

A Historical Look At The Beginning  
And Formation Of Our Redeemer  
Evangelical Lutheran Church,  
WELS, Of Ladysmith, Wisconsin

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## I. What does this mean?

Lutherans ask Scripture a simple question learned from Luther's *Small Catechism*: "What does this mean?" For the founding members of Our Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church (WELS) in Ladysmith, Wisconsin, Luther's catechism question meant the start of a new church. Yet, to find the beginning of Our Redeemer, one has to go back to 1987. When the constitution committee of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church (LCMS) of Ladysmith, Wisconsin was deciding what the inspired words of Paul mean to St. John's constitution. According to then committee member Mr. Lavell Berg, St. John's constitution stated that only men over the age of 18 have a right to vote and hold office within the church. Then two committee members sought to change the constitution to give the right to vote "to women over 18 and men over 18 shall have the right to hold offices."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Berg and another committee member pointed out to Paul's words in 1 Timothy 2. The Apostle Paul wrote:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. <sup>12</sup>I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. <sup>13</sup>For Adam was formed first, then Eve. <sup>14</sup>And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. <sup>15</sup>But women will be saved through childbearing-- if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. (1 Tim 2:11-15, NIV)

As a result of the conflict, St John's Lutheran Church (LCMS) Board of Elders in 1987-88 signed the following statement:

We, the Elders of 1987-1988, propose and recommend the voting body that women's voting and holding office in St. John's Lutheran Church of Ladysmith is against Holy Scripture for the following reasons:

We find in 1 Tim. 2, 12 that it says: "But I suffer not a women to teach nor to usurp authority over man but to be in silence" and again, 1 Cor. 14, 33-35: "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church".

Furthermore, we look at the constitution of St. John's Lutheran Church of Ladysmith, paragraph 4, item B: Voting Membership, and the constitution states: "Voting membership shall be all males, who have attained the age of 18. They shall be encouraged to read and sign the constitution and shall then have the right to vote. Only those who have been members of this congregation for one year are eligible for an office in the congregation".

We then go to paragraph part 12 and we find: Alterations: "Of this constitution these paragraphs which refer to doctrine and confession shall be unalterable and irrevocably. These are: Paragraph 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11. No alterations shall be made, however, which conflicts with the word of God and the Symbols (Confessions) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Questions were brought up at an earlier meeting that doctrine is only that which pertains to salvation. We believe as Christians that the Bible is the Old Testament and the New. The Old Testament is the Law and the coming of Christ, and the New Testament is the Good News or the Gospel that Christ has come to save all mankind.

If we look at Luther's *Small Catechism*, page 42, Law and Gospel, Luther speaks of these as the Two Great Doctrines. The Bible is doctrine.

If we look further in the dictionary, we find doctrine dogma, to mean "that it is true and beyond dispute".

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lavell Berg in a letter address to author dated Nov. 6, 2004, page 2.

And we further believe that to change doctrine or the Bible is heresy – “being an opinion contrary to the truth or accepted beliefs.”

Therefore, we, the following elders, wish to have this put into the minutes of the church meeting this evening, with a recommendation that St. John’s Lutheran Church not change doctrine, but to continue teaching the Bible in its truth and purity; that we reaffirm our confession that the congregation as a whole and all individual members of the same declare unreserved adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and New Testament as the inspired Word of God and only the rule of faith and life; that we adhere to all the symbolic books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and sound exhibition of the Word of God. These symbolic books are the Apostolic (Apostle’s) Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Same, The Smalcald Articles, Luther’s Large and Small Catechism and the Formula of Concord.

The Above confessions are from paragraph 2 of St. John’s Lutheran constitution.

We do feel that if it can be shown in doctrine that we are wrong, we are willing to do what is needed. Until then we stand on the before mentioned statement.<sup>2</sup>

*[The following signed in their own hand]*

*Lloyd Diederich*

*Ray Woebeking*

*Louis Juergens*

*Truman Ramberg*

*Lee W Purdy*

*Ed Schultz, D.D.S.*

*LaVell Berg*

*Dewayne Thompson*

*Robert L. Bladow*

*Randy Scott*

*Ralph Gutelms*

Later the District President of the North Wisconsin District of the LCMS attended a meeting in Ladysmith to discuss the issue of women suffrage. After the meeting, chairman Mr. Lloyd Diederich wrote a reply to the District President Arleigh Lutz. In a letter dated 12 February 1988, District President Arleigh Lutz replied to Mr. Diederich. President Lutz said:

Dear Mr. Diederich:

Thank you for your recent letter concerning the meeting at Ladysmith and the question of women’s suffrage in the church. If I appeared to come on too strong, I apologize for that, it was not my intention to do so, please for give me.

I find it very interesting, however, that you should talk about “common sense” in your letter. The letter prepared and signed by the elders says that women should not vote or hold office in the church because the Bible says they should not usurp authority over the man but be silent in the church (the part in 1 timothy 2:12 about “teaching” does not apply because your position is about voting and holding office, not about teaching). In your letter you say that common sense tells us that women can sing and pray and teach children in the church but not vote or hold office. In the signed letter, the elders are not basing their argument on common sense but on two Bible verses, both of which say simple that women should be silent in the church.

The Greek words in the two verses are different. The word for “silence” in 1 timothy 2:12 is the same word that is used in Acts 22:2. St. Paul is on trial and is making a defense. In Acts 21:40 it says that he waited until the crowd got quiet (silent) before he began to speak. Then 22:2 says he spoke in Aramaic, a language they could all understand, so the crowd grew very quiet (silent) in order better to hear him. The Word used in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 is the same as the one used in

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<sup>2</sup> See Addenda page A

Mark 14:61 where our Lord is being accused of many things in his trial. He was then asked: "Are you not going to answer?" Thus both words mean to be quiet and to say nothing at all.

If you apply these passages generally, they simple mean that women should say nothing whatsoever in the church. You are right in asserting that common sense leads us to see that if there is not another interpretation of these verses we are left in a very difficult position. There is, however, another interpretation. Interpretation of the Bible (both within and outside the Lutheran church) have always applied these verses to what we call the pastoral office. Women are not to speak or teach in the church as preachers. The part about learning from their husbands at home refers to the discussion with the preacher (usually in the form of questions and answers, although sometimes it led to heated arguments) that normally followed the "sermon." Women were not to participate in these discussions either. But these verses really do not apply to the matter of women voting or hold office in the church.

You are correct in stating that I did not give many Bible passages at the meeting. That wasn't the setting for it, neither was there time. What I did ask for was this: if St. Johns wishes to pursue the matter of women voting and holding office in the church, I recommended a year-long process which involves a thorough study of the Denver resolution.

Your pastor should have a copy (or can easily obtain one) of Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice published by Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations in 1985. There is a wealth of information including a Bible study in this document. I strongly urge you and the elders to obtain copies and to study in carefully. In addition, Pastor Barg has a copy of the Denver resolution. I encourage you to ask him and to share that copy with you or make copies available and to study that carefully.

Finally, I want to repeat a point I emphasized at the meeting. The Synod has stated, on the basis of a thorough study of Scripture, that women may vote and hold certain offices in the church. But whether or not this is done in a specific local congregation is the decision of that congregation alone. Your constitution does not now permit this. I am not aware, and Pastor Barg says he is not aware, of any resolution before St. Johns at this time to change this. Consequently, I am not sure what all the excitement is about. That some, perhaps even many, at St John desire this change was quite obvious at the meeting. But only the present group can make such a change. My Plea was and is that if such a change be pursued it be pursued very slowly and very carefully with a thorough study of scripture and the resolution and much prayer and discussion.

Meanwhile, may God richly bless you in your life and your work, Mr. Diederich, and may He grant both of us the grace that we need to serve Him faithfully according to the teachings of His Word in His Church.<sup>3</sup>

Forsaking the advice of the District President to "pursued very slowly and very carefully with a thorough study of scripture and the resolution and much prayer and discussion," the St. Johns congregation pressed on. Some of St John's constitution committee members stated that in regards to women voting the Paul's words does not apply today.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, St. John, Ladysmith experienced what was happening in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This trend was not only in Ladysmith, but also in the LCMS Seminary in St. Louis. It is the trend to criticize Scripture with human reason and biblical

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<sup>3</sup> See Addenda page B and C.

<sup>4</sup> Berg, letter, page 2.

scholarship. This trend rejects the fact that *ALL* Scripture is the verbally inspired Word of God. Through scholarly criticism, however, the critics select what is God's Word, and what is not. According to Professor Mark E. Braun, one possible reason for this trend in the LCMS was the faculty of the St. Louis Seminary pursuing their doctorate degrees from secular institutions. Braun states:

Between 1921 and 1941, only 6 of 16 men called to the faculty had degrees or earned them during their service; from 1941 to 1954, 13 of 23 possessed or completed doctorates. The widening educational experience of Missouri's professors, as well as the synod's broadening mission program, occasioned more frequent contact with non-Missouri doctrine and practice. This trend "had the effect of introducing exegetical and theological challenges to Missouri's doctrinal system."<sup>5</sup>

According to Braun, in 1941 - 37% of the St. Louis faculty had doctorate degrees, whereas by 1954 - 56% did. With rationalism in the secular universities, scholars rejected the historical-grammatical view that every Word in the Bible is the inspired inerrant Word of God. This view was gradually exchanged in some seminary classrooms by the historical-critical view. This other view criticized the Bible like any other literature written by men. Therefore, as a result of this trend in the LCMS, the saying is true, "as the Seminary goes, so goes the Synod." When reason is placed over Scripture, the logical conclusion is that the Bible has errors. These two opposing points of view of Scripture clashed within the LCMS during the 1950's and 1960's. Professor at Concordia Teachers College, Dr. Siegbert W. Becker holding to that every word of Scripture is the inspired Word of God challenged the view that Scripture has errors held by St Louis Professor Dr. Marin Scharlemann. Becker insightfully wrote regarding Scharlemann's view that, "If we let him continue his attacks on Scripture today, we will have no Christ tomorrow."<sup>6</sup>

The position of the LCMS is declared in the report: "*Women in the Church Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, September 1985.*" It states:

In summary, the Scriptural passages employed for the guidance on this question [*Women Suffrage*] have been those verse of 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Corinthians 14, and 1 Timothy 2 which deal with women's subordination, women's silence in the church, and women's exercise of authority. As has been noted, Paul is not addressing himself here to anything like contemporary "voter's assembly." He is giving instructions to Christians regarding the arrangement of and order in public worship. [62]

Further, it has been shown that the prohibition in 1 Tim 2:11-12 of women's exercising authority is not a concept independent of "to teach." According to this text, the woman is prohibited from the teaching in the public worship assembly. To define "authority" simply as the power to make decisions is alien to the exegesis of the passage. There is not express biblical ground for denying women the vote on issues which facilitate the work of the priesthood of all believers in the congregation.

The definition of "suffrage is also significant. A "democratic" society of men and women is ruled by a majority vote. However, it is not an exercise of the authority prohibited to women in Scriptures. In fact, according to this understanding of the matter, it is actually the assembly that

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Braun, *A Tale of Two Synods*. (Milwaukee, NPH, 2003), p 286.

