

# Michigan Lutheran Seminary: Past, Present, and Future

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Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS, the Seminary) has never been a large school; its enrollment has never reached the 400 mark. It is, however, a relatively old school for an American high school, since in 2009-2010 it will celebrate its 100/125<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. The oddity of being able to celebrate two anniversaries in the same school year is one reason why much has been written about the institution in the last 123 years. Few high schools can claim the amount of print that has been published about them as can Michigan Lutheran Seminary. As with any institution, not all that has been written about MLS over the years has been complimentary, but the vast majority of it has been.

Seminary has reasons for the volume of print material that relates the story of the school. The school's purpose has always been unusual in the field of American education. Its birth is the result of challenging and interesting circumstances. Its continued existence as a boarding high school makes MLS unique among American secondary schools, especially in the Midwest. Finally, Michigan Lutheran Seminary has shown resilience as an institution not often seen in American Lutheranism; it has met and survived challenges that have caused other schools either to die or completely change.

There is a temptation to look at MLS from the perspective of its unique name, whose Latin root, *seminarium*, means "garden, seed plot, nursery." But other authors have emphasized the growth cycle of the school in biological terms. Some writers have chosen to present the story of MLS, especially since 1910, by looking at the school from the perspective of the men who served as the school's administrators. This paper will present the story of the Seminary with a different organization than other authors:

1. The Background of Michigan Lutheran Seminary, 1833–1884
2. The Birth of the First MLS: The *Prediger Seminar*, 1885–1892
3. The Death of the First MLS, 1892–1907
4. The Re-Birth and Slow Growth of MLS: The *Progymnasium*, 1910–1945
5. The Rapid Growth and Campus Expansion of MLS, 1946–1985
6. The Stability and Unified Course of Study of MLS, 1986–Present
7. The Future of Michigan Lutheran Seminary

Please be aware that the author has approached the last section of this presentation with fear and trepidation. He has never worn the mantle of a prophet—nor has he aspired to it. He is not one who has had much confidence in the strategic planning concept that tries to look ahead five, ten, or more years. The section is included at the request of your program committee.

## **Section 1. The Background of Michigan Lutheran Seminary, 1833–1884**

The story of Michigan Lutheran Seminary and the Lutheran Church in Michigan begins with a man with an indomitable spirit for spreading the Gospel to others, *Pfarrer* (Pastor) Friedrich Schmid. Born and raised in a layman's family in the German state of Württemberg, Schmid was trained to follow his father's footsteps as a blacksmith. But he had an early desire to become a preacher. Schmid describes the importance of both the Lutheran teacher and pastor in the life of a young man in regard to ministry. As Schmid was in his apprenticeship for blacksmithing, he consulted his former Lutheran teacher about entering the ministry. With

the teacher's encouragement and the teacher's and Schmid's pastor's help, the young man was prepared academically to enter the program of the *Baseler Missionsgesellschaft* (the Basel Mission Society).

The mission society had been founded in the eighteenth century on the plan of earlier English mission societies. Its purpose was to prepare young men as missionaries who were to be sent especially to pagan societies in distant foreign countries. As emigration from Germany to the developing United States of America grew, the Basel Society received requests for men to be sent to the frontiers of America; and Schmid was one of those sent. Following his ordination at the age of 26 in April 1833, Pastor Schmid was sent to serve a group of Schwabian settlers near the newly incorporated village of Ann Arbor. He arrived in Ann Arbor at the end of August after a trip that took Schmid from Basel to LaHavre in France, to New York City (which, he writes, was more beautiful than any city he had seen in Europe, including Paris), up the Hudson River to Albany, across New York on the new Erie Canal, across Lake Erie on a steamboat and up the Detroit River to Detroit itself, and finally to Ann Arbor.

In Württemberg, Schmid's background was Lutheran. The Basel Society had a Lutheran background, too; however, it was of a Pietistic slant and tolerated aspects of the Reformed. Both Schmidt and the society were tolerant of religious aberrations. Schmid found forty German families in Detroit that were without a pastor. He stayed with them over his first weekend in Michigan, preached, and baptized children. Some of the Germans in Detroit had not heard a sermon in five years. He left them for Ann Arbor, with the promise that he would return.

That promise was typical of Schmid. He had the heart of the missionary. As one reads his collected letters, a reader is impressed with Schmid's willingness to serve others with the Gospel. He was the first Lutheran pastor in the Michigan Territory. He established the oldest Lutheran congregation in the state, Salem, just south of Ann Arbor Village, in 1833. He served his Ann Arbor families and also developed congregations in Detroit and Monroe to the east, Saline and Grass Lake to the south, Dorr to the west, and Saginaw and Sebawaing to the north. His traveling for the sake of the Gospel took him through much of Michigan's lower peninsula. He scoured the new state to gather German immigrants into groups and to bring the message of salvation to them and to Native Americans. He even began to learn the local Native American dialect so that he could effectively work among them.

Schmid always considered himself a Lutheran. His letters reporting the progress of his work indicate that he had an allegiance to the Lutheran Confessions and Lutheran practices. He met Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Universalist pastors in his travels; and he was friendly to them. However, he writes back to the mission society that he could not join hands with them as he worked for the Gospel's sake. In his first year, Schmid got help, advice, and encouragement about the Native Americans and doing mission work among them from an Austrian Roman Catholic priest. He complained that some in his congregations had a Reformed background, but he continued to serve them. He was especially critical of having to deal with the *Albrechtsbrüder*, or German Methodists.

It is difficult to imagine living the life of Friedrich Schmid. He faithfully served his growing congregation south of Ann Arbor, as well as pockets of other Germans ten or more miles away. On a regular basis he walked and rode to serve the Germans in Detroit and the group of Germans in Monroe. He used the same transportation means to explore areas where mission work could be done among Native Americans. The patience and tenacity with which he went about his ministry is admirable. His willingness to travel great distances with no comfort or convenience is almost beyond twenty-first century comprehension.

Almost a year to the day following his arrival in Ann Arbor, Schmid was surprised to find a former Basel classmate standing at his door, ready to serve God's people as he was trained. The man, Georg Metzger, was also a Lutheran from Württemberg. He first had been sent by the Basel Society to work in Africa, and from there he was sent to the frontier of America—with his new African wife. Schmid at first planned to have Metzger serve the growing group in Detroit, but he felt that would not work out because he knew the African Mrs. Metzger would be treated with ridicule. Reading Schmid's report of Metzger's arrival, one can sense the elation of the unexpected help and the disappointment of knowing Metzger would not fit the work of the Michigan wilderness because of his unusual marriage for the time. While considering a position in Illinois,

Metzger received another call to a large Lutheran parish in the more settled state of Ohio. He and his wife moved there by the fall of 1834.

Not all of the over twenty congregations that Schmid had a hand in founding remained Lutheran. Some left the fellowship of those that would be founding congregations of the Michigan Synod and are now Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod congregations or belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Some belong to non-Lutheran church bodies. Schmid's first congregation south of Ann Arbor reflects this history. It was originally named Zion Church in 1833, but the congregation split in the 1840s to become what we know today as Salem Ev. Lutheran Church, Scio, and Bethlehem United Church of Christ, Ann Arbor. One cannot blame Schmid for these developments. Since German immigrants came to America from many areas of Germany, they came with a variety of religious backgrounds: the many shades of Lutheranism, Calvinism, Catholicism, and even philosophical rationalism. The Germans rarely chose to settle together in communities of religiously like-minded people. The exception to this would be the Franconian communities of conservative Lutherans—or *Alt Lutheraner* (Old Lutherans)—in the Saginaw Valley. The common denominators on the frontier were the German language and German culture. That first drew German immigrants in the new land together; then they separated themselves into denominational groupings.

