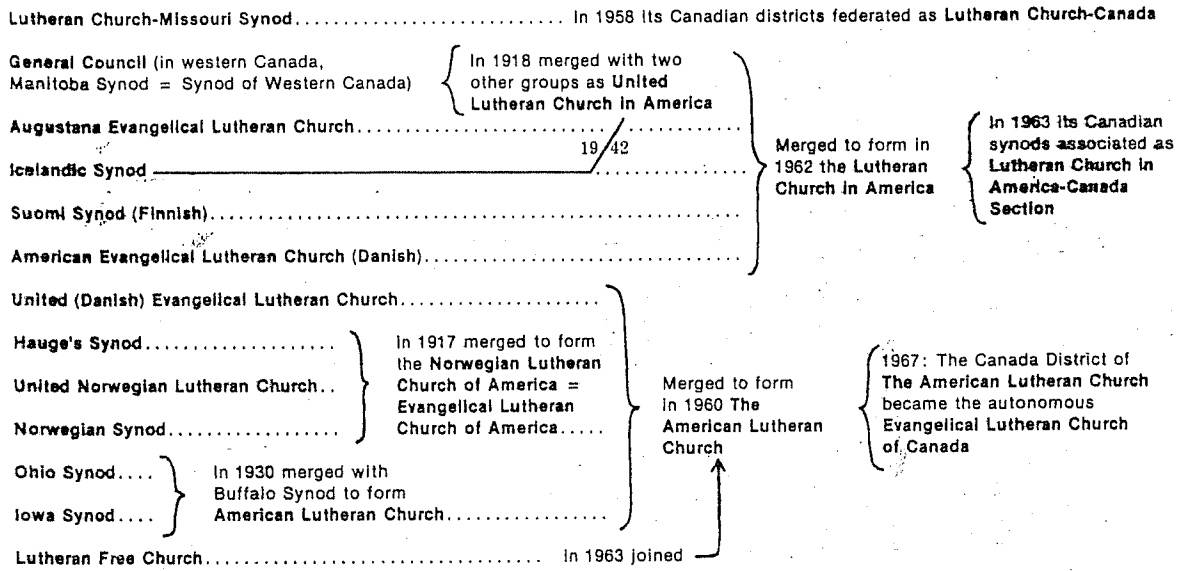
ENDNOTES

- ¹Norman J. Threinen, In Search of Identity, p. 21
- ²Carl Cronmiller, A History of the Lutheran Church in Canada, Vol.I, pp.13-19
- ³Vladimar Eylands, Lutherans In Canada, p. 25
- ⁴Norman J. Threinen, "Focus on the Loyalists," Consensus, Vol. 3 Number 1, p. 22
- ⁵E. Clifford Nelson, (ed.), The Lutherans in North America, p. 76
- ⁶Threinen, Op. Cit., p.24
- ⁷Cronmiller, Op. Cit., pp. 131-135
- ⁸Rev. Frank Malinsky, Grace and Blessing, pp. 7-12
- ⁹Eylands, Op. Cit., p.65
- ¹⁰Malinsky, Op. Cit., pp. 19-21
- ¹¹Rev. Paul E. Wiegner, The origin and Development of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan District, p. 11
- ¹²John E. Herzer, Homesteading for God, p. 23
- ¹³Herzer, Ibid. p. 8f
- ¹⁴Paul A. Phillips, "The Missouri Synod on the Canadian Frontier," p. 19
- ¹⁵Ibid. pp. 21-22.
- ¹⁶George O. Evenson, Adventuring For Christ, pp. 39-40
- ¹⁷Nelson, Op. Cit., p. 364
- ¹⁸Albert H. Schwermann, "The Life and Times of Emil E. Eberhardt,," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXXIV, p. 104
- ¹⁹Phillips, Op. Cit., p. 20
- ²⁰Norman J. Threinen, Toward Union, p. 11
- ²¹Ibid., p. 12
- ²²Prof. Karl G. Sievert, "A History of the Dakota - Montana District," p. 13
- ²³Erwin L. Lueker (ed.), Lutheran Cyclopedia, p. 129
- ²⁴Wiengner, Op. Cit., p. 61

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✠ THE LUTHERAN "FAMILY TREE" IN CANADA ✠



Note: Names are "popular" rather than legal.

Readers interested in a continent-wide summary are referred to the chart "Lutheran Family in North America" on inside cover of *Lutheranism in North America 1914-1970*, by E. C. Nelson.