<sup>6</sup> Siegbert W. Becker, *WHY I LEFT THE MISSOURI SYNOD*, (Series of articles from *Lutheran News*; Sept 9, 1963-June 29, 1964)

exercises authority as a result of suffrage, not the individual voter. Furthermore, in the church, which is ruled by love, the casting of a ballot should also have the added dimension of being an act of service.

The Commission presented a study to the Denver Convention (1969) of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod on the issue of women suffrage. It states by way of conclusion: "We find nothing in Scripture which prohibits women from exercising the franchise in voters' assemblies. Those statements which direct women to keep silent in the church, and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men, we understand to mean that women ought not to hold pastoral office." [63] Subsequent study of the matter has provided no basis for altering these conclusions. The Commission reaffirms them. [64] <sup>7</sup>

As late as December 29, 2004, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod still holds the same position on women's suffrage. The *LCMS News* – No. 89 affirms:

December 29, 2004 ..... LCMS News -- No. 89

Task force completes guidelines on women's service

Guidelines should be in the mail by early January to help congregations implement a 2004 Synod convention resolution that permits women to hold any congregational office that does not involve the exercise of distinctive functions of the pastoral office.

The guidelines, prepared by a special task force, will be included as an appendix to a 1994 report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) that is being published now in booklet form for the first time. The conclusions of that report, "The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices," were affirmed by the convention.

CTCR Executive Director Samuel H. Nafzger said that the commission agreed to include the guidelines with its report at the request of Synod President Gerald Kieschnick. Nafzger also chaired the five-member task force, which Kieschnick appointed after the convention.

Also included as an appendix to the report is the CTCR's response to questions from the Minnesota South District regarding women serving as executive director, president, assistant director, or vice president of a congregation. That response, adopted by the CTCR in April, also is cited in the 2004 convention action.

"Scripture does not prohibit women who possess the requisite gifts from holding these humanly established offices, assuming that the occupants of these offices do not 'perform those functions that are distinctive to the public exercise of the ministry of Word and sacraments,'" the CTCR responded to Minnesota South's questions.

Regarding the office of "elder," the CTCR's response refers to its 1994 report. That report notes that in LCMS congregations, elders historically "work closely with the pastor in his divinely assigned responsibility to feed the whole congregation with the Word of God and to watch over it for the sake of its spiritual welfare." In such situations, the report says, "women may not serve in this office."

The guidelines include a sample paragraph for the constitutions of LCMS congregations that want

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<sup>7</sup> LCMS official website, Dec, 2004: [http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CTCR/Women\\_in\\_Church3.pdf](http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CTCR/Women_in_Church3.pdf)

to permit women to hold all offices covered by the 2004 resolution, Res. 3-08A. The sample paragraph suggests this wording:

"Women who have reached the age of \_\_\_\_\_ may serve as officers and as members of all boards and committees of this congregation which do not call upon them to carry out the specific functions of the pastoral office (preaching in or serving as the leader of the public worship service, the public administration of the sacraments, the public exercise of church discipline). Accordingly, a woman shall not serve as pastor of this congregation or as \_\_\_\_\_."

The age given in the first blank is to be at least the minimum age required by state law for not-for-profit organizations, according to the guidelines. The second blank is for a list of offices that carry out "specific functions of the pastoral office as listed in this sample paragraph."

Nafzger said the guidelines simply pull together what the Synod already has said about the service of women. They recommend that:

\* the term "elder" be reserved for the congregational office assigned to assisting the pastor "in the public exercise of the distinctive functions" of the pastoral office;

\* in the words of a 1989 Synod convention resolution, "to avoid confusion regarding the office of the public ministry and to avoid giving offense to the church," only lay men assist in distributing the elements in the Lord's Supper; and

\* while there are situations in which it is desirable or necessary for women to be in leadership position in the congregation, "men be encouraged to continue to exercise leadership in their congregations even as they are encouraged to exercise their God-given leadership in a God-pleasing manner in their homes."

The booklet containing the 1994 report and three appendices -- Res. 3-08A itself is the third appendix -- will be mailed to all LCMS congregations and rostered LCMS church workers, Nafzger said.

Meanwhile, in Ladysmith, the chairman of St John's constitution committee sided with the committee members who thought that God's Word does not apply to allowing women to vote. Although it was argued that Holy Scripture states in Revelation 22:18, 19 not to add nor subtract from God's Word, the committee persuaded the majority to call a congregation meeting. A meeting was held a month later. About 75 people attended, including both men and women. Mr. Berg states, "All voted and the changes were put into play. I left the meeting and resigned from all committees and the Church. Later the Dist. President told someone, 'I and those against the change should have been excommunicated.'"<sup>8</sup> Since the voters' assembly of St. John Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Ladysmith decided to allow women over 18 to vote in the voters meetings, those who saw this practice conflicting with Scripture seemed to be at a crossroads. So, now what did this mean for them?

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<sup>8</sup> Berg, letter, page 2.

## II. So, now what?

Lavell and Eleanor Berg at first, then Bob and Jo Bladow, Audrey and DeWayne Thompson, and Louis and Frieda Juergens, all went to the nearest WELS church. They attended St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cornell, Wisconsin, some 21 miles South of Ladysmith. Soon Cornell's Pastor Jeffrey Seelow instructed the Ladysmith couples in an adult instruction class. All became WELS members. Some have later said that when they came to the WELS, they came home. They felt that they didn't leave the LCMS, but the LCMS had left them.

In contrast to the LCMS position of women suffrage, the WELS holds a bit different position. The WELS position is expressed by Dr. John Brug, Professor Armin Schuetze, and the "WELS Report on Roles of Women." First, as to voters' assembly of churches, Dr Brug states:

In our system of church government the voters' assembly is the authoritative governing body of the congregation. Among its more important responsibilities are the calling and removal of pastors and teachers, electing the leaders of the congregation, and the acceptance and removal of members. Participation in this and other governing boards in the church and its organizations should be limited to adult males who are able to properly exercise authority over other men. A few congregations have attempted to evade this reality by suggesting the voting assembly of the congregation become an advisory body. This is "a cure worse than the disease" since such a redefinition of the nature of voting and the role of the voters' assembly would amount to the establishment of a hierarchical church polity. The same would be true if the synod convention were made anything less than the authoritative governing body of the synod.

Participation in governing bodies includes both voting and joining in debate. In most cases, the purpose of voting in congregational and other governing boards is not to express personal preferences or needs, but to establish authoritative policy for the congregation. In Christian decision making which aims at best meeting the needs of all of the members of the congregation, including the minority, gathering and assessing the needs and desires of the members should be done prior to the decision-making. The responsible governing body should make decisions on the basis of an informed concern for all of the members of the congregation, not merely on the basis of personal preference. The congregation may use mechanisms such as questionnaires, family discussions, or informative meetings to obtain input about the needs and desires of all the members.

The purpose of debate is to sway opinion, to challenge and refute those who hold opposing views. A person cannot truly and freely participate in debate without challenging and contradicting the views of other parties in the debate. It is very difficult to see how women can do this in harmony with Paul's commands in 1 Corinthians 14 that women are to be silent and not to ask questions in the meeting of the church. There Paul seems to be applying the principle in a situation parallel to the exchange of views which takes place in decision-making processes in congregational meetings. Debate very often involves more challenge and assertion of authoritative viewpoints than the actual process of voting. Even questions asked during debate are often implied challenges to the views of others. Submission to headship, not teaching men, being silent and not asking questions are hardly compatible with free participation in debate. For these reasons women should not participate in the debate in governing bodies of the church.<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, Armin Schuetze gives a historical perspective of "The role of women in the church" in the Synodical Conference. Professor Schuetze wrote in 1988:

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<sup>9</sup> John F. Brug, "Application of the Scriptural Principles Concerning the Service of Women in the Church" An Essay given to the Minnesota District: April 24, 1990, page 9



#### A. The role of women in the church

Throughout its history the synods of the Synodical Conference were united in the recognition that specific roles were assigned by God to man and woman at the time of creation. A leadership or headship role was assigned to man and a helping and submitting role to woman. There was agreement that passages like 1 Corinthians 14:34 (“Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says”) and 1 Timothy 2:11, 12 (“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent”) required that only men should serve as pastors and that voting rights in the congregations should be restricted to the male members.

Already in the LC-MS 1938 convention the restriction of voting rights to male members began to be questioned in Missouri. The convention resolved that the “hitherto accepted position and practice of Synod be restudied in the light of Scripture.” Subsequent conventions in 1953, 1956 and 1959 again concerned themselves with the same question. While reaffirming the traditional position of the synod, restudy of the question continued to be called for in memorials submitted to the conventions. Since some congregations had begun to grant voting rights to women, the 1959 convention resolved to urge such congregations “to recognize the validity of Synod’s historic position and to reconsider their practice with the view to bring it into harmony with this position.”

In the 1960s as the liberals were gaining greater control of the LC-MS, the drive for woman suffrage gained momentum. By 1969 the synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations brought a report before the convention stating: “We find nothing in Scripture which prohibits women from exercising the franchise in voters’ assemblies.” The pertinent passages were applied only to prohibiting women from holding the pastoral office. They might, however, hold offices on boards and committees of the synod. This report of the CTCR was adopted, and the synod offered to help congregations that might “have difficulty translating the provisions of the resolution into constitutional language.”

Not everyone in Missouri was convinced that this action was scriptural. Subsequent conventions have received repeated memorials calling for reconsideration and return to the former scriptural position. In 1977 the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, published by the Ft. Wayne seminary faculty, published theses showing the practice of woman suffrage to be unscriptural. By then, however, the vast majority of congregations had adopted woman suffrage, and efforts to reconsider the matter have been unsuccessful. For the LC-MS the question is settled. Those who still consider the practice unscriptural are tolerated as long as they themselves are satisfied to remain within Missouri, which overwhelmingly disagrees with them. In 1985 the WELS published “Man and Woman in God’s World,” a pamphlet which sets forth the position of our synod. Applications are based on “the headship principle which God established at the time of creation and which therefore applies to all times.” Regarding woman suffrage, the presentation states:

In a desire to affirm the headship of men, our congregations withhold voting privileges from women in their governing assemblies. The question of such suffrage does not center on the relative importance of the matter being voted on, whether it’s theological or non-theological... The Christian woman knows that if she were to demand the right to vote and to govern the congregation, she would be exercising authority over the man who is to be her head.

As is evident, the WELS position upholds the one that was once shared by all synods of the Synodical Conference. The action of the LC-MS in 1969 has made woman suffrage an issue between the two synods, a new issue since 1961. Although affirming woman suffrage in 1969, the same convention of the LC-MS, however, rejected the ordination of women for the pastoral office. This became an issue between Missouri and the ALC (with whom Missouri had declared fellowship at the 1969

convention) when the ALC in 1970 voted to allow women pastors. This contributed to the break in fellowship again a decade later. Thus, the LC-MS has held the line on this issue. How long that will be possible remains to be seen. It rests on a somewhat artificial distinction between permitting women to speak and participate in every way in the congregation assembled for a voters' meeting but not permitting women to speak as pastors when assembled for worship. The applicable passages are looked upon as constituting a special rule or law against speaking in a worship service (a ceremonial law) rather than as being concerned with maintaining in all situations the male-female roles established at the time of creation. A recent survey indicates that about 1000 LC-MS pastors and about 28 percent of the members do not consider the ordination of women as pastors contrary to Scripture.<sup>10</sup>

With the doctrinal winds of women suffrage in the American Lutheran Church blowing here and there, the 1981 WELS Synod Convention resolved to act. Thus the WELS Conference of Presidents commissioned a committee of ten men, one from each district, in November 1981 to study the Scriptural teachings on the relationships of men and women. The final report titled, "*Report of the Committee on the Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scriptures,*" gives the following background.