Congregations separated from the original nucleus of German Lutheran congregations in Michigan for other reasons. As more Germans moved to Michigan, Schmid's work grew. His regular letters to Basel included frequent requests for the society to send him preachers, and men were sent. But Schmid had to deal with frustration after frustration with the new co-workers. A man was sent to serve the Detroit congregation, but he died eight months after arriving. Another was sent, and Schmid assigned him to Detroit, but the new pastor was unscrupulous in his ministry (Schmid branded him a thief) and left for Ohio. Another pastor came from the Gettysburg Seminary in Pennsylvania, but the man was a legalist and attacked the "principal truths of the spiritually genuine Lutheran creeds, for example Baptism and the Holy Communion" (Schmid 118). A man sent from Basel claimed he had been a teacher at the mission school. He tried to force himself on Schmid's Monroe congregation as a pastor, but obviously lacked the training for the position. The man created much confusion and ill feeling in the congregation.

These frustrations led Schmidt, Metzger, and a new pastor they ordained, Kronnenwett, to form the first German Lutheran synod in Michigan in 1844. The plan was to have the group serve as a supervising mission synod that would have the responsibility to place new men sent from Europe to the congregations in Michigan. It would also provide structure and authority for ordaining men that were trained for the pastoral ministry by Schmid and other individual pastors. The Mission Synod would continue to gather German immigrants into congregations and finally begin serious mission work among the Native Americans in Michigan. The men sent by Loehe to Michigan were drawn to the new Mission Synod, but they quickly withdrew from it. As Old Lutherans these men tended to be high church and strictly orthodox. Schmid, Metzger, Kronnenwett, and other mission society men were not cut from this fabric, and so the new Mission Synod was short lived. It was abandoned by 1848.

Schmid felt too distant from the organized synods in Ohio, New York, and the East Coast to join in fellowship with them. He sought contacts in the East and even attended the Lutheran Mission Society meeting in Philadelphia in June 1843, since Basel could not provide the number or quality of men that he felt was needed in Michigan. Schmid understood the need to train able pastors to faithfully lead the growing numbers of Germans arriving every year in Michigan. But he was continually frustrated by the inadequate number of men sent by Basel and other mission societies in Germany. He was also frequently disappointed in the poor quality of men sent to America by the German mission societies.

At the end 1860, the second Michigan Synod was founded in the Detroit Lutheran parsonage with eight pastors and delegates from their congregations. It was founded on a solid Lutheran doctrinal foundation. However, Fredrich writes:

Of the eight founding pastors, five soon disappeared from the synodical roster, returning to the Old Country or drifting into other church bodies. The three who remained to serve until their retirement or

death were Friedrich Schmid, Christoph Eberhardt, and Stephan Klingmann. (*Wisconsin Synod Lutherans* 19)

These three men will serve as the new synod's first three presidents through 1890, and the last two will have a hand in the eventual founding of Michigan Lutheran Seminary.

The Michigan Synod began with about 3,300 members, and despite valiant work that took Eberhardt to southwest Michigan and the Lake Superior shoreline of the Upper Peninsula, the synod failed to grow. The problem continued to be the lack of faithful pastors. The Michigan Synod sought men from other German mission societies. In 1867, the Michigan Synod joined the newly formed General Council, partly in hopes of finding a supply of trained pastors. The slightly older Wisconsin Synod also joined the Council, but soon left in 1869. The Michigan Synod remained until they could no longer tolerate the General Council's lax doctrinal stance in 1888.

## **Section 2. The Birth of the First MLS: The *Prediger Seminar*, 1885-1892**

The need for well-trained pastors continued to be a concern for the young synod. In its 1884 convention the Michigan Synod resolved to establish an institution "in which young men may be trained for the office of the holy ministry" (Struck 190-91). By the following year, this resolution was carried out with amazing speed. Two things fell into place. The first was the right man. Pastor A. Lange had been called from the Wisconsin Synod to be pastor of the Michigan Synod congregation in Remus. Lange formerly had served in the Buffalo Synod and taught at that synod's theological seminary. In 1885 Lange accepted a call to serve the congregation in Manchester, Michigan. A dedicated laymen from the Manchester congregation, Georg Heimmerdinger, offered his large two-story brick home to the Michigan Synod for a two-year period. The synod had a former theological professor and a building near him to begin a seminary, and so Michigan Lutheran Seminary began with six students in August 1885.

The short-term offer for the first home of MLS forced the synod to develop plans to find a permanent home for MLS. Institutions of higher learning were being developed in many towns across the Midwest in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Communities often offered incentives to encourage schools to locate within their boundaries. In the young Michigan Synod, congregations competed with one another to have the new theological seminary in their backyard. The congregations vying for the new Seminary to be placed near them each had some plan to offer the synod. The congregations listed in the minutes of the Michigan Synod's October 1886 Kalamazoo convention were Ypsilanti, Zilwaukee, Lansing, Adrian, Saline, and Saginaw City.

On the last day of the convention, an informal vote was held to determine if there was a preference evident among the synod's 44 delegates. By the time of the vote, Zilwaukee withdrew its offer. Saginaw received 19 votes; Adrian, 18; and the other three cities split the remaining 7 votes. The convention quickly resolved to have a committee of five delegates meet to bring their recommendation for the site of the new campus between the cities of Adrian and Saginaw. President Stephan Klingmann (at the time Schmid's successor at Salem, Scio, and formerly the founding pastor of St. Stephen's, Adrian) appointed the committee that was to report that afternoon. Before the committee reported, a resolution passed to revoke the decision that established the committee. The appointed time for adjournment came, and a resolution passed to extend the meeting until the Seminary situation was settled. The convention then voted by ballot, 24 to 18 (two delegates had asked to be excused) that Adrian was to be the location for the new Seminary campus. This was formally announced. A motion to reconsider this decision was rejected by a majority of voice votes. The convention ended. Adrian seemed to be the new home for Michigan Lutheran Seminary.

The secretary of the Michigan Synod for the meeting was Pastor C. F. Haussmann, of St. Stephen's, Adrian. Pastor Klingmann had been president. The new president was Pastor Christoph Eberhardt of St. Paul's, Saginaw. Klingmann and Eberhardt had been Basel classmates and actually traveled together to their first assignments in the Michigan Synod. Schmid assigned Klingmann to start the congregation in Adrian, and he assigned Eberhardt to be the synod's *Reiseprediger* (itinerant preacher). After some illness, Eberhardt eventually took a call to St. Paul's Congregation, Saginaw. Eberhardt and his wife had no children. Mrs.

Eberhardt came from a family with money. It seems that Eberhardt was determined to have the new MLS campus in his city.

After the October synod convention, St. Stephen's Congregation met to carry out its promise to raise \$500 in addition to the over \$3,000 the Michigan Synod had collected to begin building the new Michigan Lutheran Seminary campus. The parish even resolved to raise more than the promised \$500 in a December meeting.

At the end of December, President Eberhardt called for a special meeting of the synod to be held in Lansing in early January 1887. The first session of the convention could do no official business since there was not a quorum in attendance. In the afternoon session, President Eberhardt presented his report regarding the purpose of the special synod convention, to recall the October decision to locate the new Seminary campus in Adrian. A motion passed to reconsider the October Kalamazoo decision to build the Seminary in Adrian. Pastor Haussmann, the Adrian delegate, requested that his negative vote to this decision be recorded. St. Stephen's Congregation withdrew its offer to locate the Seminary in Adrian. Eberhardt's report outlined considerable financial benefit for the Michigan Synod if it located the new campus in Saginaw. The special convention reconsidered the offers from congregations in Ypsilanti, Saline, Grass Lake, and Saginaw. The convention, convinced of the financial benefits for building the new campus in Saginaw, chose that location. From that meeting on, Pastor Christoph Eberhardt became known as the "father of Michigan Lutheran Seminary."

