

Ed Boehling – Our Savior's – East Brunswick, NJ

Telephone Interview with Ed Boehling (302)-678-1623, 12/14/2010

1. Were you a member of the LCMS before you helped start Grace? yes
2. Why did you leave the LCMS? *My father and I were unhappy with our Missouri church, which was more than a little liberal. You could go to some churches and not notice. We moved from NYC in 1956. The first service had 150 people. That was the first Lutheran church. Christ Memorial Lutheran Church (LCMS). We moved to be near family. When we first moved there, we went to another Lutheran church in Fords, NJ. That church has a LES and is a very vibrant. It was also LCMS. East Brunswick at that time had 4000-5000 people. We attended church there for several years at Our Redeemer. By the way: My paternal Grandpa was a Lutheran pastor who graduated St. Louis in 1903. When this new church in East Brunswick (Christ Memorial) started, it was in our home. I was 11. At that point, LCMS was doing three year catechism. 1958 Christ Memorial started. We built a good sized church right away. No school, we never thought about that. I was in Walther league, the LCMS youth group. The pastor would drive a bunch of us. He talked about the flood and said it was a myth. I told my dad. He said, "you're kidding." He was unhappy with the answer he got from the pastor. We stayed unhappy for a year. Our Savior's started in 1964. We started in 1965. My father said one week that we were going to go over to Fords. I looked in the paper and there was a 1x2 inch add in the paper for Our Savior's Luther's church at Maple school in east Brunswick. I said, "what is Wisconsin Synod?" He said, "Your Grandfather would approve of them." We went, and we heard what we wanted to hear. No stories, but just God's Word. Church dedication was in 1970. They looked for property. The Lord provided a house with 6-8 acres of property. We were in a school in North Brunswick. In 1966 I went to New Ulm for school. I decided to be a teacher. I went for three years and graduated in '69. There was a nice sized house on the new property in East Brunswick. In 1970, the church was dedicated. My father was a member there until 2001 when he moved to Delaware. Pastor Beckmann pretty much started most of the churches on the East Coast. He would come up to central NJ for services until we called Pastor Baumler. He was the editor of the NWL for a period of years. Now he has a retirement call. When I would come home in the summer time, each pastor that was there was also helping to start other churches. I played piano and organ, so I'd go with Pastor Baumler to King of Prussia west and northwest of Philadelphia, and I'd travel with him to play for afternoon services. That church is still there, and they just dedicated a new church there.*

3. In your experience, what advantages did a core of former LCMS members bring to the new east coast missions? Do you have any specific stories or ministry memories to share on this question? *Our Saviors was mostly WELS people who came to the east and couldn't find a church. Maybe half the core was ex-Missouri, and the rest were Wisconsin mid-west transplants. They traveled for business. Mrs. Foster is an example of that. Her husband was an attorney who helped start several of our churches legally. As I look at the church now, it's mostly the community. Churches out here seem to be about 40-50 miles apart. Falls Church started a number of churches. Our Savior's started in 1964 with the first exploratory services conducted by a vicar.*
4. In your experience, were there any disadvantages to starting a WELS mission around a core of former LCMS people? Do you have any specific ministry stories to share on this question?
5. In your opinion, would the WELS have gone to the east coast as quickly as we did without the nuclei of former LCMS members asking for mission starts?
6. Describe the relationship between the new WELS missions and the established LCMS congregations in the area. *My mother kept her lady friends and kept in contact with them. I don't recall any problems. My father was very blunt, so he would have had more issues like those. I was in college, so I had a different level of friends at that point. I never heard from my uncle about it, and it seemed pretty civil. If you listened, you heard the problems in Missouri. At that point in time, that was a liberal pastor. The one in Fords, that was a conservative church. They didn't advertise every week, so it was God's hand at work that we saw the ad at all. I was upset with WELS in the '70s, and in Wisconsin, it was much different than in New Jersey. I was told at that point that I couldn't go to church with my Missouri friends. I left teaching in the '80s. Then I went to a seminary in Missouri (not LCMS) and was a pastor of a bible church group. Now I've been a member of WELS for going on 20 years. God had other things for me. I shouldn't have gone to seminary.*
7. In your experience, how did the LCMS background of core members influence the Christian education mindset of the mission congregation? I noted that the Texas congregations were starting schools within 2-3 years of start-up, and am wondering if that is a pattern consistent with former Missourians around the country.
8. What is your best memory of those days? *There was fellowship in that church. When there was a Packer game, there was one family there, the Mckennas, who came from LaCrosse. He was*

involved in ABC sports. When we went to his house for a Packer game, there were 25-30 people there. Everyone brought something. The last Sunday of the month there would be a fellowship, and you got to know everyone. People liked each other. Other than that fellowship on Sunday there were other things. When my father had his birthday in August, the whole church was invited. People brought stuff. We had a hundred people. A good third to half were family members, and the rest were from church. That knitted and made people bond.

9. *What was the biggest challenge in those days? Locating property that the synod would approve was a problem at the beginning. They made mistakes in Newark. They wanted it on a bus line. They bought property that couldn't expand. Our school was busting at the scenes, but the building codes stopped us from building. In East Brunswick, synod was loved. In 1980, we sent \$11,000. Churches in the east – there's a lot of people that have big incomes. Synod got back what they invested here. The school started in East Brunswick in 1977 with 11 students.*

Dorothy Hoeting – Grace – Falls Church, VA

Telephone Interview with Dorothy Hoeting, 12/15/2010

1. Were you a member of the LCMS before you helped start Grace? *Yes. Prince of Peace, LCMS, Springfield, VA. We were almost founding members of that.*
2. Why did you leave the LCMS? *A liberal element was coming in. The thing that upset my husband more than anything was the whole talk of joining the ALC. Fellowship. It was the trend of the whole Missouri Synod.*
3. In your experience, what advantages did a core of former LCMS members bring to the new east coast missions? Do you have any specific stories or ministry memories to share on this question? *Experience with being Lutherans. Good share of government workers. Most have died or moved since. It's a young congregation. We weren't there for the founding.*
4. In your experience, were there any disadvantages to starting a WELS mission around a core of former LCMS people? Do you have any specific ministry stories to share on this question? *N/A*
5. In your opinion, would the WELS have gone to the east coast as quickly as we did without the nuclei of former LCMS members asking for mission starts? *N/A*
6. Describe the relationship between the new WELS missions and the established LCMS congregations in the area. *We still have friends from there. I can't say that they showed any animosity. I suppose most of them wondered why, since they weren't all that strict about their beliefs. We still have good friends who are members there. That church is $\frac{3}{4}$ a mile from us, but now we drive 8-9 miles.*
7. In your experience, how did the LCMS background of core members influence the Christian education mindset of the mission congregation? *I noted that the Texas congregations were starting schools within 2-3 years of start-up, and am wondering if that is a pattern consistent*

with former Missourians around the country. *We have a school of about 75 this year. It's the biggest it's ever been. It's been wonderful to see.*

8. What is your best memory of those days? *The church we left was small too. My dad's church was large though. I enjoyed the small group. We got to know people really well. We made friends fast, and it helped coming over with people we already knew from Prince of Peace.*
9. What was the biggest challenge in those days? *Everyone has to work extra hard when the church is small. As soon as it gets larger, it spreads out. You have your core group that does most of your work.*
10. Contact also Mel Schuler for more information.

Jean Foster – Grace – Falls Church, VA

Telephone Interview with Jean Foster, 12/14/2010

1. Were you a member of the LCMS before you helped start Grace? *Yes. We had only joined the LCMS church. Neither of us were raised Lutheran. It was during that period where they were integrating the schools here in VA. But that wasn't really what pushed us into even getting acquainted with the church. We were briefly living in PA and we moved back to VA and were looking for a house. So a realtor showed us a house close to Our Savior Lutheran Church in Arlington County VA. While we were looking at the house, our two young children played on the playground of Our Savior Lutheran School, which was attached to the church. We weren't really acquainted with anything other than the public schools, but our oldest child, a daughter, had gone to Kindergarten. The B-day cutoff was Dec. 1st. We came to VA, and it was Oct. 1st. She couldn't go into the first grade and was going to repeat kindergarten. That wasn't a satisfactory solution for us. She played on that playground, we ought to inquire of that school. We were suspicious of what they were going to teach her, so my husband went to the information class and he was convinced that they were right. Then he encouraged me to go, and my background is quite different. Then I went, and then the two of us joined Our Savior's Lutheran LCMS. That's how we became LCMS. That was in 1959.*
2. Why did you leave the LCMS? *Shortly after that, there was a man in that church who was familiar with the Wisconsin Synod and he was dissatisfied with the Missouri synod and what was going on at the seminary in St. Louis. He was the one that got my husband interested in going to the Mission that they started here. The Cooper family was comfortable already at Our Savior's. We had just made a big leap to go to Our Savior's. We hadn't been there very long. The controversy was going on long before we ever got to Our Savior's. We moved to Long Island, NY in 1965 and were original members of the church in East Brunswick where Gary Baumler was the founding pastor. You might also want to talk to the cong in east Brunswick. We didn't return until the fall of 1972. One of those families was Ed Boehling (302)-678-1623. He lives in Dover and attends the WELS church in Newark. He was for a while the principle of the school at Newark. The parents have both died, but the son would be very happy to talk to you.*

I guess I can't remember if we ever left [Our Savior's]. We had two children in the school. They are only 20 months apart. I think we stayed at Our Savior's. We might have attended services at the mission. The school kept us at Our Savior's. My husband might have left Our Savior's, but because of the school I wasn't about to leave. We didn't commit to the mission because of the school at Our Savior's. Now the Coopers had two children, but their children were in the public

school, so it was easier for them to go. The other family, I can't remember the name, he had been the one that really spear-headed the move from Our Savior's to the mission.