For a full week our committee met in the beginning of February [1982]. We spent the first day and a half listening to those whom we had invited to address us. We spent Tuesday afternoon and evening at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary talking to the faculty and then to Professor Carl Lawrenz. We devoted the last three days of our sessions to our own study of the Scripture in closed meeting. As we studied the Bible we wrote down statements of principle which we in turn committed to a writer at the end of the sessions.

After Easter the committee met once more to edit the writers' copy. Because one of the committee members could not be present at the meeting, some subsequent changes were made in the copy before it was presented to the Conference of Presidents. The presidents agreed to submit the paper to their district conventions this summer as a study paper and are making arrangements for formal feedback to the committee from each district. This fall the committee will meet again to consider the responses and reactions from the districts. Then the committee will finish its assignment from the Synod resolution to put an informational writing in the hands of the Synod's constituency.

Thus, the WELS "*Report of the Committee on role of men and women according to Holy Scripture*" states:

Sin changed the way man and woman viewed and exercised their relationships. It destroyed man's relation with God first of all, but its effects did not stop there. It quickly shattered the perfect harmony that man and woman had formerly enjoyed. We see this after the fall when God came looking for the man, showing that He held him responsible for what had happened. Both Adam and Eve in turn sought to evade their personal responsibility. They thus gave sad but unmistakable testimony to the truth that sin had corrupted the most precious of human relationships.

Sin corrupted the way men and women carried out their relationship with one another. God had made Eve for Adam because man could not fulfill God's purpose without her (Genesis 2:18), but now she would find that she would be unwillingly dependent upon him. She had been created to stand alongside him, and be his helper, but now he would rule over her: the headship of man which she once perceived as all joy would no longer be exercised in perfect love. The woman

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<sup>10</sup> Armin W. Schuetze, "*The WELS and LCMS—Where Are We Today?*" A paper read to the Nebraska District Convention, Waco Nebraska on June 13-15, 1988, page 13-14.

would at times chafe under her husband's headship, and man would sometimes abuse his position as head. In short, the weeds of sin would overrun Eden.

Because of the corrupting effect of sin, God spelled out more fully the relationship that is to exist between men and women, especially in marriage. Our sinful nature may rebel against these directives, but we do not do so as children of God, any more than the branch rebels against the tree. We recognize that God's guidelines are necessary because of the appearance and power of sin in our lives. Our wills are no longer in perfect harmony with God's. Our sinful, self-serving natures frequently show themselves, even in that most precious of human relationships, marriage. So as the redeemed children of God we delight in the fact that God has given us His moral law, knowing that thereby our Lord directs us in the way that will lead to our happiness.<sup>11</sup>

In I Timothy 2 Paul again emphasizes the headship of the man in the public ministry of the church. At the end of chapter two he again states that women are "to be in silence." (v. 12) In this passage the apostle specifically forbids women "to teach," that is, to interpret and to proclaim the Word publicly when she counters the headship of man. To do so would be "to usurp authority over the man," for by the Word of God we rule and direct our lives. This would obviously violate the principle of the headship of man, so the women are asked to step back from this area of church work. In a desire to uphold that principle, they will "learn in silence with all subjection" (v. 11) when the men are involved.

As we read these words of Paul, we want to reflect faithfully what he says. In the passage from I Timothy 2, for example, we take special note of the basis on which the apostle asserts that a woman is not "to usurp authority over the man." He makes this application on the basis of the principle established by the chronology of creation in Genesis 2. The fact that "Adam was first formed, then Eve" (v. 13) is not merely a statement of timing but an establishment of the principle of authority of man over against woman. He then adds a second reason that refers to the difference in the way man and woman fell into sin. He says that "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." (v. 14) It is on the basis of the chronology of creation and the differing modes of the fall into sin that the Holy Ghost directs Paul to limit to men what we today know as the pastoral ministry. In faithfulness to His revelation we base our application on the clear statements of Scripture, on what the Spirit has specifically stated.

Just as we do not want to say any more than God has said, so we will not say less than He says in instructing us concerning His will. In Galatians 3:28 Paul reminds us that when it comes to the gift of salvation there are no distinctions whatsoever, neither racial nor social nor sexual. "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus," he reassures us, letting us know that regardless of our standing before the world, we share fully in the forgiving grace of Christ. The most bereft or beggarly among men becomes a king and priest in the sight of God because of Christ's transforming grace. While we rejoice in this Gospel proclamation, we do not assume that this description of the Gospel now sets aside the prescriptions of the moral law. Restored men and women will not discard the moral precepts as no longer applicable to their lives; they will turn to them to direct them in the way that is a delight to Him who has loved them so fully and faithfully. This is evident from passages such as Ephesians 5, for there Paul speaks of the husband-wife relationship in the most glorious of terms, comparing it to the relation between the heavenly Bridegroom, Christ, and His beloved, the church. At the same time, the apostle enjoins wives to submit themselves to their husbands in love. So also Peter exhorts believing wives to be submissive and holds up the holy women of the Old Testament as their examples.

#### IV. Conclusion

The principles that God sets down to direct men and women in their relationships with one another are all joy to us as Christians. We recognize that the willing observance of these principles

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<sup>11</sup> *Report of the Committee on the Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scriptures*, page 4.

flows out of the Gospel and finds its highest example in Him who is the very heart of the Gospel. In Christ submitting oneself becomes an act of serving God and a way of following Christ's own pattern. In Christ exercising headship becomes endowed with the spirit of love and is transformed into a means of serving the needs of others. What is more, we Christians can delight in God's precepts since we recognize that through them God is directing us toward our own good. As we bend our wills to conform to God's will, we will experience true joy and satisfaction according to the new man.

In applying the principles God gives us for man-woman relationships, we seek to do so in a spirit of love and humility. Our concern is ever, "What is God saying to me?" Our constant concern is that our own conduct is in conformity with God's will. We learn this of men such as Paul, who does not seek to tell men how to make their wives more subject or women how to make their men show more Christ-like leadership. Paul speaks to men about the duties of man; and then he discusses with women what God asks of them. In this way he takes each person aside, as it were, and carefully instructs him in the will of God, confident that those who know and love Christ will delight in doing His will when it is known to them.

In faithfulness, to God's Word we want to reflect only the clear statements of God's inspired writers. The apostles were directed to make specific application of the principles we have been discussing only to two areas of the Christian life, marriage and the church. We cannot assume that we have the right to make specific applications of these principles to the roles men and women may fill in society. The sacred writers are silent when it comes to specific applications to life outside the home and church. In fact, in the examples of Deborah and Priscilla and Lydia we learn the wisdom of not making specific application to men and women in society. We want to make no statements beyond those which Scripture directs us to make. To do otherwise is to lose the dominical authority which must be behind every statement of the church if it is to be true to its sacred trust. Because Christians are the salt and light of the earth, however, they will strive according to the new man to give glory to God by honoring His principles before the world.

We will also want to remind one another that statements such as those that Paul sets before us in I Corinthians and I Timothy are not designed to limit women, but to direct them in a way that has God's blessing. The apostle gives us an important example when he repeatedly refers in his epistles to the works of love and service which various women have rendered to the Lord through their labors in the church. Paul does exclude women from exercising the office of the keys publicly when such service would cause them to exercise authority over men. And yet, the apostle is just as quick to extol their works of faith in other areas and to exhort them to continue in such works. How blessed the church would be if we were to recapture that spirit of provoking one another to love and to good works!<sup>12</sup>

Now as a person looks at the doctrinal position of the role of man and women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Lutheran Church, a better understanding of the situation can be seen through the glass of time and history. A current view from one of Our Redeemer's founding members, Audrey Thompson, states, "Our Redeemer was started because some of the women at St. Johns wanted to vote and hold offices, so we split."<sup>13</sup> In 1987, the conflict of the Scriptural principles of women suffrage caused some in Ladysmith to become WELS. Nevertheless, those who left the LCMS felt that they did not leave the LCMS, but the LCMS had left them. Dr. Siegbert Becker, a pastor who left the LCMS after fighting hard for change, and later became a WELS Seminary Professor, voiced his feelings.

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<sup>12</sup> *Report of the Committee on the Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scriptures*, page 6, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Personal letter to author dated November 5, 2004, page 1.

In that church I learned to know my Savior, but when I survey the present state of the Missouri Synod, and recall the glory that once was hers as a faithful witness to the truth of God's Word and the grace of Jesus Christ, the words which Isaiah spoke of Jerusalem come forcefully to mind, "How is the faithful city become an harlot!"<sup>14</sup>

### III. Our Redeemer is born.

With the several families driving to Cornell each Sunday to attend worship services, they asked whether Pastor Seelow could come to Ladysmith to serve them there. Pastor Seelow was granted the request by the St. John congregation in Cornell, to start a daughter congregation in Ladysmith. An informational meeting was held in the Rusk County Nursing Home's Riverside Room. The following notice was printed in the *Ladysmith News* on June 1, 1989:

#### Come

WELS is the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

A Christ-teaching, Bible-believing, conservative Lutheran Church that cares about people and their souls is considering a new mission congregation in the Ladysmith area.

You are invited to learn more about us

INFORMATIONAL MEETING will be JUNE 9, 1989, 8:00 P.M. at the Riverside Room Rusk Co. Nursing Home PH. 532-7042. WELS is the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod<sup>15</sup>

The Ladysmith group looked for a place to worship after the June 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. They were turned down by the Hospital Board to use the Nursing Home's Riverside Room. Then Ladysmith's Security State Bank granted permission for the group to use the bank's basement room for their meetings. With 12 people present, on July 25, 1989, the name "Our Redeemer" was chosen for the Ladysmith WELS congregation on the third ballot. The list of other suggested names were "Our Savior, Rugged Cross, Holy Cross, Risen Lord."<sup>16</sup> The newly elected board members for Our Redeemer on July 25, 1989 were: Lavell Berg – President; Robert Bladow - Vice President; John Weaver – Secretary / Treasurer; and Dewayne Thompson - Financial Secretary. Our Redeemer adopted St Johns Cornell's constitution until they could draw up their own.<sup>17</sup> On the following month's meeting, Sept 7<sup>th</sup>, the incorporation application was signed and notarized by all voting members of Our Redeemer.<sup>18</sup> Our Redeemer also resolved on September 7<sup>th</sup> to have communion services on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and last Saturday of each month, or the night before it is celebrated in Cornell. Our Redeemer began to draft their own constitution so that by June 1990, Our Redeemer would be ready for acceptance into the Wisconsin Synod. The meeting ended with possibilities for land sites.<sup>19</sup> Then because of Security State Bank charged a high fee for checking, Our Redeemer decided to hold their meetings in the basement meeting room of Pioneer National Bank. It was in the basement of Pioneer National Bank on August 5, 1989 that Our Redeemer held it first worship service.