Hurt by this action of the Michigan Synod, St. Stephen's, Adrian, decided a week later to no longer contribute to the synod. Its \$20 annual offering was twice the average amount congregations were giving in the 1880s. Eighteen months later St. Stephen's congregation left the Michigan Synod altogether. The following years were difficult for the parish and its leadership. The congregation eventually joined the Ohio Synod, left that fellowship, and returned to the Michigan Synod in 1898.

In the three months following the January 1887 special convention, the Michigan Synod rapidly made plans for the new Saginaw campus of MLS. Eberhardt gave the original land to the synod as a gift, a plot of three acres in size. This is the present corner of Court and Hardin Streets. A small piece of land along Court Street was added later in the year. In Eberhardt's 1892 will, he left the school another almost acre lot behind his original gift. The site on Court Street was relatively undeveloped in 1887; Bay and Mackinaw Street were older and more important streets for Saginaw, West Side, as the city was known. Because Court Street began at the new County Courthouse, it was an avenue that would develop quickly.

By April, architect's plans were completed and a contractor was chosen to build the first Seminary building. Originally it bore the name of the school; later it became known as Recitation Hall; and before its razing in 1963, the building gained the name Old Main. Groundbreaking took place on April 30, 1887. Dedication of the not-quite-finished building was held on August 28 during the Michigan Synod convention. The opening service for the third school year of the Seminary and the first on its new Saginaw campus was September 20. The speed with which a large two and one-half-story brick building with a raised basement was planned and built is impressive. The structure served many functions. It had classrooms, dormitory space, a dining hall and kitchen, quarters for Director Lange's family, and quarters for the housekeeper. The new school year began with fourteen students.

As the plans developed for the synod's new seminary in 1884-85, there was a brief discussion about what kind of school it should be. The idea of a strictly academic institution in the mould of a German school of theology connected to a university was briefly considered. Instead, the Michigan Synod planned a *Prediger Seminar*, a "preachers' seminary" that would be of a practical design rather than academic and theoretical. The Michigan Synod, with almost 7,000 members, needed a supply of trained, faithful preachers—quickly. The school followed the German *Gymnasium* model and added a year of special training. Boys came in their mid-teens and ideally spent seven years on campus. In 1888, after the first year in Saginaw, two young men graduated and were sent to their first calls. The first three years of the school were challenging, but the young school was resilient. It survived its temporary situation in Manchester and the difficulties in establishing its permanent campus. And in three years' time, two men were already prepared to serve their Lord and his church

in Michigan. In the first two years of MLS, eleven students matriculated. Of those, five graduated and became Michigan Synod pastors: G. Ehnis, F. Krauss, G. Wacker, I. F. Henning, and J. H. Westendorf.

The resilience of Michigan Lutheran Seminary was tested in 1888. Director Lange was dismissed as professor and director of the young school at the summer's synod convention over a doctrinal matter regarding the call into the ministry. The start of the school year was delayed until the end of November because the first two calls to fill the director's position were declined. The third call, to Pastor F. Huber, was accepted. The new school year, the fourth, began with sixteen students. Huber, and Lange before him, had assistance from other men. Teacher Sperling of St. Paul's, Saginaw, and Pastors Eberhardt of St. Paul's; Merz of St. John's, Zilwaukee; and Bodamer of St. John's, Saginaw, all provided classroom instruction during the *Prediger Seminar* years. In the first seven years of the school, MLS prepared twelve young men for their first calls in the Michigan Synod, in spite of some challenging growing pains.

Another test of the MLS resilience came at the end of the 1890-91 school year. June 16 had been a very sultry day. While all the students were gathered on the front porch of Old Main to escape the very warm building, a powerful bolt of lightning struck the tower above the dormitory section of the building. A large section of the tower was severely damaged, as well as the roof below the tower and above the dormitory. No fire resulted. No one was hurt. What a blessing from our gracious God.

### **Section 3. The Death of the First MLS, 1892-1907**

The resilience of Michigan Lutheran Seminary was to be more severely tested over this fifteen-year period. In 1893 Pastor Eberhardt, the recognized Father of Michigan Lutheran Seminary, was called home by the Lord. He had been the driving force to move MLS to Saginaw. He supported the school with gifts and his time as a teacher. In his will he left the school additional land, his substantial library, and \$5,000.

A greater test for the young school of theology was what would happen in Michigan Synod relations in the 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century. In 1888, the Michigan Synod finally severed its twenty-two year connections to the General Council. In that time synod presidents Klingmann and Eberhardt led the Michigan Synod to a strong expression of its commitment to the Lutheran Confessions. The Michigan Synod was especially vocal in dealing with the Four Points of contention that quickly arose in the General Council. That controversy kept the young Missouri Synod from ever joining the General Council. The young Wisconsin Synod quickly left the fellowship already in the late 1860s and began to establish close ties to the Missouri Synod.

Michigan remained in the Council for various reasons. But the 1888 General Council convention that met at the Michigan Synod's Zion Lutheran Church in Monroe, Michigan, proved to be the turning point. Two significant leaders in the General Council preached in two non-Lutheran Monroe congregations for Sunday services during the convention. One of the Four Points was "Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran pastors only." The behavior of the two General Council leaders both offended and embarrassed the Michigan Synod and its leadership. The Michigan Synod soon left the General Council fellowship. The synod felt confident in taking this step because Michigan in 1885 had opened its own theological seminary. One of the reasons for the synod's being in the General Council was to have a supply of trained pastors. Now independent and alone, the Michigan Synod sought fellowship with the larger Wisconsin Synod and the similar-sized Minnesota Synod.

In 1872 conservative Lutherans, including the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods, formed the Synodical Conference. The Michigan Synod was not a part of that action. It was committed to the General Council. Because of this, Missouri men looked upon the Michigan Synod with some suspicion. Some of the men who helped found the Missouri Synod in 1847 were from the Loehe Franconian congregations in the Saginaw Valley. They had been part of Schmid's 1844 Mission Synod but quickly left as they got to know the laxity in Schmidt and his co-workers from Basel. During the 1870s and 1880s, however, Michigan men were in contact with men in both the Wisconsin and the smaller Minnesota Synods. Those contacts developed because men in all three synods had been trained by various mission societies in Germany. Already men had been called across

synod boundaries, such as Lange, the first administrator of MLS. As those contacts grew, the Michigan Synod was drawn into fellowship with Wisconsin and Minnesota—and even Missouri.

By 1892, a plan for a federation of the three synods was finalized. The plan made much sense—with the exception of a matter that was near and dear to the Michigan members. The issue was the duplication of educational efforts of the three synods in the new federation. Each synod had a theological seminary. Wisconsin also had its Watertown college and preparatory school. The Michigan and Minnesota schools were combinations of prep school, college, and practical theological seminary. The federation plan made Minnesota's school into a prep school and teachers' college. Wisconsin kept its prep school, its college, and its theological seminary; and the college and seminary were to serve all three synods in training pastors. Michigan's school was to become a preparatory school.

Michigan joined the federation but quickly withdrew over the school issue; that is, most of Michigan withdrew. The challenge to develop its own theological seminary had produced a love and pride for the new school in the Michigan Synod. Reducing the school to a mere preparatory school was unacceptable for most Michigan Synod congregations and members. Some feared that young men who would be sent to the supposed greener pastures of Wisconsin for their college and seminary years would never return to Michigan. Others did not like the fact that Michigan students were being required to travel the greater distances to Wauwatosa, Watertown, and New Ulm. Others felt that their investment in Saginaw was not being fully utilized. The situation was confusing.