3. In your experience, what advantages did a core of former LCMS members bring to the new east coast missions? Do you have any specific stories or ministry memories to share on this question? *I was so new, and I had three young children. The oldest six, I guess, and of course I wasn't at the voters meetings. I didn't know a whole lot about what was going on. I had become somewhat comfortable with the service, but my husband and I were both new Lutherans.*

Grace is an interesting congregation. It's in a location that's heavily foreign born. There's a Spanish church too. There's a lot of turnover because of this heavily military area. There's not a lot of turnover. That goes back to the very beginning. They started with three families, and the leader was a government employee, and Cooper was a government employee too.

4. In your experience, were there any disadvantages to starting a WELS mission around a core of former LCMS people? Do you have any specific ministry stories to share on this question?
5. In your opinion, would the WELS have gone to the east coast as quickly as we did without the nuclei of former LCMS members asking for mission starts?
6. Describe the relationship between the new WELS missions and the established LCMS congregations in the area. *We joined Grace officially after we returned from New York and New Jersey. There weren't really any hard feelings, because we had been gone for a while. We had attended Trinity in Long Island (LCMS) while we were in New York. Then we moved to NJ, and went to East Brunswick.*
7. In your experience, how did the LCMS background of core members influence the Christian education mindset of the mission congregation? *I noted that the Texas congregations were starting schools within 2-3 years of start-up, and am wondering if that is a pattern consistent with former Missourians around the country. Grace has a school. This year they have 77 students. The school started – my children were too old. The youngest was in 9th grade, beyond the school age. I think Grace started the school in '73 or '74. I was too small before that.*
8. What is your best memory of those days?

Kyle Bitter

9. What was the biggest challenge in those days?

LaVerne Baylock – Lord of Life – Houston

Notes from telephone interview conducted on December 2nd, 2010

1. Were you a former LCMS member before the split? Yes
2. Describe your primary reason for leaving the LCMS. *We left Hope because they went ahead and veered off of traditional things, like women serving and communion. We didn't find out about the schools until after we joined Wisconsin.*
3. What was your relationship like with your previous congregation after you left? *We didn't have any difficulty. Some of the members from Hope would call and say "I can't believe what they're doing. How does this compare with what WELS does."*
4. What was the hardest part about starting the new church? *Finding a location was difficult. We started by using the community room in a shopping mall. It was available to anyone who had use for it. Sometimes we'd get there for our service and we'd have to clean up the place before we could start. We couldn't leave any of our things there. We had to carry all that around. Vilas was our pastor. We are native Texans, and when we got married, my husband was at A&M. He went teaching. We moved around a lot, settled in Arlington for a while, and we came to Friendswood for work. Husband worked for NASA after a while. We left LCMS in '69. Prior to establishing LOL, we went to CTL. LOL started from 6 families in the area. We were from Hope, the rest were from Gloria Dei.*
5. What was the easiest part about starting the new church?
6. In your experience, what advantages did a core of former LCMS members bring to the new Texas missions? Do you have any specific stories to share on this question? *We didn't have to stop and teach them what synod was all about. The others were all active. We had a SS teacher and two organists from the start. We seemed to work really good together. When something needed to be done, someone was always willing to help. Lots of hands on participation.*

7. In your experience, were there any disadvantages to starting a WELS mission around a core of former LCMS people? Do you have any specific stories to share on this question?
8. In your opinion, would the WELS have gone to Texas as quickly as we did without the nuclei of former LCMS members asking for mission starts? *Perhaps at some point. Those of us at CTL. Pastor G was willing to start a new mission but synod made us wait until AW had their pastor and was going, and the same for Angleton. Then LOL was organized officially. Pastors from AW, Angleton (Wayne Vogt would come and do confirmation and did adult mid-week bible class in the afternoons, we even sent a student to the Sem who served in Naples FL until he died), and CLT helped. Each one of the churches would help so we could have a service every Sunday.*
9. Describe the relationship between the new WELS missions and the established LCMS congregations in the area. Do you have any specific stories on this question?
10. In your experience, how did the LCMS background of core members influence the Christian education mindset of the mission congregation (This question comes from the observation of a number of strong LESs in Texas.)? Do you have any specific stories you'd like to share? *We started the school in '76 or '77. Two years after the building was completed. It was started in a little temp. building. We were planning to do that from the beginning. We had a 10 acre tract on the main road, and we had hopes of using those 10 acres for expansion. At some point, synod decided that we shouldn't be paying on that building program because they thought we would never need 10 acres, so we sold the 5 back acres.*
11. Favorite memory? *Being able to build a church and not just a chapel. We built a sanctuary, and that dictated that we'd need another building when we started a school. To see all that fall into place. The first contractor went bankrupt, and we had to stop for a while.*

We just celebrated the 40th anniversary, and we served on the committee of about 10 people to make all that happen. It was really exciting to see two of the former pastors to attend and were speakers, and brought some of the other former members back to the occasion...it was interesting to be a part of that committee and experience the blessings that we've had all those 40 years.

Pastor Walter Beckmann – Grace – Falls Church, VA

Notes from a mailed survey in October, 2010

1. Which churches in the North Atlantic would you consider to have benefited significantly at start-up because of a core of former LCMS members already in place?

Grace, Falls Church, VA – LCMS and new WELS members

Ottawa, Ont. Canada – and Poltimne QUE, CAN

I don't remember all the details of all of our early churches.

2. Are there any specific members or pastors from these churches who would be able to offer me significant insight into those early days?

Cf. pages 4 and 5 of North Atlantic District History (selected pages duplicated and included). You can get the whole document from the Mission Board. NOTE – the overview chart links the pastors who started each mission. They might be able to [illegible] to supply details about the original nucleus.

3. In your experience, what advantages did a core of former LCMS members bring to the new east coast missions? Do you have any specific stories or ministry memories to share on this question?

The former LCMS members realized that sometimes you have to stand up and contend for the truth. They also loved the East Coast and wanted to see WELS expansion into it. Many also had a better feel on the various geographic areas than our officials in Milwaukee.

4. In your experience, were there any disadvantages to starting a WELS mission around a core of former LCMS people? Do you have any specific ministry stories to share on this question?

This varied from place to place. Usually the core of LCMS members was quickly outnumbered by new WELS families being moved into the area.

5. In your opinion, would the WELS have gone to the east coast as quickly as we did without the nuclei of former LCMS members asking for mission starts?

We would eventually have had to start new missions in these areas to serve new WELS members moving in who no longer felt they could affiliate with LCMS churches as they had before the split, but former LCMS members requiring WELS services did hasten the process.

6. Describe the relationship between the new WELS missions and the established LCMS congregations in the area.

There probably were cases of resentment by LCMS congregations but I didn't experience it here in Falls Church. I had a cordial relationship with the pastor of the LCMS congregation from which our original nucleus came. He seemed to be understanding of the truth and often called to me for documents and information to re-enforce his scriptural priorities.

7. Do you know of any other (besides North Atlantic and Texas) WELS mission fields that were basically opened by people who broke with the LCMS?

Milwaukee people like Harry Hagedorn would be a better source of much information.

PS – Mel Schuler and his wife were members of our congregation when we were first getting started. They may have some recollections of those early days and [illegible].

8. In your experience, how did the LCMS background of core members influence the Christian education mindset of the mission congregation? I noted that the Texas congregations were starting schools within 2-3 years of start-up, and am wondering if that is a pattern consistent with former Missourians around the country.