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<sup>14</sup> Becker, *Why I Left*, page 1.

<sup>15</sup> See Addenda page 1.

<sup>16</sup> Meeting minutes, July 25, 1989.

<sup>17</sup> Meeting minutes, July 25, 1989.

<sup>18</sup> Meetings minutes Sept 7, 1989.

<sup>19</sup> Meetings minutes Sept 7, 1989.

## IV. Our Redeemer Worships

Our Redeemer looked at a variety of locations for worship. They were turned down at the Rusk County Hospital Chapel, the National Guard Armory, and the Flambeau Apartment Chapel. However, their persistence finally paid off when the American Legion said, "Yes!" The young congregation paid the rental fee of \$40.00 monthly.<sup>20</sup> During the December 1989 meeting, Our Redeemer accepted their new constitution. Then on January 7, 1990, Our Redeemer began worship services at 11 am at the VFW Hall<sup>21</sup> owned by the Ladysmith American Legion. By April 1990, the average worship attendance was 16 people, then 19 by June.<sup>22</sup> Our Redeemer also decided to use the WELS worship Sampler beginning in September 1990. By June 1992, Our Redeemer averaged 27 in attendance for Sunday Worship.<sup>23</sup>

In July 1990, Our Redeemer discussed an exploratory budget, with the possibility of sharing a pastor—a dual parish with a small WELS congregation in Phillips, Wisconsin. A meeting with the Phillips Congregation and the WELS District Mission Board was held on July 21, 1990 at Ladysmith. "The need for a congregation in both areas and getting back to the basics was expressed. Both have room for growth and are stable communities."<sup>24</sup> Both congregations were encouraged to pursue outreach, with the mission board aiding with helping ideas. The meeting ended with a shepherd "(a go between mission board and congregation)" being assigned from the mission board, contacting the pastor three times a year. Our Redeemer found out during their October meeting that "The request for a mission congregation has been denied." The reason given was a lack of "manpower."<sup>25</sup> Our Redeemer was told that the mission board would consider the congregation again. With the mission board having denied Our Redeemer's exploratory status, the possibility of a vicar was discussed to pursue outreach opportunities. The plan was for Our Redeemer to finance a vicar, who would be under Pastor Jeffrey Seelow's supervision. It took three years for the plan to unfold. In June 1993, Vicar Paul Cerny canvassed Ladysmith,<sup>26</sup> housed at four members' houses, one week at a time.

With increase in attendance and contributions, during the August 1990 voters meeting, Our Redeemer decided to order "the Prospect News Letter," to pursue Sunday School and bible classes, and to purchase a used organ, as well as purchase Church Mutual Insurance.<sup>27</sup> Our Redeemer's first Sunday School class began on September 9, 1990.<sup>28</sup> A few months later, Our Redeemer accepted a bid of \$275-300 to purchase 6 church pews from the nearby Tony Methodist Church.<sup>29</sup> Ten other pews were bought from the Glen Flora Baptist church for \$50 each. The church also gained for the cost of moving a used altar, kneelers, pulpit and lectern from answering a *Northwestern Lutheran* ad.<sup>30</sup> During the summer 1991, the church bought 72 chairs (\$5. ea.) and 4 tables (\$30. ea.) from the American Legion when they sold its old VFW Hall.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Our

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<sup>20</sup> Berg letter, dated Nov. 6, 2004, page 3.

<sup>21</sup> See Addenda page 2 and 3

<sup>22</sup> Meeting minutes, April 5, 1990.

<sup>23</sup> Meeting minutes, June 30, 1992.

<sup>24</sup> Meeting minutes, July 21, 1990

<sup>25</sup> Meeting minutes, October 4, 1990.

<sup>26</sup> Meeting minutes, May 6, 1993.

<sup>27</sup> Meeting minutes, August 1990.

<sup>28</sup> Meeting minutes, July 5, 1990.

<sup>29</sup> Meeting minutes, November 8, 1990.

<sup>30</sup> Berg letter, page 4.

<sup>31</sup> Meeting minutes, July 18, 1991.

Redeemer was given notice that they were to find a new place of worship. The old hall was less than ideal for worship. Since our Redeemer “had to set up chairs every time (they) had church services, and take the chairs down after the services. The smell of beer, cigs. was not good, and it was not clean. It was a very old building,”<sup>32</sup> says Our Redeemer member Audrey Thompson. Thus, the church unsuccessfully checked into renting Tender Learning Center. Again, the American Legion agreed to rent their new Veterans Memorial Building to Our Redeemer, located on east of the Army Reserve Center at 608 Summit Avenue, Ladysmith.<sup>33</sup> Congregational members again had to set up and tear down for worship at the new building. This would be the last place the church rented before they moved into their permanent home.

## V. Our Redeemer’s New Home

It was on March 1, 1990, when a new site was first mentioned. It was located just on the edge of the city limits, South on Hwy 27, owned by the Flambeau Mining Company.<sup>34</sup> By May 1990, Our Redeemer was pursuing to lease five acres from the Mining Co.<sup>35</sup> During the November 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, the contract to lease the land (4460 State Hwy 27, Ladysmith, WI.) was within sight. Our Redeemer decided to pay the \$20 fee to post a church sign on the land to announce their intent to build.<sup>36</sup>

After consultation from the synod, the beginning of 1991, found Our Redeemer forming a contract with the mining company for 3.1 acres of land. The contract was summed up as: “For \$1.00 per year for a period of 40 years. A payment of \$1.00 at beginning of each year – no pre payments.”<sup>37</sup> Next, the building site needed to be “surveyed.” Second, was to get “proof of building site zoning from Rusk County.” Third, was to get “the rental agreement drawn up” to be approved by all parties. The fourth part for the plan for Our Redeemer in 1991 was to receive the applied for “tax exemption number.”<sup>38</sup> The Lord blessed the small congregation. In time, their plans succeeded. The Rusk County Zoning Committee met on August 5, 1991 giving Our Redeemer permission to put in a culvert.<sup>39</sup> By December 1991, the contract with the mining company was completed and notarized.<sup>40</sup> In the fall of 1995, the “good deal” even got better, when the Mining Co. decided to give the 3.1 acres of land to Our Redeemer for \$1.00.<sup>41</sup>

Before then, by the middle of 1992, the building plan submitted by Rudi Construction was accepted<sup>42</sup> with a bid of \$30,150.00.<sup>43</sup> The well was dug and the pump installed by Kramer Well Drilling of Weyerhaeuser, Wisconsin for \$3512.00.<sup>44</sup> Next, the congregation prepared the land for building, by removing the rocks<sup>45</sup> in September 1991.<sup>46</sup> Rudi Construction began work on the

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<sup>32</sup> Thompson letter, Nov 5, 2004, page 1.

<sup>33</sup> Meeting minutes, September 5, 1991.

<sup>34</sup> Meeting minutes, March 1, 1990.

<sup>35</sup> Meeting minutes, May 3, 1990.

<sup>36</sup> Meeting minutes, November 8, 1990.

<sup>37</sup> Meeting minutes, January 10, 1991.

<sup>38</sup> Meeting minutes, February 7, 1991.

<sup>39</sup> Meeting minutes, August 5, 1991.

<sup>40</sup> Meeting minutes, December 5, 1991.

<sup>41</sup> See Addenda, page D.

<sup>42</sup> Meeting minutes, June, 30, 1992.

<sup>43</sup> Meeting minutes, July 16, 1992.

<sup>44</sup> Meeting minutes, July 16, 1992.

<sup>45</sup> See Addenda page 4 and 5.

building in the fall of 1992, so that by the end of January 1993, Our Redeemer was able to move into their new home.<sup>47</sup> The gravel for the parking lot was contracted to Titera Excavating in June 1993.<sup>48</sup> The new building was dedicated at 3 pm on July 25, 1993, with District Mission Board Chairman, Pastor Don Buch<sup>49</sup> as the guest preacher.<sup>50</sup>

Our Redeemer soon built three auxiliary buildings: a shortage shed, a bell tower, and roofed picnic area. In the fall of 1993, Our Redeemer built a storage shed behind the church building for about \$1000. The wood for the studs was donated and sawed by Bob Bladow, with the members supplying all the labor for construction. A bell was donated to the church by Carl F. Hummel of Schofield, Wisconsin. A bell tower was built by volunteer members just East of the church entrance door to hold the bell. The following history of the bell was given.

The church bell came from Marathon County, from a one room school having grades one through eight. It was a country school and dates back to the early 1900s. The bell later hung in the yard of Carl and Mabel Hummel of rural Schofield, WI, and summoned the bean pickers in the fields, informing them that it was dinner time. This was in the early 1950s and 60s. After Carl and Mabel died, the bell passed on to Carl F. Hummel. Before he died he told his sister, Eleanor Berg, that Our Redeemer Lutheran Church should have the bell to be hung there. It was given in 1994, and was hung in 1997. The dedication of the bell was August 3, 1997, the eighth anniversary of the church.<sup>51</sup>

Truly, the Lord Jesus blessed Our Redeemer with land, furnishings, sheds, a bell, and above all faithful servants to proclaim his Gospel message to the Rusk County area.

## VI. Our Redeemer's Shepherds

Pastor James Seelow faithfully served Our Redeemer from its beginning in 1998 until 1994, while shepherding his flock in Cornell, Wisconsin. According to the first chairman, Mr. LaVell Berg, who says, "Pastor Seelow was a driving force to get Our Redeemer on this earth, along with many prayers. And the help of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>52</sup> When Pastor Seelow accepted a call to Lake Mills, WI., Our Redeemer was served during the vacancy by Pastor Robert Knipple, who was serving Redeemer, (WELS) in Rice Lake, Wisconsin. Our Redeemer decided because of its size and financial situation to call a semi-retired pastor. Pastor Donald Sellnow accepted the call in September 1994 to serve Our Redeemer, with the condition to complete the final year of Northwestern College's existence 1994-95 in Watertown, WI. Professor Sellnow served NWC for 29 years.<sup>53</sup> Pastor Jeff Seelow preached at Pastor Donald Sellnow's installation in July 2 1995.<sup>54</sup>

Pastor Donald Sellnow graduated from Northwestern Prep School in 1946, Northwestern College in 1950, and graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon in 1954. Pastor Sellnow was assigned to St. Paul, Rapid City S.D. He served there for eight years. Pastor Sellnow

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<sup>46</sup> Meeting minutes, September 5, 1991.

<sup>47</sup> Meeting minutes, January 14, 1993.

<sup>48</sup> Meeting Minutes, June 3, 1993.

<sup>49</sup> See Addenda page 6 and 7.

<sup>50</sup> Meeting minutes, February 11, 1993.

<sup>51</sup> See Addenda page 8 and 9.

<sup>52</sup> Berg Letter, page 6.

<sup>53</sup> See Agenda page 10 and 11, *Ladysmith News* article dated Thursday, July 6, 1995.