To add to the confusion within the Michigan Synod, a small minority of Michigan congregations supported the new federation plan, including the schools' concept. Two things resulted. First, Michigan Lutheran Seminary closed its upper level theology courses for school year 1892-93 while the confusion was sorted out. Second, the majority of the Michigan Synod congregations withdrew from the federation of the three synods. The minority formed the Michigan District of the Wisconsin Synod. In the process, harsh words were spoken and ill will developed between the two Michigan groups.

The larger group continued as the Michigan Synod. It continued to run MLS, which, with resilience, seemed to weather the synodical turmoil, even though it was, in the truest sense, the reason for the storm. The missing school year of the theology department did not impact enrollment. Michiganders continued to send their young men to Saginaw for pastoral training. The Michigan Synod officially left the Wisconsin-Minnesota-Michigan federation in 1896 and in the next year entered into fellowship with another group of Midwestern Lutherans, the Augsburg Synod. MLS was to be the group's theological school. This fellowship broke apart in three years' time over doctrine and practice issues.

The Michigan Synod actively celebrated the tenth anniversary of its school of theology's existence in Saginaw in 1897, but the school's building almost met its demise by a fire that began in Old Main's attic in November 1901. The fire was contained, the damage repaired, and the entire interior of the building was renovated. In 1904, the synod even installed a central heating system to replace the many coal stoves throughout the building.

In time, Michigan Lutheran Seminary was affected by the unsettled situation in the Michigan Synod. This was complicated by a rapid turnover of leadership at the school. Director Huber accepted the call to fill the vacancy at St. Paul's, Saginaw, in 1892. Pastor Otto Hoyer, of New Ulm, Minnesota, became the new director. Pastor Linsemann succeeded Hoyer in 1895 and resigned in 1902. Director F. Beer became the next administrator of the Seminary. He was a stiff Prussian who favored military discipline and who did not seem to understand second generation German-American adolescents and young men. Through 1902, enrollment at MLS was consistently about twenty young men. After four years of Director Beer, the student body declined to eight. Toward the end of school year 1906-07, the enrollment dropped to seven, then three. At the year's end, two of those graduated, leaving a student body of one and a faculty three times that. The school was officially closed by the Michigan Synod and mothballed on August 10, 1907, after twenty-two years of service to the synod. The housekeeper and her family, Frau Dora Mai, remained on the campus to maintain the facility.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary had served its synod well. Between 1888 and 1907, forty candidates graduated and entered the ministry. By 1910, one of those forty had died, and twenty-eight were still serving

congregations in the Michigan Synod. The rest had either left for other synods or left preaching. In twenty years the school had faced great change, synodical controversy, a serious fire, and rapid administrative turnover. But the year 1907 was the greatest test of the resilience of MLS. What probably seemed a severe blow to the institution at the time later can be viewed as something of a blessing. Even at the time, there seems to have been some hope for Michigan Lutheran Seminary. The school was closed, but the property was not sold. The buildings were not dismantled. The Michigan Synod carefully maintained the campus; it just ceased operating its theological seminary.

#### **Section 4. The Re-Birth and Slow Growth of MLS: The *Progymnasium*, 1910-1945**

The three academic years of 1907 through 1910 gave the congregations and members in the Michigan Synod the time to re-evaluate the Seminary matter and the federation issue. By 1909 The Michigan Synod and the Michigan District of the Wisconsin Synod were actively working toward reconciliation. The Michigan Synod had representatives at the Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, 1909 convention of the Federation of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan Synods. That convention resolved to re-open MLS as a preparatory school in September 1910, with the understanding that the two Michigan factions became reunited. The convention also elected three members of the five-man board of trustees that would plan the school's re-opening and be responsible for the school's operation. The reunited Michigan Synod was to elect two Michigan men to complete the board.

This board began its work in earnest. It arranged for Old Main's thorough cleaning and some renovation. It began the process of purchasing an additional 1.3 acres to enlarge the campus. And by August 1910 it called an administrator, Otto J. R. Hoenecke, pastor of Bethel Congregation in Milwaukee and son of the Wauwatosa Seminary theologian. Much pressure was placed on Pastor Hoenecke to accept the new position. He was told that fifteen to twenty boys were ready to enroll for the new school year of the re-opening school. The opening day was set for September 12, 1910. Hoenecke received a peaceful release from his congregation and moved his family to Saginaw, arriving on September 9. The planned renovations were not complete, and the building was in poor condition. The promised fifteen to twenty boys in reality were four boys and Hoenecke's oldest, a girl. One of the boys discontinued in October. The actual opening service was September 13, 1910; twenty-four people attended it. It was not the most promising second beginning for MLS.

The school was called a *Progymnasium*. Its curriculum would be similar to the German secondary system that prepared young men for university work. Today we call that a preparatory school. Classes were named and numbered by the German system: Sexta (freshman), Quinta (sophomore), Quarta (junior), and Tertia (senior). The curriculum would include not only Latin, but also Greek. Young men who graduated and went to Northwestern College would enter that program as sophomores. Graduates could also choose the Dr. Martin Luther College teachers' program. They could choose other schools or end their education with graduation.

While the second start for MLS may seem meager, one can recognize a hope for a larger school, even if it was now a preparatory school. By school year 1913-14, 31 students were in residence; all were boys but one, Hilda Hoenecke. In that year Seminary dedicated the result of a large building program. A large director's home had already been built to the east of Old Main in 1894. Now, to the west of Old Main, the Boys' Dormitory was built. Attached to it was a new inspector's (dean's) home. The dormitory was large, able to house 60 boys in an arrangement with sleeping rooms on one side of the wide hallway and study rooms on the other side of the hall. The building included a large recreation area in the east end of the basement. The room was about forty feet square and had a fifteen-foot high ceiling. The room was to serve as the school's only indoor recreation space for decades.

As the dormitory was planned and built, the board of trustees, Michigan Synod, and administration of Seminary all had confidence that the school's enrollment would grow. In 1921-22, the enrollment grew to 52, but that included ten girls and twelve boys who were from Saginaw. The dormitory was not completely full until the 1940s; and from the mid-1950s until its razing in the 1970s, the building had to accommodate well over 100 boys each school year.



The building of the dormitory raised an interesting problem that would persist in the early days of the *Progyrnasium* Seminary: Who pays for the school? Before the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Other States was founded in 1917, the federation paid for the operating budget of MLS. The Michigan Synod paid for any buildings. Therefore, the new dormitory and the new inspector's home were the responsibility of the Michigan congregations. After 1917, the cost of buildings became a Joint Synod matter.

The Seminary came to the synod with building requests in the 1920s. A full-size gymnasium was on the list for thirty years. In 1920 and 1924 two large new homes for professors' families were built to the east of the director's home. In 1924 the Refectory (the monastic term for a dining hall) was built behind Old Main. Three land purchases in the 1920s and one more in 1940 added four large land parcels to the Court Street campus. As the enrollment grew to 140 by 1940, Old Main was no longer able to effectively serve the school's program. The fifty-three-year-old building was showing its age. It had been remodeled again in 1925, but had only three general classrooms, an oversized classroom, a science laboratory, an assembly room, an office, a library, a typing room, a music room, and restroom facilities. Requests for a modern academic building that would include a gymnasium began in the late 1920s. The Depression, synodical financial challenges, and World War II delayed any serious consideration of the request. The same was true for the synod's Watertown and New Ulm campuses. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's new campus in Mequon was built just before the Depression hit in 1929.