They certainly didn't oppose it and probably did support it but by the time a congregation was able to consider a school, the LCMS core had probably been somewhat outnumbered by the WELS members who had come onto the scene and also by mission converts.

9. Please describe any other thoughts or insights you might have on this topic.

About 9 months before I arrived here, a nucleus of about five families (of former WELS members and life-long LCMS members) from the LCMS church in Arlington, VA, met with members of the WELS Mission Board. Pastor Daniel Gieschen was a member of that board and might be able to give you some valuable information about that meeting. (cf. page 2 of the enclosed papers, "The First Decade of what _____.")

If you want to send me further specific questions about anything, give me a quick call and I'll call you back on my phone and we can take all the time we need.

*I hope you can read my comments. My handwriting is pretty bad and I dashed this off in a hurry.
W.J.B.*

Pastor Bill Gabb – Abiding Word – Houston, TX

Email Survey conducted with Pastor Bill Gabb in October 2010

1. Which churches in Texas would you consider to have benefited significantly at start-up because of a core of former LCMS members already in place?

CALVARY, DALLAS, ST MARK, DUNCANVILLE, ABIDING WORD, HOUSTON, CHRIST THE LORD, HOUSTON, LORD OF LIFE, FRIENDSWOOD, OUR SAVIOR, SAN ANTONIO, HOLY WORD, AUSTIN, REDEEMER, EDNA; ALSO ANGLETON, FREDERICKSBURG, IMMANUEL, FT WORTH, ABIDING SAVIOR, WESLACO, GETHSEMANE, OKLAHOMA CITY (NOW A PART OF THE TEXAS GROUP OF CONGREGATIONS; I HELPED START THAT CHURCH WHEN I SERVED IN NEBRASKA). THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A COUPLE MORE THAT ESCAPE MY MEMORY AT THIS TIME.

2. Are there any specific members or pastors from these churches who would be able to offer me significant insight into those early days?

PASTOR GLAESKE WOULD BE A PRIMARY SOURCE SINCE HE WAS ASSIGNED TO EDNA WITH THE IDEA THAT THE MISSION BOARD WOULD SEND HIM WHEREVER THEY NEEDED HIM DUE TO LCMS MEMBERS WANTING TO BE SERVED. CALLS WERE COMING IN FROM SEVERAL LOCATIONS; PASTOR GLAESKE SERVED, I THINK, ONLY ABOUT A YEAR IN EDNA BEFORE THE MISSION BOARD MOVED HIM TO HOUSTON.

3. In your experience, what advantages did a core of former LCMS members bring to the new Texas missions? Do you have any specific stories to share on this question?

THEY HAD A HIGH REGARD FOR THE AUTHORITY AND INFALLIBILITY OF SCRIPTURE, AND THE NEED FOR THE CHURCH TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO THE WORD WITHOUT COMPROMISE. MOST IF NOT ALL OF THE CORE MEMBERS HAD TO ENDURE PERSONAL COURAGE IN TRYING TO GET THEIR PASTORS TO ADDRESS UNSCRIPTURAL ISSUES THAT WERE SURFACING AS THE ST LOUIS SEMINARY AND IN MANY REGIONS OF THE LCMS, BUT THEIR PASTOR WOULD NOT DO SO. AS THE "CONCERNED" MEMBERS TRIED TO SHARE THEIR CONCERNS WITH MEMBERS OF THEIR CONGREGATIONS, THEY WERE NOT BELIEVED, LABELED AS FANATICS, UNLOVING, UNCHRISTIAN, SLANDEROUS, TROUBLE-MAKERS, LEGALISTIC, AND THE LIKE. IT TOOK A LOT OF COURAGE TO STAND UP AGAINST THIS OPPOSITION, WHICH INCLUDE OPPOSITION FROM FAMILY MEMBERS. FAMILIES WERE DIVIDED, FAMILY MEMBERS WERE OFFENDED AND EMBARRASSED BY THEIR "OVERLY-CONCERNED" KIN.

AS A RESULT, NEW WELS MISSIONS RECEIVED OFTEN THE CREAM-OF-CROP FROM THE LCMS...THE PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN REGULAR IN CHURCH AND BIBLE CLASS ATTENDANCE, AND WERE GENEROUS GIVERS. THEY KNEW THE BIBLE WELL.

SOMETIMES, HOWEVER, THEY DID COME WITH LEGALISTIC TENDENCIES THAT HAD TO BE DEALT WITH. THERE WERE SOME "JUNIOR THEOLOGIANS" WHO THOUGHT THAT BECAUSE THEY HAD GONE THROUGH THE STRUGGLE OF LEAVING THE LCMS FOR CONFESSIONAL REASONS, AND HAD DONE A LOT OF READING TO INFORM THEMSELVES REGARDING THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE, FELLOWSHIP, ET AL., THEY KNEW IT ALL AND WOULD TRY TO IMPOSE LEGALISTIC PRACTICES ONTO THE NEW WELS GROUP. THEY ALSO DID NOT HESITATE "TELLING" THEIR NEW AND OFTEN YOUTHFUL PASTOR HOW TO DO HIS JOB AND MADE HIS LIFE VERY MISERABLE. DICK FREY, THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT OF THE A/CA DISTRICT, OF WHICH TEXAS WAS A MEMBER AND KNOWN AS "THE TEXAS/NEW MEXICO MISSION DISTRICT OF THE ARIZONA/CALIFORNIA DISTRICT," TOLD ME ONCE THAT THE DISTRICT PRESIDENTS OF THE SALT WATER DISTRICTS (WHERE NEW WELS MISSIONS WERE POPPING UP AND WITH NEW SEM GRADS AS THE PASTORS) WERE ALL HAVING TO DEAL WITH INTERNAL PROBLEMS BECAUSE TOO MANY OF THESE LCMS TRANSPLANTS "THOUGHT IT TO BE THEIR DIVINELY APPOINTED RESPONSIBILITY TO DRIVE SOME OF OUR FINEST YOUNG PASTORS OUT OF THE MINISTRY." AND USUALLY THE PROBLEMS WERE PERSONALITY CONFLICT ISSUES AND EVEN ACCUSING SOME OF THE PASTORS WITH TEACHING FALSE DOCTRINE WHERE NO SUCH THING WAS TAKING PLACE.

WITH A SMALL CORE OF PEOPLE NEW TO THE WELS AND HAVING TO WEAR MANY HATS IN GETTING A MISSION CONGREGATION STARTED, BURNOUT AND TENDER OR STRONG EGOS WERE ALSO PROBLEMS. THE PEOPLE WHO CAME TO US OUT OF THE LCMS USUALLY HAD STRONG PERSONALITIES AND WEREN'T AFRAID TO SPEAK THEIR MINDS AND STICK TO THEIR GUNS, IN ADDITION TO INSISTING THAT THEIR WAY WAS THE ONLY WAY TO DO THINGS. THIS WOULD BECOME APPARENT WHEN DISCUSSING WHERE TO BUY LAND FOR A NEW MISSION AND WHAT NAME TO GIVE IT. ARGUMENTS ENSUED, FEELINGS WERE HURT, SOME PEOPLE LEFT THE GROUP AND WENT BACK TO THEIR LCMS CHURCH WITH THEIR TAIL BETWEEN THEIR LEGS. BUT THE MISSION SURVIVED AND THRIVED IN SPITE OF THEM. I SPENT A LOT OF AGONIZING TIME INVOLVED WITH TRYING TO RESOLVE PERSONALITY CONFLICTS AND TRYING TO KEEP THE PEACE WHILE MOVING FORWARD IN MAKING CRUCIAL DECISIONS ABOUT PLANNING THE FUTURE OF A NEW MISSION. I SERVED AS CIRCUIT PASTOR (THEN CALLED VISITING ELDER) AS WELL AND FOUND MYSELF HAVING TO MEDIATE SEVERAL PROBLEMS IN OUR TEXAS CONGREGATIONS DUE TO STRONG PERSONALITIES NOT BEING ABLE TO WORK WITH OTHERS...NOT KNOWING HOW TO SHARE IDEAS WITHOUT BECOMING PERSONAL AND ATTACKING OTHERS WHO DIFFERED WITH THEM.