<sup>54</sup> Meeting minutes, May 11, 1995.



then accepted a call to serve Christ, Menominee, MI, serving there three years. In 1966, Pastor Sellnow accepted a call to serve Northwestern College to teach psychology and history. Professor Sellnow served the WELS College of pastoral education, as well as the golf coach for 29 years. The Lord blessed the marriage of Pastor and Ruth Sellnow with five children. In Ladysmith, Pastor Sellnow faithfully served Our Redeemer for three years until he retired in 1998. Pastor Sellnow gave his farewell sermon in Ladysmith on May 10, 1998.<sup>55</sup> Pastor and his wife, Ruth Sellnow retired in Watertown, Wisconsin. Even after five years, Ruth Sellnow remembers, Our Redeemer congregation as “Personal ‘hands on’ work on behalf of the members personifies my impression of the group. Convictions about fellowship, roles of women in a former LCMS congregation prompted the effort to form a WELS group. The members demonstrated a keen interest in the study of the Scriptures.”<sup>56</sup> Sadly, on April 9, 1999, Pastor Donald Sellnow was called to his eternal home.<sup>57</sup>

Again, St. John Cornell assists Our Redeemer. Following Pastor Sellnow’s retirement, Pastor Melvin Schwark of St. John Cornell faithfully served Our Redeemer as vacancy pastor from May 1998 until July 1999. After calling for sometime, Pastor John Ruege Sr. accepted the second call Our Redeemer sent him. The first call from Our Redeemer came to Pastor Ruege as he was in Russia. Pastor Ruege was installed as Our Redeemer’s shepherd on July 11, 1999.<sup>58</sup>

Pastor Ruege graduated Northwestern Prep School in Watertown, WI. in 1949. He graduated NWC in 1953, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, WI in 1957. Pastor Ruege was assign to Slinger, Wisconsin. The Lord blessed the marriage of Pastor John and Dorothy Ruege with five children. Through the years, Pastor Ruege served congregations in Wisconsin, Michigan, North Dakota, and was called from South Dakota before serving Our Redeemer. Pastor and Mrs. Dorothy also served as in the WELS mission work in Novosibirsk, Russia for two years.<sup>59</sup> Pastor Ruege continues to faithfully serve Our Redeemer from July 1999 until the writing of this paper in December 2004.

This is “His story” of the beginning and formation of Our Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church (WELS) of Ladysmith, Wisconsin. Indeed, the founding members of Our Redeemer took to heart the Words of Peter. The Apostle wrote.

“Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.<sup>16</sup> He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.”(2 Peter 3:15-17)

May the Lord Jesus Christ continue to bless Our Redeemer to guard the rich deposit given them by faith in their Redeemer. May this congregation faithfully proclaim the Gospel of Christ to Rusk County, Wisconsin until our Redeemer returns. To God alone be the Glory!

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<sup>55</sup> See Addenda page 12.

<sup>56</sup> Personal letter from Ruth Sellnow to author dated October 8, 2004.

<sup>57</sup> See Agenda page 13, Rev. Donald Sellnow’s funeral bulletin.

<sup>58</sup> See Addenda page 16 and 18.

<sup>59</sup> See Agenda page 16, *Ladysmith News*, Thursday July 22, 1999.

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A ODENDA

A

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD



North Wisconsin District  
3103 Seymour Lane  
Wausau, Wisconsin 54401  
715-845-8241

Office of the District President

12 February 1988

Mr. Lloyd Diederich  
310 Lindoo Avenue  
Ladysmith, WI 54848

Dear Mr. Diederich:

Thank you for your recent letter concerning the meeting at Ladysmith and the question of women's suffrage in the church. If I appeared to come on too strong, I apologize for that, it was not my intention to do so, please forgive me.

I find it very interesting, however, that you should talk about "common sense" in your letter. The letter prepared and signed by the elders says that women should not vote or hold office in the church because the Bible says they should not usurp authority over the man but be silent in the church (the part in 1 Timothy 2:12 about "teaching" does not apply because your position is about voting and holding office, not about teaching). In your letter you say that common sense tells us that women can sing and pray and teach children in the church but not vote or hold office. In the signed letter, the elders are not basing their argument on common sense but on two Bible verses, both of which say simply that women should be silent in the church.

The Greek words in the two verses are different. The word for "silence" in 1 Timothy 2:12 is the same word that is used in Acts 22:2. St. Paul is on trial and is making a defense. In Acts 21:40 it says that he waited until the crowd got quiet (silent) before he began to speak. Then 22:2 says he spoke in Aramaic, a language they could all understand, so the crowd grew very quiet (silent) in order better to hear him. The word used in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 is the same as the one used in Mark 14:61 where our Lord is being accused of many things in his trial. He was then asked: "Are you not going to answer?" Mark says: "But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer." Thus both words mean to be quiet and to say nothing at all.

If you apply these passages generally, they simply mean that women should say nothing whatsoever in the church. You are right in asserting that common sense leads us to see that if there is not another interpretation of these verses we are left in a very difficult position. There

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We, the Elders of 1987-1988, propose and recommend to the voting body that women's voting and holding office in St. John's Lutheran Church of Ladysmith is against Holy Scripture for the following reasons:

We find in 1 Tim. 2, 12 that it says: "But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over man but to be in silence" and again, 1 Cor. 14, 33-35: "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church".

Furthermore, we look at the constitution of St. John's Lutheran Church of Ladysmith, paragraph 4, item B: Voting Membership, and the constitution states: "Voting membership shall be all males, who have attained the age of 18. They shall be encouraged to read and sign the constitution, and shall then have the right to vote. Only those who have been members of this congregation for one year are eligible for an office in the congregation".

We then go to paragraph part 12 and we find: Alterations: "Of this constitution these paragraphs which refer to doctrine and confession shall be unalterable and irrevocable. These are: Paragraph 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11. No alteration shall be made, however, which conflicts with the Word of God and the Symbols (Confessions) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Questions were brought up at an earlier meeting that doctrine is only that which pertains to salvation. We believe as Christians that the Bible is the Old Testament and the New. The Old Testament is the Law and the coming of Christ, and the New Testament is the Good News or the Gospel that Christ has come to save all mankind.

If we look at Luther's Small Catechism, page 42, Law and Gospel, Luther speaks of these as the Two Great Doctrines. The Bible is doctrine.

If we look further in the dictionary, we find doctrine dogma, to mean "that it is true and beyond dispute".

And we further believe that to change doctrine or the Bible is heresy - "being an opinion contrary to the truth or accepted beliefs".

Therefore, we, the following elders, wish to have this put into the minutes of the church meeting this evening, with a recommendation that St. John's Lutheran Church not change doctrine, but to continue teaching the Bible in its truth and purity; that we reaffirm our confession that the congregation as a whole and all individual members of the same declare unreserved adherence to all the canonical books of the Old and New Testament as the inspired Word of God and the only rule of faith and life; that we adhere to all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and sound exhibition of the Word of God. These symbolical books are the Apostolic (Apostle's) Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Same, The Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large and Small Catechism and the Formula of Concord.

The above Confessions are from paragraph 2 of St. John's Lutheran constitution. We do feel that if it can be shown in doctrine that we are wrong, we are willing to do what is needed. Until then we stand on the before mentioned statement.

Lloyd Diederich  
Ray Waepbeking  
Lauris Juregens  
Freeman Remberg  
Lee W. Rudy  
Ed Scholtz, D.D.S.

Lawell Berg  
Thomas Johnson  
Robert L. Bladow  
Randy Scoot  
Ralph Gutelius

is, however, another interpretation. Interpreters of the Bible (both within and outside the Lutheran church) have always applied these verses to what we call the pastoral office. Women are not to speak or teach in the church as preachers. The part about learning from their husbands at home refers to the discussion with the preacher (usually in the form of questions and answers, although sometimes it led to heated arguments) that normally followed the "sermon." Women were not to participate in these discussions either. But these verses really do not apply to the matter of women voting or holding office in the church.

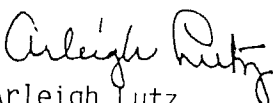
You are correct in stating that I did not give many Bible passages at the meeting. That wasn't the setting for it, neither was there time. What I did ask for was this: if St. Johns wishes to pursue the matter of women voting and holding office in the church, I recommended a year-long process which involves a thorough study of the pertinent Bible passages and a thorough study of the Denver resolution.

Your pastor should have a copy (or can easily obtain one) of Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice published by Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations in 1985. There is a wealth of information including a Bible study in this document. I strongly urge you and the elders to obtain copies and to study it carefully. In addition, Pastor Barg has a copy of the Denver resolution. I encourage you to ask him to share that copy with you or make more copies available and to study that carefully.

Finally, I want to repeat a point I emphasized at the meeting. The Synod has stated, on the basis of a thorough study of scripture, that women may vote and hold certain offices in the church. But whether or not this is done in a specific local congregation is the decision of that congregation alone. Your constitution does not now permit this. I am not aware, and Pastor Barg says he is not aware, of any resolution before St. Johns at this time to change this. Consequently, I am not sure what all the excitement is about. That some, perhaps even many, at St. John desire this change was quite obvious at the meeting. But only the present voters group can make such a change. My plea was and is that if such a change be pursued it be pursued very slowly and very carefully with a thorough study of scripture and the resolution and much prayer and discussion.

Meanwhile, may God richly bless you in your life and your work, Mr. Diederich, and may He grant both of us the grace that we need to serve Him faithfully according to the teachings of His Word in His Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

+   
+ Arleigh Lutz  
President

AL:co

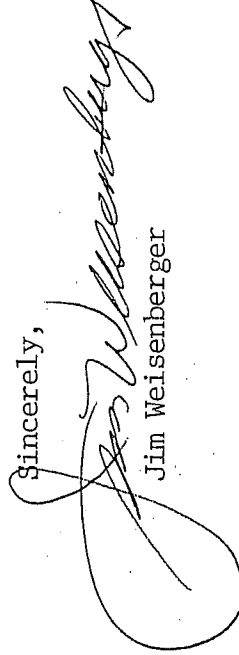
September 19, 1995

LaVell Berg  
Our Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church  
8715 Port Arthur Road  
Ladysmith, WI 54848

Dear Mr. Berg:

I would like to have you call me at your earliest convenience to discuss the land that your church is leasing from Flambeau Mining Co. It is nothing serious but could be to your advantage.

Sincerely,



Jim Weisenberger

JW/rk

This Lead to Mining Co. - Gifting The 3.1 Acres

0

1

# COME

## WELS is the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

A Christ-teaching, Bible-believing, conservative Lutheran church that cares about people and their souls is considering a new mission congregation in the Ladysmith area.

You are invited to learn more about us

### INFORMATIONAL MEETING

will be

**June 9, 1989**

8:00 P.M.

at the Riverside Room  
Rusk Co. Nursing Home

Ph. 532-7042



WELS is the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

7N8SN

## Come to the Wels

The Conservative Bible Teaching Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod is considering a new mission congregation in the Ladysmith area. A meeting will be held at Rusk Co. Nursing Home Riverside Room on June 9, 1989 at 8:00 p.m.