During this period from 1910 to 1945, Michigan Lutheran Seminary became more and more like an American high school. Already in the *1917-18 Catalog of Michigan Lutheran Seminary* the German language was replaced with English. The classes were referred to as "Freshman, Senior Preparatory, Middle Preparatory, Junior Preparatory"; in 1919-1920, the classes became the American "Twelfth Grade, Eleventh Grade, Tenth Grade, Ninth Grade." The curriculum was mostly taught in German in 1910, but with the influences of World War I, third generation German adolescents, and changes in the Joint Synod, more and more English was used in the classroom and less and less German as the school moves to the 1920s. German orations will still be a part of the graduation ceremonies into the 1930s, but American English will dominate, even if some speak it with an accent.

The curriculum emphasized the Bible, English, German, Latin, and Greek. History, mathematics, science, geography, and penmanship and drawing were also taught, but for fewer hours per week. Singing is first included in school year 1919-20. By school year 1922-23 elective courses in typing and stenography are available for eleventh- and twelfth-grade students. Greek left the curriculum in 1931. The Seminary catalogs in this period emphasize the purpose of the school was to prepare students for Dr. Martin Luther College and Northwestern College. The catalogs also welcome those from the Missouri Synod who planned to attend the colleges of that synod. The catalogs also welcome students who wished to acquire an education at a school where God's Word ruled supreme. To that end, the curriculum by the mid-1930s had three courses of study: the Classical Course (for those going into church work), the Science Course, and the Modern Language Course.

The seeming conflict of interest in welcoming students not planning on church vocations was not unique to MLS. The same was true of the Joint Synod's preparatory schools at Watertown, New Ulm, and Mobridge, South Dakota. It was evidence of the thinking of the time in our church body. In 1927 the Joint Synod's convention spent much time on the Moussa Report. This report was the result of the work of an appointed educational survey committee from the 1925 convention. The impetus of the survey was the development of the second area Lutheran high school in the synod. The first was a joint venture with Missouri Synod congregations, the Lutheran High School of Milwaukee, which opened in 1903. In 1925 Wisconsin Synod people began Winnebago Lutheran Academy in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. The question in the synod concerned the relationship between such schools and the synod, especially in view of preparing future students for Watertown and New Ulm. The 1920s was the period in American education when the high school became universal across the land; there was a great national interest in secondary education. Wisconsin Synod people were not immune to that excitement. The Milwaukee school, the first area Lutheran high school in the nation,

was a success. Should there be others? How did the synod's existing preparatory schools fit into this interest for expanded secondary Lutheran educational opportunities?

The Moussa Report was to answer these and more questions. After the committee's study, the report was presented over the signature of the committee's secretary, a pastor from the Fond du Lac area; hence the report's unusual name. The report had five recommendations: Every parish should have a school offering eight years of instruction; the Watertown and New Ulm campuses should not have preparatory schools; the synod should authorize and subsidize preparatory schools, preferably by conference boundaries; New Ulm should expand its teacher preparation program; and Northwestern College should also serve those not intent on preparing for ministry. All agreed on the first point. The other four caused much controversy. A result of the discussion was the 1928 founding of the synodical preparatory school in Mobridge, South Dakota, Northwestern Lutheran Academy. The synod also eventually funded part of the Winnebago Lutheran Academy program. The rest of the Moussa proposals died, mostly because of the financial impact of the Depression on the synod and its congregations. The expansion of area Lutheran high schools had to wait until after World War II. Synodical support in large amounts for these efforts in Lutheran secondary education never materialized. The four preparatory schools continued their work, but began to share at least a bit of the area Lutheran high school design in their curriculums.

As the curriculum of MLS expanded and student body grew, so did the faculty. Director Hoenecke was the sole faculty member for the first two years of the *Progymnasium*. In 1912 Professor Adolf Sauer was added to the faculty, and two local part-time teachers helped. By 1930 the school had a faculty of five full-time professors and one tutor. By 1945, the faculty increased by one tutor. The *Progymnasium* years were years of stability and slow growth. By the beginning of the Depression, the enrollment grew to eighty students. The student body dropped to an average of sixty-two students for the decade after 1932. During the war years, the enrollment jumped from 55 in 1941 to 140 in 1945. Michigan Lutheran Seminary again proved resilient. It had survived its re-birth and slow growth. It weathered the financial storm of the Great Depression. It grew quickly during World War II. The school was poised for greater growth.

### **Section 5. The Rapid Growth and Expansion of MLS, 1946-1985**

Lutherans were part of the great Baby Boom that followed World War II. As our churches and schools grew in number and size in the two decades following the war, so did Seminary grow. The student body grew to 160 in 1951, to 340 in 1960, and to 350 in 1971. For the first two decades of this period, almost one half of the students came from Missouri Synod families. The difficulties between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods had roots that went back to the World War I years. The 1950s saw those difficulties increase until finally the Wisconsin Synod severed its fellowship with the Missouri Synod in 1961 and left the Synodical Conference in 1963. The Missouri Synod students were allowed to graduate, and some siblings were permitted to enroll and graduate, but by the end of the 1960s, no Missouri Synod students were at MLS. One would think that the enrollment would have diminished, but it did not. One-by-one, additional Wisconsin Synod students filled the desks left empty by Missouri Synod students. In the decade of the 1960s, the average enrollment at MLS was 320.

Since that growth began in the 1940s, the school's board of regents repeated its request for a gymnasium and asked for a modern classroom structure. Old Main could no longer accommodate the school's rapidly growing enrollment. A small building project in 1947 expanded the Refectory. At the end of the 1940s, the synod gave permission to the school to plan and construct a modern high school building—including a gymnasium. The enrollment in the 1940s averaged 140. The new building was designed to accommodate 170. Its gymnasium was to serve as not only athletic space but as a chapel and auditorium; it had a stage along one of the long walls of the room. The gym was built with junior high school dimensions with a low ceiling and an overlapped basketball court. The building had seven classrooms, two science laboratories, a library, office, faculty room, and small classrooms for typing and stenography. To provide space for the new building, two faculty homes were first raised from their foundations and moved further east on Court Street. Old Main was

slightly remodeled and continued to serve the school with classrooms and music practice facilities. The new building was completed for the 1951-52 school year and referred to as the Administration Building or the Classroom Building; it never got its own distinctive name.

What seemed an adequate building in 1950 was housing twice the number of students it was designed for by 1959. In 1963 MLS built an L-shaped addition to the school. To make room for this addition, Old Main had to be razed. The attractive, Victorian-style building had served Seminary well, but it was outdated and had some serious structural problems. The new addition provided modern music facilities, an enlarged library, modern science rooms, and needed recreational and social spaces. In 1954 a new Refectory was built and attached to the east of the old one. The old refectory was remodeled into Girls' Dorm I. Earlier in 1951, a large home one mile east of campus on the opposite side of Court Street was purchased and remodeled to serve as a girls' dormitory, a first for MLS. Until then, female students were either from Saginaw and commuting students or girls who boarded with Saginaw-area families. The school had provided dormitory facilities only for boys. With the new dormitory for girls on campus, the Court Street house became Girls' Dorm II. In the late 1960s, MLS leased another large Court Street house to serve as Girls Dorm III.

Despite the growth in girls' dormitory space, by the end of the 1960s the school could not accommodate all its boarding students. The Boys' Dormitory housed nearly 120 students; it was designed for 60. The school housed many junior and senior boys and girls in what was termed *dorm-home* arrangements. Students lived with families close to the school and ate their meals on campus in the Refectory. The student housing situation was improved in 1976 with the combined Boys' Dorm and Girls' Dorm building. The old Boys' Dorm of 1913 was razed, as well as the dean's home and part of Girls' Dorm I, to make space for the large five-level structure on Seminary's compact campus.

