

75th Anniversary of  
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary's  
Mequon-Thiensville Campus  
1929-2004

## **The Seminary Then ... and Now**



December 1, 2003  
Seth Haakenson  
Luke Boehringer

Church History 3031  
Lutheranism in America  
Prof. Brenner

## The Campus Then ... and Now

On July 22, 1928 the Rev. Gustav E. Bergemann laid the cornerstone for the new theological seminary of the Ev. Lutheran-Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States. A newspaper covering the event states: "Sealed in the cornerstone were church papers in German and English, a history of the seminary, German and English newspapers published yesterday and minutes of the 1928 synod meeting."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, construction began on the new school of ministerial training for Wisconsin Synod Lutherans. And did the construction ever go fast! Already a year and one month later Wisconsin Synod Lutherans had reason to celebrate again. The dedication of their new seminary was now at hand. An excerpt from the local newspaper reads as follows:

A large representation of local Lutherans attended the dedicatory services of the \$350,000 seminary at Thiensville last Sunday. This was probably one of the largest gatherings of Lutherans ever held in this state, over 15,000 being in attendance. It was a day of great rejoicing for Wisconsin Synod Lutherans.

Thus, the present Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary had its beginning in Thiensville, Wisconsin on August 18, 1929.

### Seminary buildings and grounds

One merely has to see the Seminary for himself to realize that the buildings were constructed to "express in some manner or other the idea of a theological seminary."<sup>2</sup> At the same time, however, the Wisconsin Synod in its planning was insistent on providing a decided "Lutheran" look for their new seminary as opposed to that of the Roman Catholic or Calvinistic churches. That is why the buildings we see today have a form borrowed from that of the Lutheran Reformation. The administration building in particular is copied from the "Lutherhaus" of the Wartburg, and the overall style of the seminary is that which originated in Germany in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>3</sup>

It's interesting to note that entire seminary building in 1929 was composed of only three parts: the dormitory, the refectory, and the administration building.<sup>4</sup> All the buildings were made of a fireproof construction, and were faced with Lannon stone as opposed to brick.<sup>5</sup> While the layout of the seminary buildings is still pretty much the same today,<sup>6</sup> the campus itself in 1929 looked much different.

Perhaps the most notable difference is the amount of trees that were lacking during the seminary's first beginnings.<sup>7</sup> Since the grounds of the seminary were purchased from an existing farm site<sup>8</sup> the only trees that existed were those surrounding Pigeon creek and a small orchard that was located behind the present house of Professor Tiefel. In fact, so bare was the seminary campus at its dedication that a special offering was collected for the express purpose of beautifying the seminary grounds.<sup>9</sup> A biography of Professor Carl Lawrenz recalls his memory of the campus during its first year of use:

---

<sup>1</sup> Name of the newspaper unknown.

<sup>2</sup> Synod newsletter describing the layout of the new seminary and its purpose. While the name and date of the newsletter could not be found, it undoubtedly was written before the seminary's dedication in 1929.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The dormitories included the same dormitories that exist today minus sections seven and eight. They were built to house 72 students. The "refectory" included the kitchen, dining hall, quarters for the steward and his family; rooms for the kitchen workers, and a hospital with guest rooms. No longer are there quarters for the steward and his family, nor are there rooms for the kitchen workers or a hospital for quarantine purposes. The administration building included the gymnasium, library, classrooms, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Information taken from the aforementioned synod newsletter.

<sup>6</sup> The present gymnasium, library, and dormitories #7 and #8 did not exist in 1929.

<sup>7</sup> See attached photos of the Seminary around the years 1929-'30.

<sup>8</sup> The total cost of the seminary site is listed as \$25,000 as stated in the seminary's building committee report of December 15, 1930.

<sup>9</sup> This money was collected on the day of the seminary's dedication. Total collections for the day amounted to \$4,000 dollars. Cf. Vol. 16, No. 17 of *The Northwestern Lutheran*, Milwaukee, Wis., September 1st, 1929.

He [Prof. Carl Lawrenz] remembers the campus at the time was quite different from what it is today. Construction of the buildings and the excavating had just been completed. The freshly dug red clay was saturated from the fall rains and there was much everywhere. The students helped plant trees throughout the grounds under the supervision of the campus director. Among the trees were elms, evergreens, and red maples.