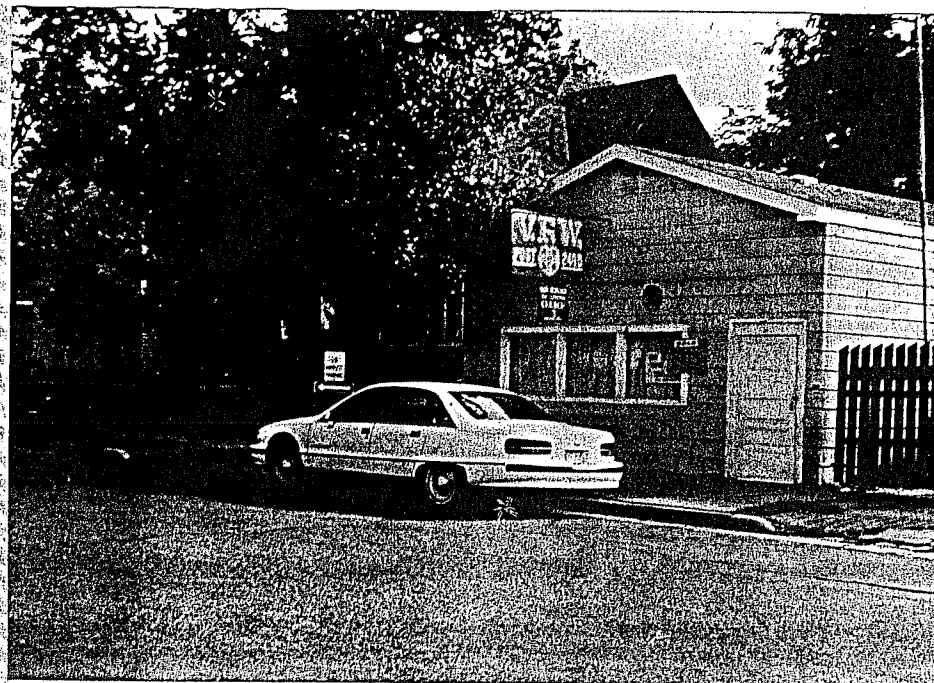
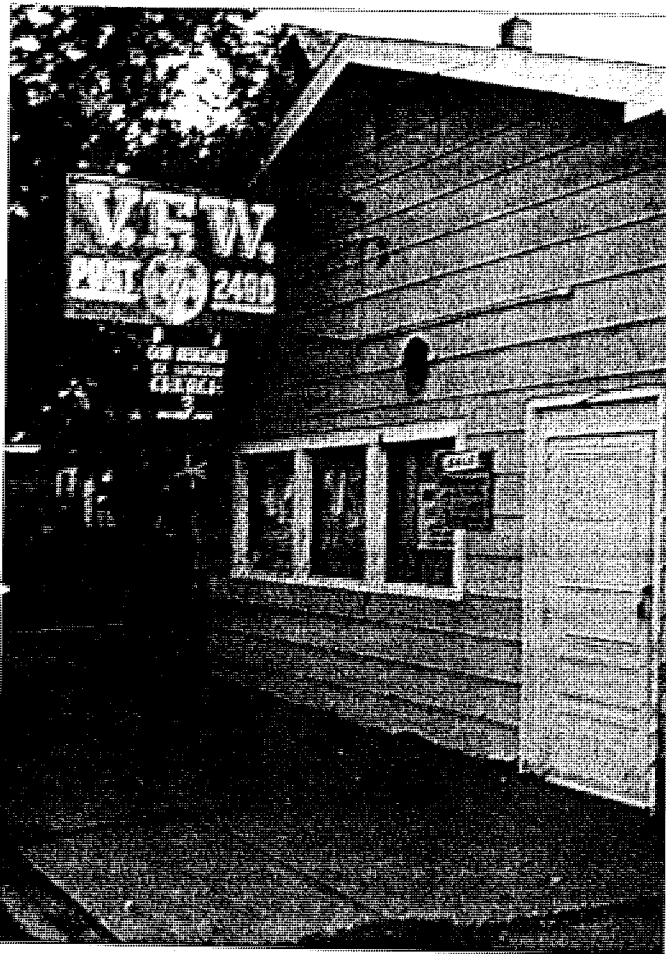
For more info. call 715-532-7047

2

## New church organized here

Our Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wisconsin Synod, was organized on July 26. Services will begin on Aug. 15 at 7:30 p.m. with Bible class followed by regular church service. Services will be held at the VFW Hall, 203 West 2nd N., Ladysmith. Our Redeemer is a member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. One of a number of Lutheran bodies in the United States, it is so named because its founders begin their work in Wisconsin. Today it is represented all across the country and in many parts of the world. The prime purpose is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Jeffrey Seelow, pastor of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cornell, will serve as pastor. His phone is 239-6081 or contact 532-5382.







3

Those who helped lay the Planks of  
Our Lords Church - Our Redeemer Ev Lutheran  
Church Wis. Synod in Ladysmith, Wis

FRONT Row - John Weaver, Lorraine Weaver, Jo Bladow  
Bob Bladow, Lavell Berg, Eleanor Berg, Val Stanenas  
SMALL BOYS Adam & Eric Stanenas - Pastorotel Seckow  
BACK Row - Louie Juergens, Bob Bladow Sister Freida Juergens  
Ted. MATACZYNSKI, Shari Mataczynski, Minny Juergens Delwayne  
Thompson, Audrey Thompson, Monica Keirst & 2 children  
VFW Hall 203 W and North Ladysmith

OUR DEAR FREIND JOHN  
Weaver - Died Before Total Completion of The  
Church - We Missed His devotion To His Lord  
Jesus Christ and His ENCOURAGEMENT TO  
All who Served on The Council with Him

July  
1986

4



Ground Breaking  
FOR our Redeemer  
A picnic Followed  
1992



5

THE PACK  
PICKING CREW  
ON OUR  
LEASED PROPERTY  
BEFORE BLDG  
CAN BE  
BUILT  
MR & MRS  
BRUCE KENAST  
& CHILDREN  
JAMIE & COBY  
ROBERT BLADOW  
DUANE THOMPSON  
MARK THOMPSON  
JOHN WENZEL  
LOUIS JAEYGENS  
IN TRACTOR  
SPRING - 1992



6

# New church to be dedicated

Our Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church-Wisconsin Synod is dedicating its building to the Lord on July 25, 1993, at 3 p.m. Pastor Don Buch, District Mission Pastor, will conduct the service. An open house will follow.

Our Redeemer was organized in August of 1989 with five families. Today it has 40 members. The first service was held at the VFW hall. Its members graciously let the church members worship there until the building was torn down for the Subway parking lot.

Our Redeemer then moved to the Veterans Memorial building until its new facility was completed.

Our Redeemer building is constructed so that it can readily be expanded to the west and north if warranted.

The building was constructed by Rudi Construction of Winter. The septic system was by Ron Young Plumbing, Grading and parking lot by Titera Construction.

The public is invited to attend the dedication.

District Board Mission  
Chair, Pastor Buch  
Standing to Rear of Pew  
Mrs Buch & Mrs  
Seelow July 25-1993



# Our Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church

## Ladysmith, Wisconsin

In 1987, a number of families left St. John Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Ladysmith for doctrinal reasons. After being served by Pastor Jeffrey Seelow at St. John (WELS) in Cornell for a time, they asked Pastor Seelow to serve them in Ladysmith. His congregation granted this request, and through the sharing of his pastor established a daughter church in Ladysmith.

The congregation was formally organized on July 26, 1989. The first service was conducted on August 5, 1989. The congregation was accepted as a member of the Western Wisconsin Dis-

trict of WELS in 1990.

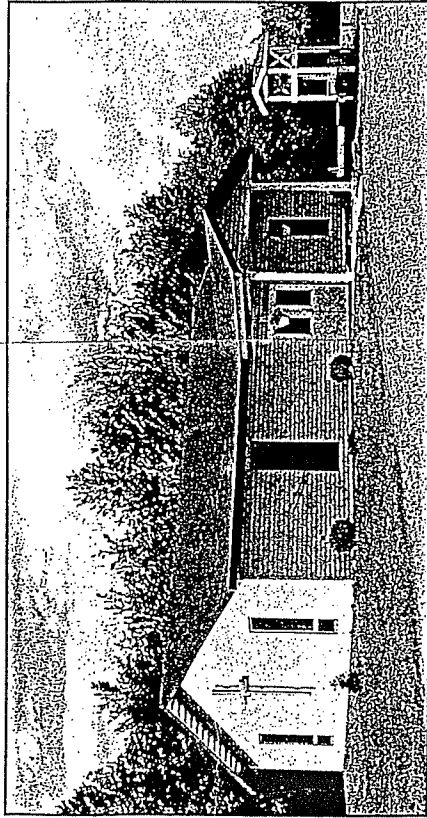
In the fall of 1992, the congregation erected a church building of its own on 3.1 acres of land. This property had been obtained from the Flambeau Mining Company on a 40 year lease agreement at a cost of \$1 per year. In March of 1996, the Flambeau Mining Company

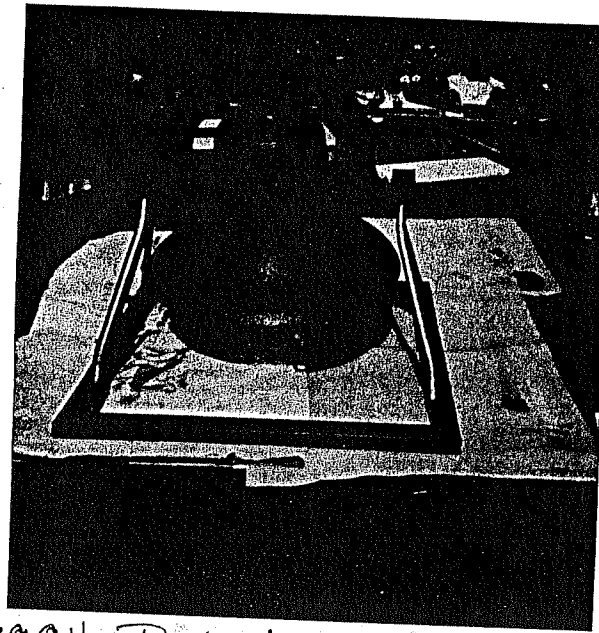
donated the 3.1 acres of land to congregation. The first service was held in the new church on January 26, 1993. A dedication service was held on July 25, 1993.

In 1994, the congregation was ready to call a pastor of its own. A call was extended to

Pastor Donald Sellnow of Watertown, WI. He accepted the

call in September with the understanding that he would be allowed to continue teaching at Northwestern College in Watertown during its final year of existence. Pastor Sellnow served until his retirement on May 10, 1998. He was succeeded by Pastor John Ruege, who was installed on June 27, 1999.