The final building expansion for MLS in this period of its history was completed in 1985. The large building project began as a plan to expand the school's small gymnasium-chapel-auditorium and locker facilities. These facilities had been designed for 170 students in 1950. By 1953, the school had twice that many students—and many more. The gymnasium seating could not safely accommodate the crowds of spectators for basketball games. Concerts, graduation services, and other events in the room were over-crowded. The locker rooms were too small. The overuse of the facilities for over twenty years had been hard on the facilities.

At first a plan was developed that would have doubled the size of the gymnasium by removing its long wall opposite the stage. This would have provided great floor space for the school's needs, but the room would have had a very low ceiling, twenty-one feet high, and a lower beam in the middle of it. This design was not acceptable, and a new architect was hired. As the new man met with the faculty and administration, it became obvious that the school needed more than a new gym and locker rooms. A broad plan developed that completely remodeled the 1950 structure, especially for energy efficiency. The construction and remodeling project gave to the school improved classrooms, a large library, a new gymnasium and locker rooms, a large commons area, a modern computer room, and larger administration offices. Two things in the project that were particularly appreciated by both students and adults were an attractive chapel/auditorium and a connecting hallway from the dormitory to the classrooms.

The remodeling and construction project was dedicated at the beginning of the 1985 WELS Convention. This was the first convention held at MLS since 1967, for the Seminary's facilities were too small for the biennial meeting after that year. Since 1985, Seminary has been part of the regular rotation of synodical schools for hosting the synod conventions.

The last addition to the school in this period of its history was a second campus named Cardinal Field. In the 1950s and 1960s, MLS tried valiantly to purchase the homes and lots across Hardin Street, the north boundary of the campus. In time, five homes that were next to each other were purchased. The purpose of this program was two-fold: to provide athletic space for physical education, track and field, football, baseball, and softball, and to provide needed parking space. At first the homes were used to house faculty and staff families. The deep lots behind the homes provided some parking space and athletic practice space. The program moved slowly, and neighbors soon understood the school's intentions. Prices rose or neighbors were not interested in leaving their properties. Finally in the 1970s, the program was abandoned. Instead, the school purchased a

large piece of undeveloped property on Mackinaw Road, about 1.2 miles north of the MLS campus. Initial attempts to improve the rugged piece of land were not too successful. In the 1980s, funding allowed the school to completely clear this second campus, install drain tiles, and grade the land for a baseball diamond, a track, a practice field for football and soccer, and a large paved parking lot. While the distance between the school's two campuses was an inconvenience, it was safer and more convenient than having students running on city streets and making arrangements to hold home track meets and home baseball and softball games in various locations around Saginaw.

The average enrollment at MLS remained in the 320s through the 1970s and into the 1980s. From the 1950s on, faculty number increased with the growth in the student body. By the late 1970s the faculty numbered 20, plus tutors and part-time instructors. The leadership of the school changed three times in this period of the school's history. At the very beginning of the period, 1950, Director Hoenecke stepped down and President Conrad Frey led the school. The term *president* actually appears in school documents in reference to the position of the administrator of MLS all the way back to the first English school catalog for the year 1917-1918. But Director Hoenecke continued to be *Director* until he was called home to heaven in 1965. Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, Director Hoenecke continued to serve MLS as a teacher, then the bursar, or business manager, and then as a substitute teacher. President Frey served at MLS until 1966, when he became the president of Dr. Martin Luther College. An MLS faculty member, Prof. Martin Toepel, became the next president. In 1978 President John Lawrenz became the next administrator of Seminary. Three administrators for an institution over a period of more than 35 years is not unusual; what was unusual at MLS was the forty-year term of O. J. R. Hoenecke as the school's administrator.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary had an extracurricular program well before 1950, but during this period of time is when the extracurricular program grew as the enrollment increased and our society changed. As soon as there were enough students to field a baseball team, MLS had a ball diamond and was competing in Director Hoenecke's favorite sport by the end of World War I. Even though MLS lacked a proper gymnasium, the school fielded a basketball team and even earned a state championship trophy in the 1930s. The teams practiced in a rough barn-like structure on campus and a local public intermediate school gymnasium. Track and field had been an activity of students from the school's early years. By the early 1950s, MLS was of the size so that it could field a football team, and that became a part of the extracurricular program. Before the 1950 gymnasium-auditorium, students had prepared drama presentations and presented concerts, but the new facility allowed more activity in drama, band, and singing. At the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s, interscholastic girls' sports became a part of school life.

The curriculum of MLS remained surprisingly stable until the end of this period of the school's history. The curriculum had two divisions: a pastors' course and a teachers' course. Students not intent on ministry could choose either to prepare for other colleges than church schools. Because of tight dormitory space, general students were not permitted in the junior and senior classes; students had to sign a *letter of intent* stating their plans to attend either Wisconsin Synod or Missouri Synod colleges for teachers or pastors.

By 1961, MLS had graduated 1,058 students. Of those, 199 had become or were training to become pastors (WELS, 130; LCMS, 69) and 263, teachers (WELS, 180; LCMS, 83). The purpose of the school had not changed over the school's first seventy-five years, nor had its achievement in preparing future workers for the church. This historic recruitment-to-ministry rate of 44 percent improved slightly after 1961. As more and more career choices became available for young people to consider following World War II, the school recognized it had to concentrate on its recruitment-to-ministry activities. In the 1960s the position of recruitment director became a part of the school's administration. From then on activities were organized to encourage the MLS students to prayerfully consider ministry for their futures. The annual WELS College Tour, Taste of Ministry-Teaching, WELS Michigan District Grade School Basketball Tournaments and other activities and programs were developed to encourage Lutheran elementary students to consider Seminary for their high school and to encourage MLS students to seriously consider ministry for their vocation.

Although challenged by rapid growth and aging and inadequate facilities in this period, the resilience of MLS was again evident. The school grew far beyond what many believed ever would be possible. New

programs developed to make the students' experiences at MLS the best possible for them. The school's small campus was put to efficient use, and by 1985 the school had attractive, efficient facilities that were designed for the school's special purpose and a student body of 365. Seminary was ready to enter its current period of history.

## **Section 6. The Stability and Unified Course at MLS, 1986-Present**

Early in the 1980s the administration and faculty of MLS went through the newly popular planning exercise known as SWOT Analysis. Its purpose was to learn whether or not the school's entire program was truly supporting the school's stated mission. A thorough synod-required self-study in the late 1970s had indicated there were some things that could be improved at Seminary. During the 1980s ideas that came from these two studies were incorporated in the school's program. The 1984-85 building program was one of those ideas. Another was a re-tooling of the school's curriculum.

While the courses in the school's curriculum did not change much in the 1980s, how they were delivered to the student was. The school adopted a six-day cycle schedule to replace the standard five-day schedule for classes. The new schedule provided more convenient scheduling for courses, variety in the daily schedule for both students and teachers, and opportunities to take courses students formerly could not schedule. The school dropped the pastor, teacher, and general courses. It established one, unified course, ministry. It expected all students to accept that being a Seminary student meant that the student would seriously and prayerfully consider full-time service to the church as his or her vocation. It further meant that the students should expect and accept regular and varied encouragements toward ministry. The new curriculum required all students to be in foreign language instruction each year. Spanish was added to the curriculum, and the method of teaching both Spanish and German emphasized that both were living languages that can and should be used. A few electives were added to the curriculum to give upper-class students some choices. The music curriculum was increased for all students. All were required to take a minimum of three semesters of piano instruction—and to pass a competency test at the end of that study. All students had to participate in a choir or the band each year. These standards continue to the present. The school has since added more electives across the curriculum for sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

During the 1980s, MLS moved into the computer age. This actually began early in the decade. Seminary was really on the cutting edge of putting computers in the classroom and had a sixteen-computer classroom for English instruction in 1982. The students were even connecting with another school in the South via telephone lines to share writing samples before the Internet and e-mail were possibilities. The 1985 building project provided a thirty-computer classroom for academic use. MLS was connected to the Internet as soon as it was available, the first school in central Michigan to do so. Computers enhanced the administration of the school in the 1980s. In-house programs for maintaining students' grade records and producing grade reports were written by two faculty members since there were no commercially produced programs for small high schools at the time.