SOME LCMS PEOPLE ALSO CAME TO US FOR OTHER THAN DOCTRINAL REASONS. I RECALL MEETING WITH A GROUP OF LCMS FOLKS IN HARLINGEN, TX (IN THE VALLEY) ON A WEEKEND THAT I FLEW DOWN THERE TO CONDUCT SERVICES IN WESLACO...ABOUT TEN OR 12 PEOPLE. THEY SAID THEY WERE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT OUR WESLACO MISSION (ABOUT 20 OR SO MILES TO THE WEST). AS I WENT AROUND THE ROOM AND ASKED EACH PERSON WHY THEY WERE INTERESTED IN PERHAPS STARTING A WELS MISSION IN HARLINGEN, NOT A SINGLE PERSON GAVE ME A DOCTRINAL REASON; THEY WERE ALL ANGRY WITH THEIR LCMS PASTOR AND WERE LOOKING FOR A WAY TO START WITH A DIFFERENT PASTOR. I LEARNED FROM OTHER EXPERIENCES THAT UNLESS WE ASKED THE RIGHT QUESTIONS, WE AT TIMES ENDED UP WITH A CORE OF MALCONTENTS IN A NEW MISSION, WHICH CREATED OTHER PROBLEMS AS THE NEW GROUP TRIED AND NEEDED TO WORK TOGETHER, CANVASSING THE NEIGHBORHOODS, MAKING PLANS TO PURCHASE LAND, FIND A PARSONAGE, SERVE ON COMMITTEES, ET AL. NONETHELESS, THE LORD USED THIS GROUP, WHATEVER ITS MAKEUP, TO ESTABLISH A WELS MISSION WITH THE RESULT THAT EVEN THOUGH SOME OF THOSE MALCONTENTS ENDED UP LEAVING THE GROUP, IT HAD GROWN TO BE LARGE ENOUGH TO STAND ON ITS OWN AND SURVIVE TO THIS DAY. MOST OF THE FOLKS, HOWEVER, WERE WONDERFUL, DEDICATED CHRISTIANS WHO SIMPLY WANTED TO BE FAITHFUL TO SCRIPTURE AND SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH OTHERS.

AND, MOST OF THESE FOLKS WERE ALSO VERY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION-MINDED. WE STARTED THE LUTHERAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT ABIDING WORD WITH, I THINK, 79 COMMUNICANT MEMBERS AND 20 KIDDOS IN THE SCHOOL. ALL OF THE MEMBERS WERE WILLING TO PROVIDE WHATEVER ADDITIONAL FUNDING NECESSARY, THROUGH THEIR OFFERINGS, TO MAKE THE SCHOOL VIABLE. THE MISSION BOARD STRUGGLED WITH WHETHER OR NOT TO ALLOW MISSIONS TO START SCHOOLS. THE THOUGHT ORIGINALLY WAS THAT A SCHOOL WOULD BE A GREAT MISSION ARM. THAT PROVED NOT TO BE THE CASE TOO OFTEN AND, RATHER THAN BEING A HELP WAS A HINDRANCE TO GROWTH, FINANCIALLY.

4. In your experience, were there any disadvantages to starting a WELS mission around a core of former LCMS people? Do you have any specific stories to share on this question?

SEE ABOVE.

5. In your opinion, would the WELS have gone to Texas as quickly as we did without the nuclei of former LCMS asking for mission starts?

NO, I DOUBT IT. CALVARY IN DALLAS AND REDEEMER IN EDNA WERE THE FIRST CONGREGATIONS TO BRING US TO TEXAS, SOLELY BECAUSE OF DOCTRINAL REASONS. OUR GROWTH CAME FROM THAT SAME CORE CONCERN. ONCE WE HAD DEVELOPED A BASE TO WORK FROM, EFFORTS WERE MADE TO REACH OUT FURTHER INTO THE COMMUNITY SIMPLY TO REACH THE LOST, NOT TO SERVE AS A HAVEN FOR DISGRUNTLED MISSOURIANS.

6. Describe the relationship between the new WELS missions and the established LCMS congregations in the area. Do you have any specific stories on this question?

NOT REALLY. WE PRETTY WELL IGNORED EACH OTHER. THEY KNEW WE WERE AROUND BUT NO EFFORT WAS MADE TO SEEK US OUT (AT LEAST, NOT ME PERSONALLY) TO TALK ABOUT THE BIBLICAL ISSUES THAT DIVIDED US. NOR DID WE MAKE ANY EFFORT TO GET TO KNOW THEM. THERE WERE, HOWEVER, MISSOURI SYNOD PASTORS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY WHO WERE SEEKING OUT THE WELS FOR CONFESSIONAL REASONS AND PLAIN DISGUST WITH WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THEIR CHURCH BODY. FOR SEVERAL YEARS RUNNING, COLLOQUY REQUESTS FROM MISSOURI SYNOD PASTORS, AND THE RESULTS OF THE COLLOQUY, WERE POSTED IN THE THEN NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN.

7. Do you know of any WELS mission fields that were basically opened by people who broke with the LCMS?

I WOULD LABEL TEXAS AS SUCH A FIELD. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS WOULD ALSO BE TRUE OF CALIFORNIA AND ARIZONA TO SOME EXTENT. YOU'D HAVE TO CHECK THAT OUT TO BE CERTAIN. BUT I DO KNOW THAT NEW MISSION CONGREGATIONS WERE BEING OPENED IN THESE TWO STATES BECAUSE OF PEOPLE WHO WERE LOOKING FOR OUR CONFESSIONAL AND CONSERVATIVE THEOLOGY. IN FACT, NEW MISSION OPENINGS WERE ADVERTISED AS BEING "A CONSERVATIVE CHURCH," WHICH BROUGHT A CONTINGENCY OF MEMBERS OF THE JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY INTO THE WELS FOLD. YOU WOULD NEED TO GOOGLE THE JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY TO LEARN WHAT THEY WERE ALL ABOUT. THE HEAD OF THE JOHN BIRCHERS WAS A WELS MEMBER. A CLASSMATE OF MINE IN PHOENIX CONDUCTED THE FUNERAL WHEN HE DIED. THE LOCAL CONVENTION CENTER WAS RENTED, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, TO HOLD ALL THE PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED.

8. In your experience, how did the LCMS background of core members influence the Christian education mindset of the mission congregation (this question comes from the observation of a number of strong LESs in Texas)?

I MENTIONED ABOVE THAT ABIDING WORD, THE CHURCH WHERE I SERVED AS THE FIRST RESIDENT PASTOR, HAD A LES WITHIN THREE YEARS OF STARTING THIS NEW MISSION. WE HAD PURCHASED 4 ACRES OF LAND ON RED OAK, WORSHIPED IN THE Bammel Elementary School North of the property on Red Oak, had a double-wide mobile trailer built for us in Saginaw, TX as our first place of worship. Then, after a couple of years, we were granted funds to build the first permanent unit, the 100 x 50 steel structure that had a sanctuary on one end and classrooms on the other. The plan to start a school was part of the discussion from day one. I recall meeting with the mission board not long after I arrived at Abiding Word to talk about funding for a school. I was told (see above about the concerns) that there would be no funding and I was told to forget about starting a school. We didn't forget but understood that a school would have to stand on its own, financially...and it did. Our offerings to the WELS CMO were something like \$10/communicant member (quite high at the time) and we paid all expenses for the school. That was also the case for Christ the Lord, Calvary, Holy Word and Our Redeemer, San Antonio. Lord of Life also had a school not long after its founding. We had fun (we pastor guys) meeting with our new teachers, discussing curriculum and textbook choices. We would meet monthly for a while, making the cycle from Houston to Dallas to Austin to San Antonio, meet for the day and go home again. We were pioneers when it came to starting our school. With all the government red tape and parent expectations today (one teacher per class, computer lab, etc.) I don't believe we could start these schools today.

9. Please describe any other insights you might have on this topic.

In general, there was an excitement all over the synod during the 1970s and 1980s. New missions were being established at a rate of 20 - 25 a year; new schools were opening at a rate of 10 or 12 or more a year. And the WELS was still emerging from our break with the LCMS. We were learning how to do evangelism because we had left that up to Missouri. Pastor Norm Berg authored a "Missionaries' Handbook" with all of the rules and regulations that had to be followed across the country (1700 square feet maximum for a parsonage (that made it tough for Texas homes where we have no basements for storage); no fireplace or built in dishwasher, and the like). The LCMS had predicted that, because the WELS had no

OUTREACH PROGRAM TO SPEAK OF, WE WOULD DIE AS A CHURCH BODY WITHIN 20 YEARS. BUT IT WAS A WAKEUP CALL FOR US.