1994 Bell donated By  
CARL F. Hummel  
Schofield Wisc

#### OUR BELL

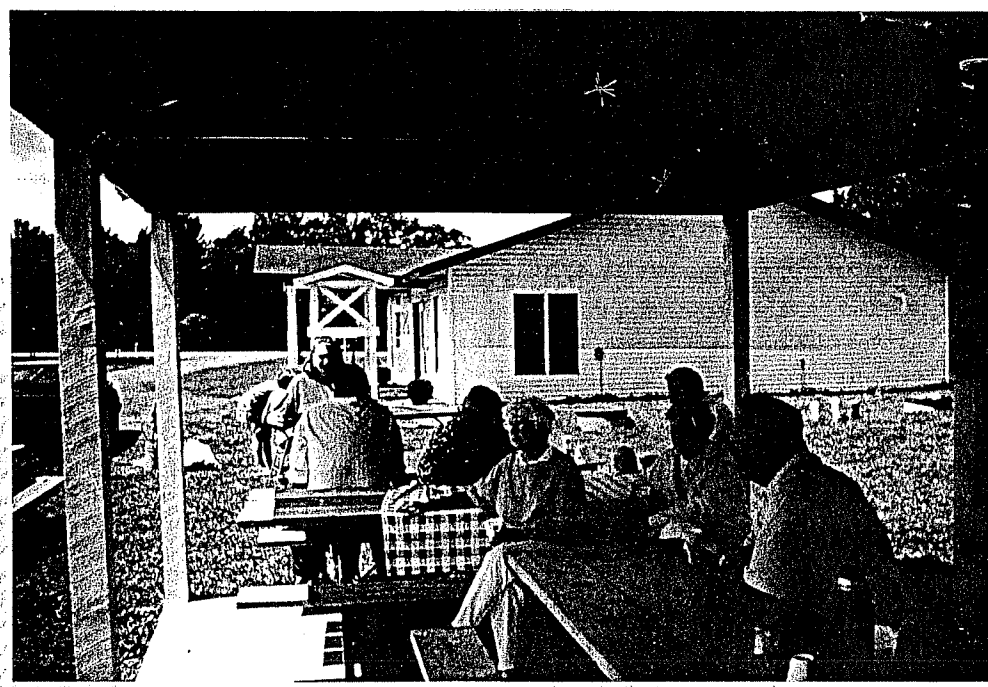
Our church bell will be dedicated to the glory and service of the Triune God in the service this morning. The bell comes to us from the Bergs and is housed in our newly-constructed bell tower. The following is a brief history of the bell as compiled by LaVell and Eleanor Berg:

"The church bell came from Marathon County, from a one room school having grades one through eight. It was a country school and dates back to the early 1900s. The bell later hung in the yard of Carl and Mabel Hummel of rural Schofield, WI, and summoned the bean pickers in the fields, informing them that it was dinner time. This was in the early 1950s and 60s. After Carl and Mabel died, the bell passed on to Carl F. Hummel. Before he died he told his sister, Eleanor Berg, that Our Redeemer Lutheran Church should have the bell to be hung there. It was given in 1994, and was hung in 1997. The dedication of the bell was on August 3, 1997, the eighth anniversary of the church."

9



ELEANOR BERG  
NEE HUMMEL  
MARION SCHULTZ  
NEE HUMMEL  
DONATE BELL 1947



10

### ABOUT OUR NEW PASTOR

Donald C. Sellnow, son of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Sellnow, was born in Embarrass, Wisconsin, on March 8, 1928. He grew up in Neenah, Wisconsin, where he attended Trinity Lutheran School and was confirmed by Pastor G.A. Schaefer. He attended Northwestern Preparatory School as a student, graduating in 1946 and from Northwestern College in 1950. He went on to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, vicaring at St. Martin's in Winona, Minnesota, and graduated from the Seminary in 1954.

He was assigned to St. Paul's in Rapid City, South Dakota, where he spent the next eight years. During three of those years he also served Trinity of Sturgis, and for five years he was the secretary of the Dakota-Montana District. In 1962 Pastor Sellnow accepted a call to Christ Lutheran in Menomonie, Michigan, where he served until 1965. In that year he accepted the call to Northwestern College and began teaching in January of 1966. To better prepare himself for his assignment, he did post-graduate work in psychology and in history at UW-Oshkosh and at UW-Whitewater.

Professor Sellnow served as chairman of the Social Studies Department and as chairman of the Faculty Athletic Committee. He was also the college golf coach for all of his 29 years at Northwestern.

On June 20, 1954, he married Ruth Ebert at St. Mark's in Watertown. Ruth is an R.N. and served as Northwestern's school nurse for several years. Their family includes Rachel and Cynthia of Madison, Wisconsin; David of Lubbock, Texas; Elizabeth of Caledonia, Wisconsin; and Mark of Watertown, Wisconsin. There are five grandchildren.

18-9221

Photo credit: Augsburg Fortress  
Litho in U.S.A. Copyright © 1991 Augsburg Fortress





Pastor and Mrs. Donald Sellnow  
*Our Redeemer Lutheran  
 installs its first pastor*

Professor Donald C. Sellnow has accepted the call to Our Redeemer Ev. Lutheran Church, Wisconsin Synod, in Ladysmith.

Professor Sellnow grew up in Embarrass, where he attended Trinity Lutheran School. He graduated from Northwestern Prep School in 1946, Northwestern College in 1950, and graduated from the seminary in 1954.

He was assigned to St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Rapid City, S.D., and served there eight years. He then accepted a call to Christ Lutheran Church, Menominee, Mich., and served for three years.

Professor Sellnow did post graduate work in psychology and history at UW-Oshkosh and UW

Whitewater.

In 1966 he accepted a call to Northwestern College to teach. Professor Sellnow has been teaching at Northwestern for 29 years and has been chairman of the social studies dept. and has been college coach of golf for the past 29 years.

Professor Sellnow has been married to Ruth Ebert for 41 years. She is a registered nurse. Their family includes Rachel and Cynthia of Madison, David of Lubbock, Tex., Elizabeth of Caledonia, and Mark of Watertown. There are five grandchildren.

Professor and Mrs. Sellnow moved to Ladysmith and will live at the Flambeau Village Apartments.

On July 2, Professor Sellnow was installed as pastor of Our Redeemer Ev. Lutheran Church at 3:30 p.m.

# Lutheran pastor to give farewell sermon

12

Pastor Donald Sellnow has announced his retirement and will preach his farewell sermon at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church at 4460, S. Wis. 27 on Sunday, May 10, at the 10:30 a.m. service. The congregation is planning a potluck dinner after the service in honor of Pastor Sellnow and his wife.

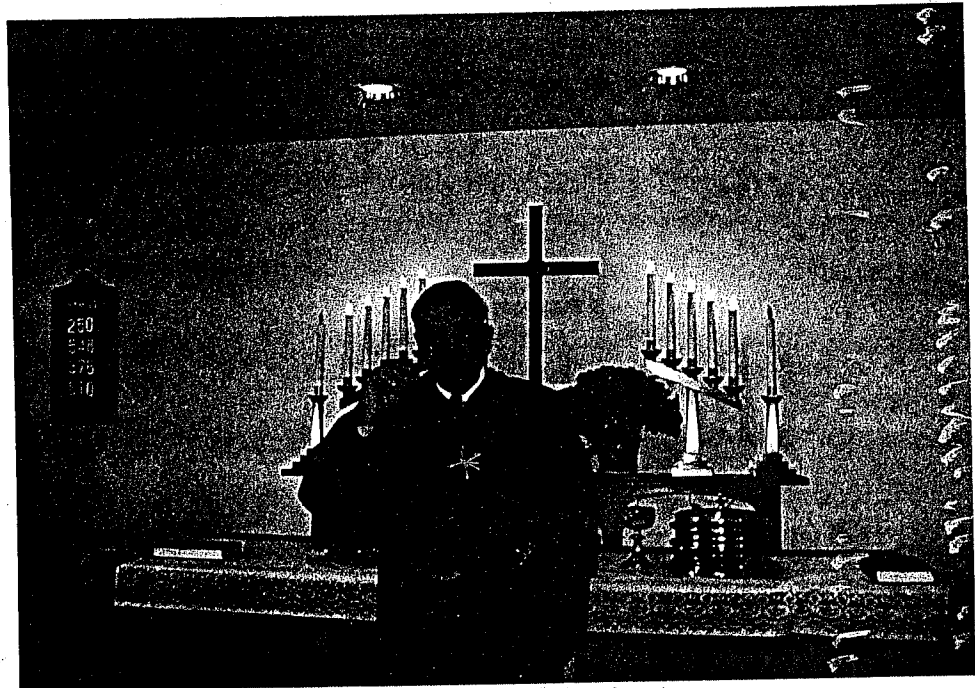
Pastor Sellnow came to Ladysmith in 1995 from Watertown, where he had served since 1966 as a professor at Northwestern College, the pastor-training college of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. He graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon in 1954, and served congregations in Rapid City, S.D., and in Menominee, Mich., before accepting the call to Northwestern College.

Pastor Sellnow and his wife, Ruth, will be retiring in Watertown, where

they have spent most of their lives and where they will be close to four of their five children. The Sellnows have enjoyed their years at Our Redeemer and will leave with fond memories of the congregation, the city, and the entire area.

The congregation is currently in the process of calling a successor to Pastor Sellnow. During the vacancy, Pastor Melvin Schwark of St. John's Lutheran Church in Cornell will serve Our Redeemer. The time of the Sunday service will remain at 10:30 a.m.

1998



*The Twenty-Third Psalm*

*The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
He leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the  
paths of righteousness for his name's sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the  
shadow of death, I will fear no evil:  
for thou art with me: thy rod and  
thy staff they comfort me.  
Thou preparest a table before me in the  
presence of mine enemies:  
thou anointest my head with oil:  
my cup runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow  
me all the days of my life: and I will  
dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

IN MEMORY OF

**Rev. Donald Carl Sellnow**

BORN IN EMBARRASS, WISCONSIN  
MARCH 8, 1928

PASSED AWAY IN WATERTOWN, WISCONSIN  
APRIL 9, 1999

TIME AND PLACE OF SERVICE

MONDAY, APRIL 12, 1999  
11:00 A.M., ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH  
WATERTOWN, WISCONSIN

CLERGYMAN  
REV. MYRON KELL

PALLBEARERS

REV. JOHN A. BRAUN  
REV. PAUL E. EICKMANN  
REV. ROBERT J. KNIPPEL  
REV. JEFFREY M. SEELOW  
REV. DANIEL W. MALCHOW  
PROF. JERALD J. PLITZUWEIT

INTERMENT  
LUTHERAN CEMETERY  
WATERTOWN, WISCONSIN

ARRANGEMENTS BY  
HAFEMEISTER FUNERAL HOME  
WATERTOWN, WISCONSIN

13

## Rev. Donald Sellnow

Rev. Donald C. Sellnow, 71, Watertown, died Friday afternoon, April 9, at his home.

He was born on March 8, 1928, at Embarrass, Wis., the son of Walter and Elda Huebner Sellnow.

He and Ruth Ebert were married on June 20, 1954, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Watertown.

He graduated from Trinity Lutheran Grade School, Neenah, and from the former Northwestern Prep School in Watertown in 1946 and former Northwestern College in Watertown in 1950, and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon in 1954.

He served the following Wisconsin Synod Congregations: St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Rapid City, S.D., from 1954-1962; Christ Lutheran Church, Menominee, Mich., from 1962-65; and taught psychology and U.S. history at Northwestern College, Watertown, from 1965-95 after which he then served another Wisconsin Congregation, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Ladysmith, from 1995-98, retiring on May 10, 1998. He moved to Watertown with his wife, Ruth, on May 13, 1998.