The school's recruitment-to-ministry program grew in this period. At first the recruitment director was expected to be in the classroom half-time. By the new century, recruitment became a full-time position. Programs grew in this period. The Taste of Ministry-Teaching program was improved and expanded. At first it was a volunteer experience, but it became a required experience for all seniors. A Taste of Ministry-Pastors program was developed with the help of Michigan District pastors in 1988. The successful program has become a model for similar programs in high schools across the WELS. What started as a means to enhance the school's foreign language curriculum soon took on a recruitment emphasis. Early in the 1980s MLS began an international exchange program with a school in Germany. It was so successful that a Spanish-language experience was developed involving our mission in Mexico. From that developed what today is called Project Titus. Through this program hundreds of MLS students have received interesting off-campus experiences with ministry opportunities that are appropriate to their age and training. Students have traveled to Germany,

Mexico, the Ukraine, Malawi, Zambia, the Dominican Republic, Detroit, central and suburban Milwaukee, Apacheland, and many American cities in the South and the West through Project Titus.

An interesting development grew out of the Seminary's German exchange program. A few German students asked special permission to spend a semester or a full year at MLS. They were interested in gaining a longer American experience and to develop better English skills. The school accepted individual students because the benefits of having an international student on campus for an extended time gave the Seminary students a good experience, too. After the Berlin Wall fell, our German exchange program shifted from the boarding school in former West Germany to our friends in the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK) of former East Germany. Soon we began to have ELFK students in our student body, as well as students from other international missions and church bodies in fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod. The class of 1994, a class of sixty-three students, graduated with ten international students from eight different countries. International students continue to study at MLS. As a new country was represented in the Seminary student body, its flag was placed on the back wall of the chapel. Today the display spans the wall with twenty-four different flags.

The faculty in this period remained stable at twenty-one plus tutors. The administration had one change in this period. In 1993 President Lawrenz became the president of Dr. Martin Luther College. In 1994 Pastor Paul Prange became the fifth president of MLS since 1910.

In this period the school faced some enrollment challenges. In school year 1986-87 the enrollment dipped to below 280. The school did not fully understand the reason for the drop in numbers. It was assumed at the time that the low enrollment was mostly due to difficulties in placing all graduates from Dr. Martin Luther College into calls upon graduation. The school made some recruitment program changes to improve recruitment. The school also commissioned a thorough study of our WELS recruitment base—we started counting the number of baptisms and confirmations as well as keeping track of Lutheran elementary school enrollments. The new database helped understand that we had gone through a period of fewer WELS children. It also gave us solid information for the future. The database continues to serve the admissions program very well.

While enrollment dipped to below 280 in 1986, it exploded in the new century. School year 2000-01 had the largest enrollment MLS has ever had, 381 students. The database indicated that would happen. The database also predicted the current situation. The current school year started with 234 students, the lowest number since the early 1950s. This year and next are the nadir, the lowest point, of our recruitment pool of WELS children. We therefore should see a smaller student body for the next few years.

Other forces than just the number of WELS children may have affected the current low enrollment. MLS and its sister schools have had to react to some serious challenges since the late 1970s. Since the late 1920s, the Wisconsin Synod maintained four preparatory schools whose chief mission was to prepare students for the synod's colleges of ministry. Until the mid-1960s, MLS also served the Missouri Synod in the same way as a part of our former fellowship with that church body. In the 1970s financial and enrollment pressures affected two of the preparatory schools, Northwestern Lutheran Academy and Martin Luther Academy. A special synod convention in 1978 chose to close those two schools and to purchase a large former Roman Catholic boarding high school to serve as the new campus for the two closed schools. The new school, Martin Luther Preparatory School, operated from 1979 until 1995. The six-school ministry training system of the synod continued to be expensive. The 1985 synod convention established a study committee to thoroughly look at how the synod was producing its pastors and teachers on the secondary level. This Preparatory School Study Commission (PSSC) reported to the 1989 convention. Its first recommendation was to preserve the preparatory school system of the synod in some form. The second began the discussion of what became in 1995 the amalgamation of the synod's two colleges and two of its preparatory schools. The 1989 convention resolved that all should study the (PSSC) report and took no other action. The 1991 convention reacted to the report. First, it agreed that the synod needed a strong, viable preparatory school system to provide future church workers. Second, it set into motion the beginning of the amalgamation plans. By 1995 the synod had one, not two, colleges and two, not three preparatory schools.

The prep school issue was not solved by those actions. Continued financial challenges for the synod moved the 2003 convention to re-open the preparatory school matter. It called for Preparatory School Study Commission-2. The PSSC-2 reported to the 2005 convention that the synod continued to need the two remaining preparatory schools in order to provide the number of church workers needed in the foreseeable future. This was particularly true in the case of pastors, since the PSSC-2 pointed out that 60 percent of the pastor students at Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary came from the two remaining preparatory schools. The convention agreed with this aspect of the report and affirmed the importance of the two-school preparatory system. Even though the synod declared the importance of the preparatory schools in 1991 and 2005, the synod-wide discussion about our preparatory schools affected enrollment at each of the schools, including MLS.

The severe financial crisis in the Wisconsin Synod in the winter and spring of 2003 also impacted enrollment. Having to quickly and drastically cut seven faculty and staff members from the small MLS school family shook the confidence of many, including parents of students considering enrolling at Seminary. The second financial crisis of the winter and spring of 2007 only exacerbated the enrollment challenges. The unexpected challenge of the Synodical Council (SC) to quickly close MLS forced the school to spend five months fighting for its survival. The 2007 convention disagreed with the SC proposal to eliminate MLS from the synodical budget. By that time, some enrollment damage had been done. It seems that the confidence of some in our synod in the continued operation of MLS may still be in question.

While all of this was happening, positive things for Seminary also occurred. Following a long study by the synod's Board for Ministerial Education, a revision of the preparatory school curriculum was put into place at the two remaining prep schools. The new curriculum had as its basis what had always been important at the two schools. Added were new courses in mathematics and the sciences, as well as a number of new elective courses that gave the students choices and opportunities to broaden their educational experiences. The curriculum revision developed with much advice from Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

Another positive development for MLS occurred during the 2001 synod convention held on the Seminary campus. At the time the synod was financially stable, and the convention approved a large addition to the 1950 structure of MLS. The addition was proposed especially to improve the school's science and music curriculums as a result of the new curriculum revisions. The school lost one of its faculty homes in the process but gained four up-to-date science classrooms, two general classrooms, a second computer classroom, and enlarged and improved music facilities. The music improvements were made as the former science area of the campus was remodeled for the music department's use. The project replaced the 1950 boilers with a modern and energy-efficient heating-ventilation-air conditioning system. The building program was completed for the beginning of the 2002-03 school year.