I THINK OF MANY WONDERFUL LCMS PEOPLE I GOT TO KNOW WHO HUMBLY DEDICATED THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES TO ESTABLISHING NEW, SMALL GROUPS OF CHRISTIANS WHO WOULD BE FAITHFUL TO GOD'S WORD AND SHARE THAT WORD WITH OTHERS. IT WAS ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT FOR KIDDOS IN THE LATE GRADE SCHOOL YEARS AND HIGH SCHOOL WHO HAD TO LEAVE THEIR FRIENDS BEHIND BECAUSE OF THEIR PARENTS' CONFESSION OF FAITH. AND THERE WAS NO SMALL AMOUNT OF HAND-WRINGING GOING ON BY PARENTS WHO WONDERED HOW THEIR CHILDREN, ESPECIALLY DAUGHTERS, WOULD MEET FINE CHRISTIAN YOUNG PEOPLE AS POTENTIAL SPOUSES AFTER LEAVING LARGE LCMS CONGREGATIONS THAT HAD ALL KINDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

WE OFTEN FAILED TO GET NEW FAMILIES TO JOIN OUR SMALL MISSION WHEN THESE FOLKS HAD YOUNG CHILDREN BUT WE HAD NO YOUTH GROUP AND PIONEER-LIKE GROUP TO PROVIDE ACTIVITIES FOR THEIR KIDS. WE WOULD TELL THEM "WELL, IF YOU WOULD JOIN OUR CONGREGATION YOU COULD HELP US GET GROUPS STARTED FOR OUR KIDDOS. HOW ELSE CAN WE GET GROUPS STARTED IF YOU WON'T JOIN OUR EFFORT?"

AS I SAY, THOSE WERE EXCITING TIMES BECAUSE SO MUCH WAS GOING ON IN TERMS OF NEW GROWTH AND EXPANSION. THE LORD BLESSED US GREATLY. AND, AS IT IS STILL TRUE TODAY, WE WOULD WORK HARD TO CANVASS AREAS AND TRY TO ATTRACT NEW PEOPLE TO OUR FLEDGLING CONGREGATIONS WITH LITTLE VISIBLE RESULTS, THEN THE LORD WOULD BRING SOMEONE TO US OUT OF THE BLUE AND EVERYONE WOULD BE SO EXCITED. WE HAD TO HOLD OURSELVES BACK FROM SMOTHERING A VISITOR TO A WORSHIP SERVICE AND BOMBARDING THE VISITOR WITH QUESTIONS: ARE YOU NEW TO THE AREA? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A NEW CHURCH HOME? OH, YOU'RE FROM WISCONSIN/MICHIGAN/ MINNESOTA; ARE YOU WELS? AND SO IT WOULD GO.

I'M DRIVING DOWN TO ABIDING WORD THIS COMING SUNDAY TO BE THERE FOR THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY. WHEN I THINK OF THAT CONGREGATION, I THINK OF 4 ACRES OF EMPTY FIELD, Bammel Elementary School, living in an old farmhouse on Spring-Steubner with 6 beautiful live oak trees out front and a host of copperhead and water moccasins lurking around out back (if I killed one of those critters I killed 20 or more during the two or three years that we lived in that house) while our very young children played outside oblivious to the danger that was around them, waking up in the morning to chameleons on our bedroom wall watching us as we slept (there were holes in the floor that allowed critters to come and go; the house

WAS SITTING ON 1 FOOT CINDER BLOCKS WHICH MADE THE FLOOR ONLY A COUPLE OF FEET FROM THE GROUND). AND WE WOULD HEAR COCKROACHES SCURRYING ABOUT IN THE STOVE AT NIGHT AND WOULD SEE THE HOST OF THEM IF WE GOT UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT AND TURNED ON THE LIGHT.

I REMEMBER DRIVING TO BEAUMONT (PASTOR GLAESKE AND I TRIED TO GET SOMETHING STARTED THERE) ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON 90 MILES TO THE EAST OF US. OUR KIDS LOVED IT BECAUSE THEY GOT TO GO TO SUNDAY SCHOOL TWICE EACH WEEK WITH MY WIFE BEING THEIR TEACHER. AND THERE WAS A PEACOCK ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH WE RENTED THAT WE WOULD HEAR THROUGHOUT THE TIME WE WERE THERE. THE BUILDING WAS NOT AIR CONDITIONED SO WE HAD TO KEEP THE DOORS OPEN (OUR KIDS STILL THINK OF THAT PEACOCK AS SOON AS I MENTION BEAUMONT). AND I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER NORMAN AND NANCY MARTINDALE (WE STILL RECEIVE A CHRISTMAS CARD FROM THEM EACH YEAR). THEY LIVED IN SILSBEE, TX AND DROVE A FAIR DISTANCE TO BEAUMONT TO GET TO CHURCH. I INSTRUCTED NORMAN (NANCY WAS A WELS MEMBER FROM WISCONSIN); MY WIFE TAUGHT THEIR KIDDOS IN SS. ONE NIGHT AFTER CHURCH NORMAN MENTIONED THAT THEY WERE ON VACATION AND WOULD BE DRIVING BACK TO THEIR CAMPGROUND THAT NIGHT. "WHERE IS IT?" I ASKED. "OH, ABOUT 120 MILES SOUTH OF HERE," NORMAN SAID. ONE HUNDRED TWENTY MILES!!! EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE ON VACATION, NORMAN DID NOT WANT TO MISS CHURCH OR THE BIC I WAS GOING THROUGH WITH HIM SO IT WAS A NO-BRAINER THAT THEY WOULD DRIVE TO CHURCH THAT NIGHT. AND...THEIR FAMILY AND MINE WERE THE ONLY PEOPLE IN CHURCH, WHICH WAS OFTEN THE CASE.

I ALSO REMEMBER WELL A MAN WHO CALLED HIMSELF FRED W. EAST TEXAS PEA-PICKER MILLS. I CAME ACROSS FRED AND ELSIE MILLS WHILE CANVASSING THE SUBDIVISION JUST EAST OF ABIDING WORD (I FORGET THE NAME OF THAT SUBDIVISION). THEY WERE FALLEN AWAY BAPTISTS IN THEIR 70s OR 80s. I VISITED THEM ABOUT ONCE EVERY 3 OR 4 MONTHS; THEY ALWAYS SAID THEY MIGHT COME TO CHURCH "ONE OF THESE SUNDAYS." ONE DAY WHEN I STOPPED IN, FRED TOLD ME THAT ELSIE HAD ALMOST DIED SINCE THE LAST TIME I HAD STOPPED IN. "DO YOU THINK GOD IS TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING?" HE ASKED. I TOLD HIM THAT HE PROBABLY WAS MAKING THAT EFFORT. BUT STILL THEY DIDN'T COME TO CHURCH. IT WAS 3 OR 4 MONTHS LATER THAT I STOPPED IN AGAIN AND FRED TOLD ME, "YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE IT BUT I ALMOST DIED SINCE THE LAST TIME YOU WERE HERE. DO YOU THINK GOD IS TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING?" I WHOLEHEARTEDLY AGREED THAT HE WAS.

FINALLY FRED AND ELSIE STARTED COMING TO CHURCH AND I STARTED A BIC WITH THEM, MEETING AT THEIR HOME ON THURSDAY MORNINGS. HE SAID ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, "YOU WOULDN'T HAVE LIKED ME VERY MUCH WHEN I WAS A YOUNG MAN, RIGHT ELSIE?" AND ELSIE

ALWAYS AGREED WITH HIM...HE WASN'T A VERY NICE PERSON IN HIS YOUNGER YEARS. AFTER FINISHING THE LESSON ON BAPTISM, FRED WAS UNUSUALLY QUIET. HE ASKED ME, SOMEWHAT RHETORICALLY, I THINK, "SO, ALL THIS ABOUT BAPTISM, AND SINS BEING WASHED AWAY...IT'S TRUE?" I TOLD HIM IT WAS.

WHEN I RETURNED TO THEIR HOME THE NEXT THURSDAY, FRED OPENED THE DOOR, AND WITH A VERY WARM BUT SERIOUS LOOK ON HIS FACE HE SAID TO ME, "I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MUCH THAT LESSON ON BAPTISM MEANS TO ME. EVERY MORNING DURING THIS PAST WEEK, WHEN I GOT UP AND WASHED MY FACE, I THOUGHT OF MY BAPTISM!" I'M GOING TO TELL THIS STORY AFTER DINNER THIS COMING SUNDAY WHEN I SPEAK AT ABIDING WORD. YOU SEE, FRED REALLY WASN'T A NICE MAN IN HIS YOUTH. HE ASSUMED THAT THERE WAS NOTHING THAT COULD BE DONE ABOUT HIS PAST SINS...HE RESIGNED HIMSELF TO THE "FACT" THAT HE WOULD GO TO HELL WHEN HE DIED BECAUSE HE DIDN'T NEED TO LISTEN TO SOME PETER-THE-PULPIT-POUNDER TELLING HIM HE WAS GOING TO HELL WHEN HE DIED; HE KNEW THAT ALREADY. BUT BAPTISM RELIEVED HIM OF A GUILT ON HIS HEART THAT HE THOUGHT HE WOULD CARRY TO HIS GRAVE, AND, TRAGICALLY, BEYOND.