Others: Lutheran Brethren

Danish Church Abroad (DKU)

Wisconsin Synod



Lutheran Congregations and Membership — 1981

BY REGIONS

Upper Figure—Congregations
Lower Figure—Baptized Membership

CHURCH BODY	British Columbia	Alberta, Yukon, N.W.T.	Saskatchewan	Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic Provinces	TOTAL
The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada	42 12,257	93 21,920	132 31,096	36 12,841	14 4,524	2 421	2 253	321 83,312
Lutheran Church in America—Canada Section	17 4,192	52 17,022	35 7,356	36 12,623	151 71,037	9 3,342	30 6,824	330 122,396
Lutheran Church—Canada	50 11,520	78 19,120	69 17,112	22 6,426	125 38,033	7 671	— —	351 92,882
Others	5 450	9 500	5 250	— —	14 3,000	1 29	— —	34 4,229
TOTAL	114 28,419	232 58,562	241 55,814	94 31,890	304 116,594	19 4,463	32 7,077	1,036 302,819

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LUTHERAN CHURCHES IN CANADA

Statistical Summary with 25 Year Comparison

CHURCH	CLERGY			CON- GRE- GA- TIONS	MEMBERSHIP			SUNDAY SCHOOLS			CONGREGATIONAL FINANCES			
	Total	Parish	Other		Baptized	Confirmed Communi- cant	Number	Teachers	Pupils	Property Valuation \$	Indebtedness \$	Local Expenses \$	Benevolence \$	
Synod/District														
1981	299	202	97	321	83,312	59,457	242	2,481	12,406	56,601,039	4,925,566	9,351,014	1,640,817	
1980	288	198	90	321	83,058	58,974	244	2,507	13,174	52,447,154	4,819,911	8,523,674	1,380,953	
Change	+11	+4	+7	—	+254	+483	-2	-26	-768	+4,153,885	+105,655	+827,340	+259,864	
Central	68	45	23	77	21,936	15,749	57	644	3,218	13,119,182	914,786	2,525,052	312,483	
Eastern	204	110	94	184	79,246	58,565	171	1,987	10,187	57,857,915	2,360,025	5,706,540	1,565,078	
Western	90	53	37	69	21,214	15,553	61	621	3,260	15,758,975	1,277,560	2,014,119	304,801	
1981	362	208	154	330	122,396	89,867	289	3,252	16,665	86,736,072	4,552,371	10,245,711	2,182,362	
1980	354	212	142	327	121,699	89,057	279	3,064	16,090	76,168,450	4,337,070	9,038,027	1,883,526	
Change	+8	-4	+12	+3	+697	+810	+10	+188	+575	+10,567,622	+215,301	+1,207,684	+298,836	
A-BC	130	87	43	128	30,985	22,233	111	916	6,250	34,047,694	4,162,921	4,089,337	1,041,924	
English	16	13	3	10	3,935	2,820	9	116	772	4,500,000	950,000	410,775	77,451	
Man.-Sask.	72	55	17	91	23,193	16,702	86	524	3,100	12,011,475	1,054,295	3,192,754	436,256	
Minn.-Nth.	12	11	1	15	3,763	2,615	14	136	908	2,520,000	492,200	376,587	109,169	
Ontario	89	68	21	97	29,307	22,782	83	910	5,689	26,470,275	2,672,518	3,056,238	1,074,528	
S E L C	5	5	0	10	1,699	1,293	8	61	383	—	—	268,414	21,496	
1981	324	239	85	351	92,882	68,445	311	2,663	17,102	79,549,444	9,331,934	11,394,105	2,760,824	
1980	323	226	97	354	94,139	68,385	294	2,618	17,161	70,355,663	8,343,991	9,891,607	2,530,069	
Change	+1	+13	-12	-3	-1,257	+60	+17	+45	-59	+9,193,781	+987,943	+1,502,498	+230,755	
1981	985	649	336	1,002	298,590	217,769	842	8,396	46,173	222,886,555	18,809,871	30,990,830	6,584,003	
1980	965	636	329	1,002	298,896	216,416	817	8,189	46,425	198,971,267	17,500,972	27,453,308	5,794,548	
Change	+20	+13	+7	—	-306	+1,353	+25	+207	-252	+23,915,288	+1,308,899	+3,537,522	+789,455	