He served as golf coach at Northwestern College and as chairman of the faculty athletic committee at Northwestern College. He enjoyed golf and music. He enjoyed working with students for the work of the

APRIL 9 - 1999

14

### Christian Ministry.

He was a member of Northwestern College Alumni Society; Post Polio Resource Group of Southeastern Wisconsin and Watertown Country Club.

Survivors include his wife, Ruth; children Cynthia of Madison, Elizabeth of Caledonias, and Rachel of Madison; sons Rev. David (Ellen) Sellnow of Lubbock, Texas, and Mark (Julie) of Watertown; six grandchildren; a brother, Walter (Ethel) of Fremont, and two nieces and an uncle, Alvin Huebner of King. He was preceded in death by his father in 1928 and his mother in 1988.

Funeral services were Monday at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Watertown. Rev. Myron Kell officiated and burial was in Lutheran Cemetery. Memorials may be given to the Pastor Education Fund or St. Mark's Lutheran Church. Hafemeister Funeral Home, Watertown, assisted the family with arrangements.

news around WELS



## Obituaries

Donald C. Sellnow  
1928-1999

Donald Sellnow was born Mar. 8, 1928, in Embarrass, Wis. He died Apr. 9, 1999, in Watertown, Wis.

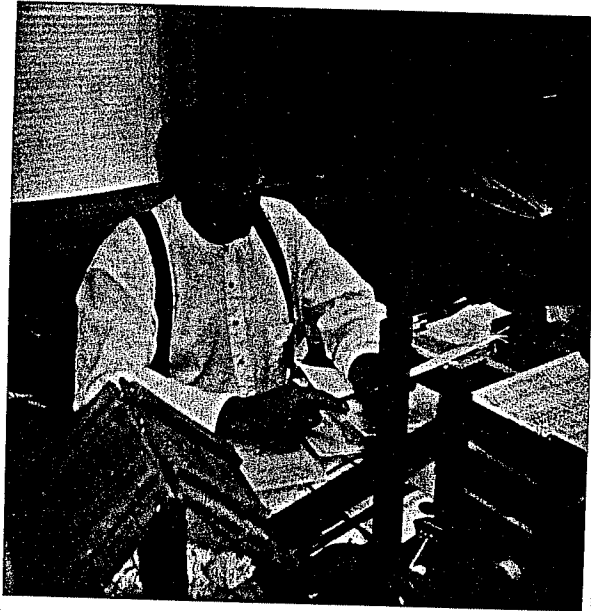
A 1954 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Sellnow served at St. Paul, Rapid City, S.D.; Christ, Menominee, Mich.; and Our Redeemer, Ladysmith, Wis. He also taught at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis., for 30 years.

He is survived by his wife, Ruth; three daughters; two sons; six grandchildren; one brother; and two nieces.

15

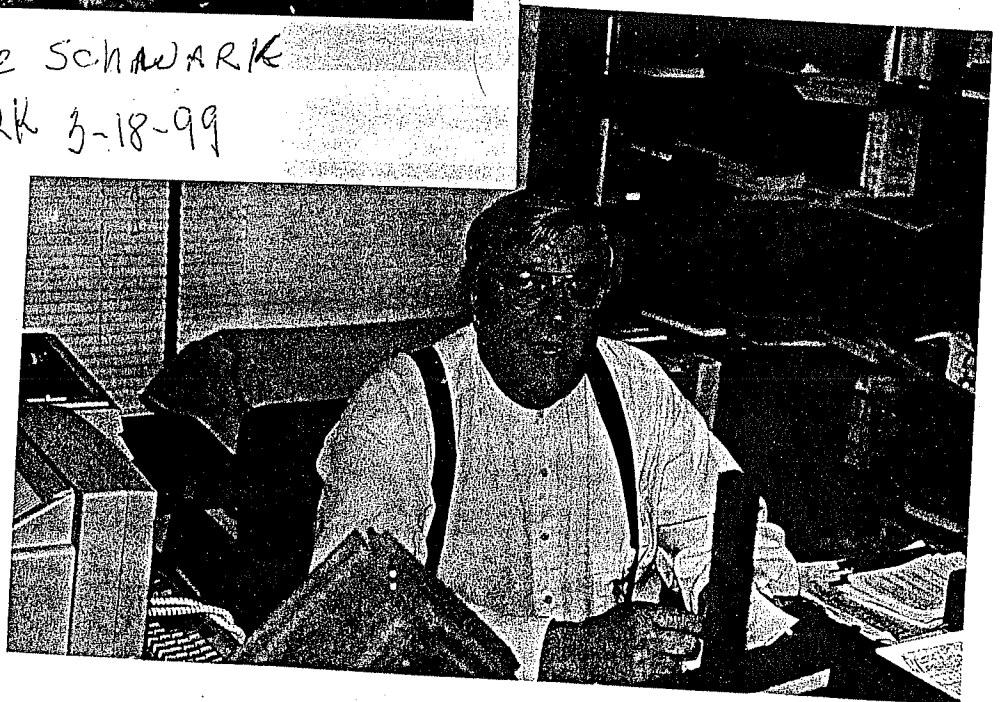


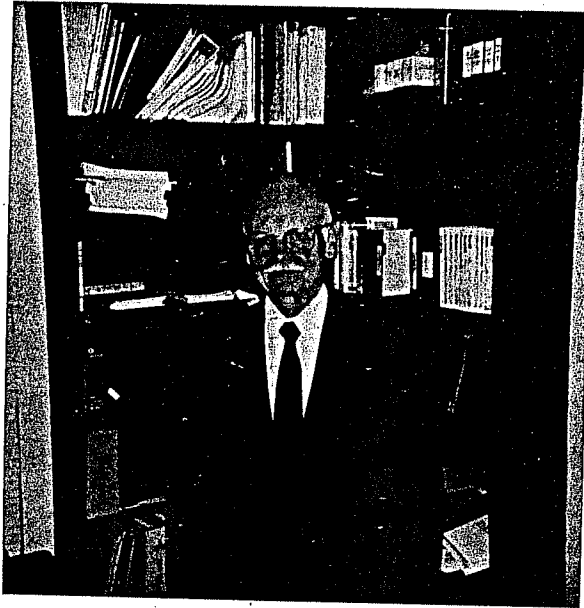
PASTOR SCHWARZK  
VACANCY PASTOR 1998-1999



PASTOR PASTOR  
VACANCY PASTOR  
SCHWARZK  
MET FROM  
COLEMAN  
VERMOREL  
SANDERSON  
STIP  
JOHNS - IOWA  
MISSIONARY

PASTOR SCHWARZK  
AT WORK 3-18-99





*John Ruege*

**INSTALLED** — Pastor John Ruege was installed by his son-in-law, Pastor Stephen Ristow of Watertown, S.D., during a ceremony at Our Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church Wisconsin Synod on July 11.

## Pastor John Ruege installed

Pastor John Ruege was installed at Our Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church Wisconsin Synod on July 11, 1999.

The installation ceremony was performed by his son-in-law, Pastor Stephen Ristow of Watertown, S.D.

The sermon was given by Pastor Reginald Pope of Ashland, Wis.

Pastor and Mrs. Ruege purchased

a home in Ladysmith

John Ruege was born on March 3, 1931, to Pastor and Mrs. J. G. Ruege.

He attended Lutheran Elementary School. He graduated from Northwestern Preparatory School, Watertown, Wis., in 1949, and from Northwestern College in 1953.

He married Dorothy Thierfelder from Sheboygan, Wis., on June 27, 1953. In 1957, He graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Cemetery. He was ordained and installed in his first congregation at Slinger, Wis., in June of that year.

Throughout the years he has served

various congregations in Wisconsin, Michigan, North Dakota and most recently, South Dakota. He and his wife also assisted with the synod's mission work in Novosibirsk, Russia, for two years.

The Rueges have five children, John (and Pamela) Ruege, Wasilla, Alaska, Elizabeth Ruege, Cedarburg, Wis., Carmen (Mrs. Stephen Ristow), Watertown, S.D., Naomi (Mrs. David Senter), Hastings, Minn., and Phillip Ruege, Ladysmith.

## Our Redeemer Lutheran awaits 10th anniversary

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church of Ladysmith will observe its tenth year anniversary with a service Sunday, Aug. 1, at 10:30 a.m., followed by a potluck lunch.

The public is cordially invited to attend. Pastor John Ruege, who was installed on July 11, 1999, will officiate.

The church had its beginning in 1987. After being served by Pastor Jeffrey Seelow at St. John's (WELS) in Cornell for a time, the families asked Pastor Seelow to serve them in Ladysmith. His congregation granted this request, and through the sharing of its pastor established a daughter church in Ladysmith.

An informational meeting was held in the Rusk County Nursing Home's Riverside Room on June 9, 1989. The congregation was formally organized on July 26, 1989, and the first service was conducted in the basement meeting room of the Pioneer National Bank on Aug. 5, 1989. Shortly after this, services were held in the VFW Hall on Lake Street and then in a new VFW Hall on Summit Ave.

The first church council members were: LaVell Berg, president; John Weaver, secretary-treasurer; Robert Bladow, Louis Juergens, and DeWayne Thompson, elders. The congregation was accepted as a member of the Western Wisconsin District of the WELS in 1990.

In the fall of 1992, the congregation erected a church building of its own on 3.1 acres of land along Wis. 27 at the southern entrance to Ladysmith. This property had been obtained from the Flambeau Mining Company on a 40-year lease agreement at a cost of \$1 per year. The cost of construction for the church was \$55,000. A \$42,000 church extension fund loan was obtained from the WELS with the help of the Western

Wisconsin District Mission Board. The congregation funded the balance as well as the cost of furnishings.

The first service was held in the new church on Jan. 26, 1993. A dedication service was held on July 25, 1993. A storage shed was added shortly thereafter and in 1997 a bell tower and picnic shelter were erected by members of the congregation.

In March of 1996, the Flambeau Mining Company donated the 3.1 acres of land to the congregation. In December of 1997, the CEF loan was renewed for another five years. The balance due at this time was \$26,900.

In 1994, the congregation was ready to call a pastor of its own. In August of that year a call was extended to Pastor Donald Sellnow of Watertown who accepted the call in September with the understanding that he would be allowed to continue teaching at Northwestern College in Watertown during its final year of existence before being amalgamated with Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minn.

In the spring of 1995, Pastor Seelow accepted a call to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Lake Mills, Wis. When he left for Lake Mills in April, Pastor Robert Knippel from Rice Lake served Our Redeemer until Pastor Sellnow's installation on July 2.

Pastor Sellnow was called to serve as a semi-retired minister of the gospel. In January of 1998, he informed the congregation of his plans to enter full retirement on May 10, 1998. The congregation decided to call another semi-retired pastor to succeed him. In the interim, Pastor Mel Schwark from Cornell (St. John's) served until July 11, 1999.

On July 11, 1999, Pastor John Ruege was installed as the newest pastor to serve



3 Pastors  
Pastor Rugee  
Pastor Seelaw  
Pastor Schward  
Pastor Seelaw  
Pastor Rugee  
Pastor Seelaw  
Pastor Schward

Pastors Rugee, Schward, Seelaw