FRED WAS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE MASONIC LODGE. WHEN I TALKED TO HIM ABOUT WHAT THE LODGE STOOD FOR, HE SAID, "DO YOU MEAN I CAN'T BECOME A MEMBER OF ABIDING WORD AND STILL BE A MEMBER OF THE LODGE? THE LODGE WILL TAKE CARE OF ME AND ELSIE IF WE GET TOO FEEBLE. I'M ESPECIALLY CONCERNED THAT IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO ME, I DON'T KNOW WHO WOULD HELP ELSIE. BUT THE LODGE HAS A HOME WHERE I WOULD BE TAKEN CARE OF AND ELSIE COULD LIVE THERE, TOO. WHAT SHOULD I DO?" I TOLD HIM TO GO BACK AND REVIEW WHAT WE HAD STUDIED AND COMPARE IT TO HIS LODGE MANUALS. THE NEXT SUNDAY WHEN HE AND ELSIE LEFT CHURCH AND I GREETED THEM AT THE DOOR, FRED HELD UP HIS RIGHT HAND TO SHOW ME THAT HE HAD REMOVED THE MASONIC RING FROM HIS HAND. HE GAVE ME HIS LODGE MANUALS THE NEXT THURSDAY WHEN I WENT TO HIS HOUSE FOR THE BIC. HE DIDN'T HAVE TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT ELSIE HAVING TO TAKE CARE OF HIM IF HE HAD BECOME AN INVALID. I THINK HE MAY HAVE BEEN MY FIRST FUNERAL AT ABIDING WORD. HE FELL ASLEEP IN DEATH WHILE READING THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE IN HIS EASY CHAIR AND THE ANGELS USHERED HIM INTO HEAVEN.

I HAVE MORE STORIES, KYLE, LOTS OF HAPPY ONES LIKE FRED, SOME NOT SO HAPPY, BUT ALL GOOD.

Kyle Bitter 2010

I HOPE THIS WILL GIVE YOU A GLIMPSE OF WHAT IT WAS LIKE BACK IN THE PIONEER DAYS OF TEXAS MISSIONS. BE SURE TO CONTACT PASTOR GLAESKE. HE WILL HAVE EVEN MORE TO ADD TO THIS SINCE HE CAME TO TEXAS THREE YEARS BEFORE I ARRIVED, AND HAS BEEN HERE HIS ENTIRE MINISTRY.

GOD'S CONTINUES BLESSINGS AS YOU COMPLETE YOUR SEMINARY WORK.

IN CHRIST,

PASTOR G

Pastor Vilas Glaeske – Various Missions – Texas

Notes from an email survey conducted in October 2010

1. Which churches in Texas would you consider to have benefited significantly at start-up because of a core of former LCMS members already in place?

Redeemer, Edna; Abiding Word, Houston; Good Shepherd, The Woodlands; Holy Word, Austen; Calvary, Dallas; Mt. Zion, Hillsboro; Gethsemane, OK City; Lord of Life, Friendswood; – these would be the 'significantly benefitted'

2. Are there any specific members or pastors from these churches who would be able to offer me significant insight into those early days?

Specific members or pastors ...

Dallas = Ted and Lois Burgdorf

Abiding Word = Earl and Dorothy Hildebrandt

Redeemer = Eleanor Meador

Lord of Life = La Verne Blaylock

These are people who are getting up in years, but would be the best to speak with concerning the beginnings. Get their phone numbers from their pastor and speak with them directly

3. In your experience, what advantages did a core of former LCMS members bring to the new Texas missions? Do you have any specific stories to share on this question?

These people were the "All Stars" of the congregations from which they came. They knew the Truth and were determined to follow it, which required them to find a confessional church. IN many instances they were the people who lead others to the organization of the mission congregation. They were also well trained in Christian stewardship.

4. In your experience, were there any disadvantages to starting a WELS mission around a core of former LCMS people? Do you have any specific stories to share on this question?

For the most part these people had been leaders in the congregation from which they came. Sometimes the personalities had to be managed to keep them all moving in the same direction.

5. In your opinion, would the WELS have gone to Texas as quickly as we did without the nuclei of former LCMS members asking for mission starts?

The WELS came to Texas primarily because of Ted and Lois Burgdorf in Dallas and because of the LC-MS group in Edna that broke away from their congregation in Edna. They were independent when they contacted us.

6. Describe the relationship between the new WELS missions and the established LCMS congregations in the area. Do you have any specific stories on this question?

The only place where I know of a tension was in Edna. The LC-MS pastor came to visit me and told me that he was going to visit all my members who had originally been his members. He didn't ask. He simply said he was going to do it. He only got as far as three homes because our people told him they had a pastor and he had no business calling on them. Besides, they gave him an ear full as to why they had left the LC-MS.

7. Do you know of any WELS mission fields that were basically opened by people who broke with the LCMS?

That would be Redeemer, Edna: Abiding Word, Houston: Calvary, Dallas: Mt. Zion, Hillsboro.

8. In your experience, how did the LCMS background of core members influence the Christian education mindset of the mission congregation (This question comes from the observation of a number of strong LESs in Texas.)? Do you have any specific stories you'd like to share?

At Christ the Lord where I served, the former LC-MS people were 100% for Christian Education. Most of them no longer had children of elementary school age. Never the less, they were committed to beginning a school and we did.

9. Please describe any other insights you might have on this topic.

When we began worshiping in Houston, I advertized in the local news papers and in the Northwestern Lutheran. I was anticipating nine people attending that service. In fact, twenty seven people showed up. That was in July of 1966. In 1967 the mission board moved me from Edna to Houston and three years later the mission went self-supporting. They were a marvelous gathering of believers.

This is a thumbnail sketch of what I think you were looking for. If you need more, give me a call me late some night.

Greetings to the Body!

Vilas

Pastor Karl Gurgel – Messiah – South Windsor, CT

Notes from an email survey with conducted in October 2010

1. Which churches in the North Atlantic would you consider to have benefited significantly at start-up because of a core of former LCMS members already in place?

Messiah, South Windsor, Ct. Initially, a large percentage of the nucleus was from the LCMS. As the years went by, the percentage decreased but there were always some. I remember well a rather aged, but active couple who began to attend about two years before we accepted a Call to WI. When they finally joined, just months before we moved, they expressed their appreciation for sermons they could reverently hear without turning on their Truth Checker.

2. Are there any specific members or pastors from these churches who would be able to offer me significant insight into those early days?

Perhaps Ron Muetzel, my immediate successor might have something to add.

3. In your experience, what advantages did a core of former LCMS members bring to the new east coast missions? Do you have any specific stories or ministry memories to share on this question?

For the most part, these former LCMS members were native to New England unlike the mid-western, WELS transplants. They had many contacts and could help us appreciate the culture of the east coast as we sought to reach out to the people there. Because they so much appreciated the Truth of God, they were very active in the congregation and very supportive in every way, including monetary, of the congregation's activities.

4. In your experience, were there any disadvantages to starting a WELS mission around a core of former LCMS people? Do you have any specific ministry stories to share on this question?

Sometimes, because of the struggle for the Truth, they were more in a mode of preserving the Truth than presenting the Truth to others. However, often their love for the Truth would encourage them and others to share the Truth. I well remember one of these strongly confession gentlemen who built his own sign for display at the entrance to the school where we were meeting. One line read, The One True, Orthodox, Confessional Lutheran Church. Now all of those words were true. You might have hoped, however, that people would have come to appreciate

how true they were by hearing and studying the Word with us rather than seeing the sentence as they drove by. Yet, in the end even this man, appreciated there might be other, better ways, of sharing the Truth.

5. In your opinion, would the WELS have gone to the east coast as quickly as we did without the nuclei of former LCMS members asking for mission starts?

God well might have found other ways. However, it was one catalyst God used to spread His Truth on the east coast. So often the confessional LCMS members who came to us had contacts in other parts of New England which sometimes lead to another nucleus being formed.

6. Describe the relationship between the new WELS missions and the established LCMS congregations in the area.

The more conservative LCMS churches seem to appreciate what we were doing though not openly supportive of it. Others were quite defensive, concluding we had invaded their territory. In hind sight, it would have been better if we had spent more time talking with LCMS pastors, assuring them that primarily we were seeking the lost, not the members of their congregations. While we had some experiences with encouraging a confessional approach, we might have had more.