In this period of the school's history, the financial assistance opportunities developed into a consistent program. For decades before 1985, financial support was available for the families of students who had difficulty in meeting the financial obligations of tuition, room, and board. This support went to a handful of students, and the funds came from individuals' gifts to the school specifically for the purpose of helping out needy families who had MLS students. By the 1980s, the federal government's student assistance programs had become commonplace for college students. In a similar manner MLS, and the other preparatory schools, developed a fine program for providing tuition assistance to families in need. The system developed consistent funding from synodical funds, local funds, and special gifts. A fair and honest means of determining who should receive what support was developed. The MLS financial assistance program has permitted many students to prepare for lives of service in the church who without the help may not have been able to do so. Related to this program was the development of the program of Michigan Lutheran Seminary graduation grants and scholarships. Every MLS senior who plans to enroll at Martin Luther College is eligible to apply for these awards. The grants and scholarships vary in amount and are presented to students with their diplomas at the annual graduation service. Recently, some of the awards have become renewable four-year scholarships.

As the movement for school accountability developed in American education in the 1990s, MLS considered the possibility of becoming an accredited institution again. In the 1960s the University of Michigan had accredited the school's program. In the 1970s the university dropped its accreditation program because of the growth of the North Central accreditation program. With the advent of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation (WELSSA) program in 2003, MLS decided to seek accreditation status. MLS again became an accredited institution in 2006. In addition to this, Seminary has also been licensed by the Michigan Department of Education as a boarding high school. This is a long-standing state requirement that applies only to a handful of secondary schools in Michigan. Until recent years the annual licensing procedure was a perfunctory process. It has become a time-consuming, thorough analysis of Seminary's full program each fall. The licensing process now requires that MLS is an accredited institution, and its WELSSA status helps in the annual licensing review.

Again, Michigan Lutheran Seminary had demonstrated its resilience. The threats of 1985, 2003, and 2007 were real and severe. They were probably the greatest challenges the school has had to face since its founding in 1885. Two world wars, a severe economic depression, even the 1907 mothballing of the school were not as severe threats. The school continued through the major national and international events. The old Michigan Synod in 1907 continued to maintain its closed campus because it knew the school would probably re-open, even if it were in a different form. The threat in 2007 was more severe. Leadership in the synod made plans that spring to sell the MLS campus, not mothball it; the leadership was willing to sell it to any buyer, not necessarily someone within the synodical fellowship. Faculty, staff, and students understood that graduation 2008 might have been the last one for MLS. The synod had already closed three preparatory schools since 1979. It had also closed a college. Throughout the challenges of the spring and summer of 2007, faculty, staff, students, parents, and supporters of Michigan Lutheran Seminary remained confident that God's will would be done in the summer's synod convention. They were prepared to accept whatever decision the 2007 synod made regarding MLS.

### **Section 7. The Future of Michigan Lutheran Seminary**

This will not be a prediction about what MLS may become or what may happen to it. It will be a description of where Seminary is in its history in 2008. It will present some of the things that will or may affect the school in positive or negative ways in the coming years. It is presented in much the same spirit the Seminary family lived through the time between March and August 2007: a quiet confidence that God's will be done.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary in 2008 has a very small enrollment for its history and its facility. This was expected because of its longstanding demographic study. The synodical events of 1979, 1989, 1991, 1995, 2003, and 2007 have had a negative impact on the school's enrollment. At the same time, Seminary has over two hundred students interested in prayerfully considering full-time ministry in our Savior's church as their future. These students come from families and Lutheran elementary schools and Lutheran congregations that encourage and support their young people as they grow and mature and consider ministry through their teenage years. The school's tracking of the children in our synod shows that the number of children will increase in the coming years.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary has an excellent, attractive, modern, and well-maintained facility. Its compact campus is efficient to operate. Its location near two full-size airports is ideal for a boarding high school. It has as neighbors who understand, respect, and appreciate the school and its chief purpose. The school is close to seven Wisconsin Synod congregations and within walking distance to the largest of these. The campus facilities were specifically designed to serve the school's special curriculum and programs very well. It can easily accommodate more than 380 students.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary has a dedicated faculty, staff, and administration. All three fully understand and fully support the school's chief purpose to prepare young people for full-time service in the church as pastors, teachers, missionaries, and staff ministers. For those students who choose other careers, the



school prepares them well to be willing lay leaders in their congregations. The faculty is diverse and experienced; it is able to teach a challenging and interesting curriculum. It is able to lead an active and broad extracurricular program that supports the ministry purposes of the school. The faculty and administration are willing and experienced in serving both the Wisconsin Synod and the Michigan District in a variety of committees and offices.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary has had consistent success. Year after year the school has sent 45 percent of its graduates to the synod's college programs for ministry. Graduates of Seminary serve as faithful lay leaders in congregations across our synod. Many hundreds of MLS graduates are in ministry positions throughout our synod and its missions. Currently exactly 100 MLS alumni are studying on the campus of Martin Luther College, which is over 14 percent of the school's 700 students.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary faces some local challenges. Three large areas of its campus are in need of attention. The gymnasium and the chapel have not been redecorated or renovated since they were constructed in 1985. Twenty-three years of constant use are very obvious in these two well-used facilities that are the most visible parts of the campus. About two thirds of the furniture in the two dormitories is the original furniture from 1976. Thirty-two years of teenagers' use has been hard on this equipment, and it is in need of replacement. Other aspects of the dormitory need updating.

The changing economy in America and Michigan already affected Saginaw years ago because of the significant problems in General Motors and its former Delphi subsidiary. The two were the chief employers of Saginaw County. The City of Saginaw has been particularly hit hard in the last decade. While foreclosed homes began to be obvious across our country in the summer of 2007, Saginaw was in that economic challenge years ago. There are many foreclosed homes in the Seminary neighborhood. There has been a creeping blight moving towards the Seminary campus over the last two decades. MLS has been an anchor to its neighborhood.

At the same time, there are some positive developments in the neighborhood and community around MLS. The Saginaw Public School System is putting the finishing touches on its new \$25 million Thompson Middle School eight blocks west of Seminary on Court Street. The new school will probably have a positive impact on the neighborhood it shares with MLS. The challenges of March through August 2007 drew much neighborhood and community support. Since fall 2007, MLS has received some grants from local foundations that formerly ignored the school. In the last year, Saginaw community leaders and the local media have expressed public support and encouragement for Seminary and its special program. The community both respects and appreciates Michigan Lutheran Seminary in ways that were not evident before the winter 2007.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary has always had a strong and large group of people who willingly supported the school with their words, their time, their efforts, and their special gifts. Many of these people were local, many were distant, and some were even from the Missouri Synod. The events of last year brought words of encouragement and support, special gifts, and many hours of volunteer labor from people all over the Michigan District and the synod. The response was both astounding and humbling for those who work full time on the campus—and it was very encouraging. Volunteers continue to serve on campus daily in a variety of ways. Gifts continue to be sent to the school. People continue to communicate their concern and support for the school's important ministry.

The future of MLS should be affected by what is happening at MLS. The future of MLS should be affected by the 2003 Preparatory School Study Committee's recommendation to maintain Michigan Lutheran Seminary and Luther Preparatory School. The future should be affected by the 2005 synod resolution that firmly supported that recommendation. The future of MLS should be affected by the 2007 synod convention's resolution to continue to fund the ministry-training program of Michigan Lutheran Seminary. To say *it should* does not express a fact but a possibility. It may affect MLS, and it may not. Nor does it express what the effect will be. That is the future, and only God knows the future. The people of MLS, faculty, students, staff, parents, alumni, and the extended Seminary family, understand that all is in God's hands. Whatever he wills for us and for Michigan Lutheran Seminary, we humbly and thankfully accept.

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