7. Do you know of any other (besides North Atlantic and Texas) WELS mission fields that were basically opened by people who broke with the LCMS?

Perhaps South Atlantic or Nebraska?

8. In your experience, how did the LCMS background of core members influence the Christian education mindset of the mission congregation? I noted that the Texas congregations were starting schools within 2-3 years of start-up, and am wondering if that is a pattern consistent with former Missourians around the country.

The LCMS churches from which members of Messiah came did not have Lutheran Elementary Schools. However, when Messiah was considering and actually opened a school, they were very supportive of it in every way. Perhaps this was so because they saw it as another opportunity to solidify the Truth for future generations. One elderly, single gentleman, when we were considering a school, deposited his entire social security check every month in the offering plate. That was most encouraging for all of us! They were strong supporters, too, of adult Christian education. I well remember the first adult Bible Study topic they requested, the Formula of Concord. Thankfully, I had my senior notes and could put something together. One man, after completing the Adult Information Class, read the entire Book of Concord before becoming a member.

9. Please describe any other thoughts or insights you might have on this topic.

Because of the potholed roads along which they had been traveling, with Truth so often compromised, they sometimes got lost in peripheral matters like the King James Translation issues. It was so important that we stress Biblical Articles of Faith, contrasting them with adiaphora. Once this was clear, they journeyed happily along God's Highway of Truth, avoiding the unnecessary and unproductive detours into human opinions.

Kyle, thanks for allowing me to participate! For a moment or two, it was pleasant; remembering the privilege God gave us to meet so many wonderful, Christian people. As God encouraged them through His Word, they were and still are an encouragement to us.

Earl and Dorothy Hildebrandt – Abiding Word – Houston, TX

Notes from a phone interview on December 1st, 2010

1. Were you a former LCMS member before the split?
2. Describe your primary reason for leaving the LCMS. *We had a teacher (Jack Carpenter) at Trinity (LCMS) and he told us that when he was in school, there was so much false doctrine being taught. One prof would teach the pure word, and another prof would teach contrary to scripture and nothing was being done about it. We got to be close to him, and an older pastor too, who took a call north of here (Paul Schnelling). He told us that all this was going on too. He was very much concerned. Earl went before the voter's meeting and expressed his concern and they didn't want to do anything about it. (EARL) We have got some real problems at the seminary. Teachin, Preus, Charlemin, Martin Marty. WELS was small, and was working through the LCMS. When these four rotten apples came to attention, what can you do? The WELS and LCMS had been one in doctrine. As this spread out and more and more came to attention, the WELS had their convention and they voted that the LCMS had a big big big problem. The next convention, WELS says "last convention we marked them." Here it is one year later. Whose perfect? There was a reluctance to address it. WELS was split. People left the WELS. Here at Trinity Lutheran, they had a teacher over there that was telling us all along that there is stuff going on in our synod that is bad bad bad. The Missouri Synod down here at Westfield (St. Matthews) they split. 2930 and Louetta CLC church. Missouri people from different congregations formed the CLC church there. That was the people that felt that the Missouri was not moving and addressing the issues. Raymond and Wanda Baumgartner have relatives that belong to the CLC church, and they used to belong there too. They didn't want anything to do with us, because they felt that we were*
3. What was your relationship like with your previous congregation after you left? *Jack Carpenter. We were aware there was a problem. Jack rang the bell on us, told us what was going on. Our daughter Barbara was in her 8th year at Trinity and she was going to be confirmed. It was in the spring of the year during Lent, one of the ushers over there, we had a midweek service. I was turning out the lights and putting hymnals back, shutting the place down. Paul Jordan, chairman of the board of elders. Our pastor was [unintelligible] Weltz. He'd come from Lufkin, TX. Paul walked in front of Weltz. "Earl. I heard you wanted to meet with the board of Elders." There was a group of us who weren't happy. Weltz. He hadn't been there every long. "Yes, that's right." He said, "Well, if you've got a personal problem, we'd be glad to meet with you. But if all*

you want to do is argue religion, we don't have time for you." We would have voters meetings Sunday afternoon. We'd have 50-60 people in attendance. Here is what happened. Different boards had their meetings and presentations. Then they had as a wrap up business from the floor. I held up my hand. The chairman was Eric Klink was at the podium, and to his right was Dr. John Klein and then Earl Kromm was beside him (an elder). I held up my hand, and the chairman recognized me. Dr. Klein made a motion to give the Earl Hildebrandt family a release and not discuss the matter further. Earc Klink seconded the motion. 50-60 were there. 18-20-21 were opposed to granting me a release. My daddy got up and asked for a peaceful release. He didn't throw anything, but he said, "do you know what you have just allowed to happen here?" Here was a man allowed to speak, he spoke in order, and look what you did." It was a shut deal. The voters basically said, let's go. We're not going to do this to Barbara. Let her finish out the school year, get confirmed, and then we're out of there. We haven't been back. Just a few weddings and funerals. Their history in my book. That's what they actually did.

Before this: Trinity needed a new pastor. They called a Missouri synod pastor. Paul Schnalle. From IL. That poor guy came down here at a bad time of the year. He was confined to his home. They had to put in central heat and A/C. The humidity and mold got to him. He was almost confined to his house by allergies. When he left here, he wept at the church. But he was allergic to the climate. The thing of it is, I kind of stayed in touch with him for the first year or two, but then I didn't hear from him for the longest time. Maybe 6-7 months ago, I said I wonder if I could get a hold of him. I called him up, and hadn't heard from him in 30 something years. I played with him a bit on the phone. He and I got to talking. For the record: I got a wheelbarrow full... there was a paper printed Christian News. In our garage I've got 80-90% of them. I've got ones printed by those conservative people. Paul Schnalle was one of the contributing people.

I read some of the emails. Dorothy got one from Gabb and Glaske. Pres. Glaske. He and his wife Ruth. They were just married. In the middle of Edna. There was a stone church there. Trinity Lutheran. That church split almost perfectly. Right down the middle. Across the street, opposite the church and parsonage, they started the first mission of the WELS in this part of Texas. This was not long after I'd been given my walking papers from Trinity Lutheran. WE attended a mission in south Houston. South Bellaire. There was a Knights of Columbus lodge there. Those guys had games and all sorts of things in there. We were meeting in there for Sunday mornings. We worshiped there for three years. Jack Carpenter and others were there. Esther Fulmer was there too. Some years later, she went back to the LCMS. We had probably 25-28 people meeting there. It had a piano and a curtain where the bar was. We'd set up a cross and pull the curtain and have church there. Sometimes when we'd drive up there, the guys would have puked outside. Sometimes we had to go ahead and open the doors and windows to ventilate the place. You'd get sick inhaling the fumes. We even had SS behind the bar! Anthony was the first confirmation class. This meeting place became Christ the Lord. Roy and Esther? Plofus. Bill was one Anthony's partner. There were a few other kids. At AW, Steve H. Edward Baumgartner, Bill Horn, and one other boy. For three years we went ahead and worshipped there. We never questioned for three years. I do remember that they built a new chapel over at Aleif and a

parsonage maybe a quarter of a mile away. I had a big pasture up here. 200 acre. I was running a dairy then. 70-80 head. Among other things. The boys and I rented a tool for the back of a tractor. When they were getting ready to dedicate the chapel. We shaved a truck load of that St. Augustine grass and sodded the lawn at Christ the Lord's dedication. If my memory serves me, that little mission building over there they had bought from Army barracks, they reworked them, and that was their school. I haven't been back. No sooner than they had the dedication, we started out in North Houston.

4. What was the hardest part about starting the new church?
5. What was the easiest part about starting the new church?
6. In your experience, what advantages did a core of former LCMS members bring to the new Texas missions? Do you have any specific stories to share on this question?
7. In your experience, were there any disadvantages to starting a WELS mission around a core of former LCMS people? Do you have any specific stories to share on this question?
8. In your opinion, would the WELS have gone to Texas as quickly as we did without the nuclei of former LCMS members asking for mission starts?
9. Describe the relationship between the new WELS missions and the established LCMS congregations in the area. Do you have any specific stories on this question?
10. In your experience, how did the LCMS background of core members influence the Christian education mindset of the mission congregation (This question comes from the observation of a number of strong LESs in Texas.)? Do you have any specific stories you'd like to share?
11. Favorite memory? *Our Pastor was Pres. Glaske. On this hear road, spring stuebner, down that road, there was a vacant house of one of the old timers who used to live by us. In this process, we had a parsonage there for our new pastor, which wound up being Bill Gabb. But Pres. Glaske held our services there at Bammel school. They had a 20x20 back then. That was where we met.*

In the music hall. Our first gathering was 10-11 people. Pres. Glaske was there, and he didn't have a pulpit or anything like that. When we had enough people, there was a call given to us. WE were in that real small place for maybe 4,6,7,8 times. It was getting a little crowded, so we moved into the main building of the school. The cafeteria. We didn't have music in there, so we had to bring the piano from the music practice room every week. After we left there, we'd have to take the piano back into the practice building. Then they raised our rate. I was treasurer and wrote the checks. I was everything there at first. At the same time, Glaske had gotten...we have services over at Christ the Lord. Then we'd meet here at 2:00, I'm guessing. He had a cross and doily thing to go across the table like an altar. He put all that stuff, and two dozen hymnals and he'd take the cross and he'd put all that stuff in the dodge and he and Ruth'd hook 'em down toward Angleton. It was an older community with people from a Lutheran church. That'd be the third sermon of the Sunday. Well, there is a bit WELS church on the south end of Houston. We have Lord of Life in that area now. I never went there, but that one was a pillar! They did quite well. Then, of all things, we got into the fall of the year and the snowbirds from up north come down to the Rio Grande valley with their big RVs and in the winter time they'd come down there and stay until things warmed up north. I remember that I went down there once with Pastor Bill Gabb. We flew down there one Sunday in the afternoon in October or November. That mission was mostly snowbirds, and it met in a Presbyterian Church. That was some of my kinfolks who started that mission. Monday, we met with a lot of them and beat the bushes and I got an experience worshipping down there.

When we got Bill Gabb here, moved all of his clothes, the furniture movers brought every stitch of clothes into that old farm house. I locked the building, and they weren't coming for a week or so. I don't have much gray hair on my head, but it sure aged me as we waited. They had the car, and everything else was in that house! It seemed like a month! I made I don't know how many trips I made down there to check on things.

There were two mobile homes bolted together for our first church. It had a little kitchenette and bathrooms in the back. Two mobile homes, pull them together, bolt them together, room for a little organ, it was really nice. We had that for a number of years. The synod only built 5-6 of those, they had problems. Once that was there, we built the Red Oak Parsonage. Vic Bailey and his crew framed it. Bill Gabb, Earl H and his boys, and Baumgartner and his boys roofed it.

Dorothy: I really liked the naming process. Abiding Word. I didn't suggest it, but it was perfect. Also fixing the parsonage. It was a real privilege. It was a lot of work, but we were really excited about having that house fixed up. Also seeing some of the other founding members commit over time. It took a little while, but we kept on getting more. They were exciting times, and sad times. I'd do it over again. I feel very blessed that God chose us to do this. I think of myself. With the disciples, he picked people who were sinful folks. Earl: We never questioned it. We just put our hands on and went to work. Dorothy: I had a passion for mission work. I was never happy unless I was knocking on doors. I guess I was on fire for Christ. God put that in me. It was hard, but it was very very rewarding. It was hard on our kids too. They worked really hard. They taught

Sunday School. We never skipped a day in 3-4 years. We're not people that do a lot of vacationing either. It was such a joy to see new people when they would come. We greeted those people and they felt welcomed when they left. We were in Bammel 2 years, relocatable 2 years, once we started growing, once people saw we had our own pasture, once we were granted mission status, and got our own pastor, we really made headway. It was our whole life. We spent more time and energy getting this church going than trying to make a living, our own livelihood. God put that in us.

12. Biggest challenge? *I'll be quite frank with you. I can't put my finger on it. It might sound unusual, but I never wearied or tired of it. I knew it was my baby, and if anything had to be done I had to do the biggest share of it. I cannot say that I wearied of doing it.*

Dorothy: When we started, it was hard with our relatives and friends. They thought we were mixed up, and we'd regret taking our children out of the big church and isolating them. We were concerned about it, but as you know, it worked out. God really blessed us in that respect, and we're really thankful for it. One of the hardest things was when Jack Carpenter. One of our young people went to an AALC colleges. He felt that was a break of fellowship. He was one of the ones who started the CLC church. I was fearful that we maybe should have gone CLC because it was more conservative, and we'd have to make this kind of change again. Pastor Glaske talked to us and persuaded us that WELS was on the right track and CLC was legalistic. Carpenter was on the other side. I went back and forth, and finally, I was persuaded that WELS was the right place for us. We lost our dear friend over it. I found that hard.

Eleanor Meador – Redeemer – Edna

Notes from telephone interview on November 29th, 2010

1. Were you a former LCMS member before the split? *yes*
2. Describe your primary reason for leaving the LCMS. *Seminary was teaching false doctrine. Writing letters, having meetings, about a year ago. Resigned, started own church, not excommunicated. Only a few WELS churches around Dallas. It's flourished since*
3. What was your relationship like with your previous congregation after you left? *Worked for AAL in Houston. They assigned me all the WELS churches. They realized later that they'd missed out when I did pretty well! Some of the other agents were Missouri, and others were ELCA. They just thought they were too conservative and couldn't deal with them.*
4. What was the hardest part about starting the new church? *It wasn't hard. We trusted in God. We left with not even a hand book, trusting that God would take care of us. Relationships with family was the hardest, but "I didn't let that bother me." Dad was a staunch Lutheran who'd already been in discussion with pastor. Lots of persecution because I'd been a strong member. I knew where I stood. 100 of us started Redeemer. I was 45-46 when that happened. I'm 86 now and that was. First husband killed in WWII, went as a single mom with 5 kids.*
5. What was the easiest part about starting the new church? *"It's hard to describe. We had to take a lot of abuse from the people still in Missouri synod." three of the ladies wanted me to sign a letter that I couldn't leave Missouri because I was confirmed Missouri. I wasn't confirmed Missouri. I was confirmed and evangelical Lutheran. One lady's mother stayed "over there," and there was a lot of difficulty between those. I didn't have that problem. My dad had died, and my mother came right along. "God's going to take care of us. He's not going to forsake us. That's God's promise."*
6. In your experience, what advantages did a core of former LCMS members bring to the new Texas missions? Do you have any specific stories to share on this question? *We were such a strong group that it wasn't all that difficult. "We were real close knit." The first Sunday we had*

a service at grandparents home in the country. Pastor from Dallas came all the way down. He'd stay Monday for visitation. The WELS had taken really good care of us. Then Pastor Vilas Glaske was sent to us in June.

7. In your experience, were there any disadvantages to starting a WELS mission around a core of former LCMS people? Do you have any specific stories to share on this question?
8. In your opinion, would the WELS have gone to Texas as quickly as we did without the nuclei of former LCMS members asking for mission starts? *WELS would not have come this far south without the split. When we applied for membership, there were only two WELS churches in Texas, both around Dallas. This area had never heard of WELS, but our pastor had been a minister in WELS before, so he knew about WELS.*
9. Describe the relationship between the new WELS missions and the established LCMS congregations in the area. Do you have any specific stories on this question?
10. In your experience, how did the LCMS background of core members influence the Christian education mindset of the mission congregation (This question comes from the observation of a number of strong LESs in Texas.)? Do you have any specific stories you'd like to share? *We didn't have a school for a long time. The choir came and had a concert for us. We had a lot of young ladies at the time. They all went to DMLC. Rodger Crawford is a cousin. He went up there. There were so many who went to Milwaukee and DMLC schools. We had a lot of teachers in synod who married others, and it spread out that way. Later on, in the maybe the 80s, we started a Christina day school. My son and I were strong in getting it started. It lasted 6-7 years, but didn't stick. We had to finally give up. Those children that went got a good education though. We had some good teachers.*
11. Favorite memory? *"The closeness that we all felt. We were all in one accord. It was wonderful to have people, that many especially, that all clung together and stood up for what we believed." That was not true for the people left at St. Paul. There were a few more who wanted to come, but their family members wouldn't let them. It ended up splitting the church right about in half.*
12. Did you build right away? *There was a Presbyterian church/funeral home. It was a big nice church that we used for a few years. At that time, we had 40-50 children in Sunday school. We had Saturday school too. K-7th. We had that by the parsonage in the country while they had*

meetings. People would send their children to school every Saturday to be taught the word of God. We had plenty of people who were willing to teach. "It was really a happy time to see all that things that could be done. We accomplished a lot with our being strong and close-knit." All of us grew up outside Edna in the same area. That's where the church was. That's where my children live today. There are so many good memories. "I have never regretted ever standing up for what we believe and knowing that God was going to take care of us."