A receipt dated April 23, 1930 from Eberhardts' Nursery in Cedarburg, Wisconsin lists an estimated \$167.50 as the price for the purchase of some 101 trees and shrubs meant for the embellishing of the seminary campus. A certain Henry Barenz was contracted for a period of five years in order to cultivate the grounds. His annual salary was \$200.00.<sup>10</sup> While the traditional Arbor Day was already celebrated by students and faculty in 1930, that particular year had to be canceled due to rain.<sup>11</sup>

#### Cafeteria

Another interesting statistic was located on the food bill for the month of October 1931. The total groceries spent that month for a student body of about seventy was \$113.75. Today the average family pays twice that amount in a month's time. Not only that, but a special category also listed on the seminary's food bill was that of home butchering. Perhaps that surprises those of us who eat from the cafeteria today, but it makes sense considering how the seminary used to raise its own cattle for meat.<sup>12</sup> Clearly things were different at the seminary 75 years ago than they are today. The cafeteria is much bigger. The cost for a luncheon meal is \$7.00, and the seminary no longer butchers its own meat.

#### Dormitories

If you would happen to have visited the seminary only four years ago, you would have received a good idea of how the dormitories looked back in 1929. Today all the dormitories have been remodeled and, as a result, look completely different. But back in 1929 the "old" dormitories were new just as the "new" dormitories are new today. A bedroom consisted of two separate studies and a sleeping area for four. The studies were designed for two students each and had built in bookcases along the walls. An excerpt from a synod publication entitled *The Buildings of Our New Seminary* reads:

The arrangements of the studies, bed-rooms, lavatories and toilets, is the same in all the three stories of the three units. On each floor, the rooms are grouped around a short, broad hall. The bed-rooms lie behind the studies. Each study will accommodate two men, each bed-room four. The bed-rooms will have sunlight in the morning and in the afternoon. The studies will have the proper light for both occupants. By this arrangement we save corridor space and, at the same time, achieve quiet and home-like privacy for the students. Book-cases and wardrobes will be built in, and everything will be arranged so that order can be maintained with as little effort as possible.<sup>13</sup>

It was likewise interesting to discover that the seminary had a bookstore at its beginnings. However, unlike its present location underneath section #7, the bookstore was located underneath section #4. A candy store was also located underneath section #4. With a bookstore in the dormitories, then, the students also had regular book auctions. Not all books donated to the seminary, however,

<sup>10</sup> Contract found in the WLS archives. The contract was dated April 7, 1930.

<sup>11</sup> On May 1, 1930 J. P. Meyer wrote in his diary that Arbor Day had to be cancelled due to rain. No mention was made if they ever changed the day. It appears that they did not.

<sup>12</sup> This bit of information has been gathered from John Brug of the present WLS faculty.

<sup>13</sup> For a better understanding of how the dormitories were laid out see the attached photos.

were up for sale. Some would go directly to the library. The others were sold to the student body. Pastor Meyer commented that most books would sell for cheap—1 cents and 2 cents for junk.<sup>14</sup>

### Library

Not much can be said about the library except that it occupied the entire second floor of the administration building. Its dimensions were 28 x 76 feet and it contained 6,000 volumes. Synod was to provide \$200.00 annually for the purchase of new volumes and the student body itself would not only choose but also purchase the periodicals and newspapers by majority vote.<sup>15</sup> A good picture of the library can be found in the attached photos.

### Gymnasium and the Chapel

The gymnasium was also located in a place different than its current location. It could be found basement of the administration building where many of the Junior classes are taught today. That is why the ceilings of those classrooms are much higher than those of the main floor. No information was found on the gymnasium except for the included photograph.

The chapel, on the other hand, was located in the same place that it is located today. There was no pipe organ, but the rest of building has for the most part been left unchanged. In the picture one can see an empty chapel without any pews. Likewise, the current floor pattern and wall decoration did not exist at that time. The three windows that we see today were present, but without any stained glass. And instead of both a pulpit and a lectern, there was only a central pulpit that left the chancel without an altar. While it cannot be seen from the photograph, the painting of the Wartburg castle that now stands outside of the chapel used to cover its back wall.<sup>16</sup>

### Professors' Houses

The only houses on the seminary property in 1929 were the original four houses situated on Seminary Lane, closest to the seminary building itself. These houses currently are the homes of Prof. Tiefel, Prof. Wendland, Prof. Leyrer, and Prof. Siggelkow. At that time, however, they were much smaller without the additions that have been built on in the past years. Pastor Henry Meyer said the order of living among the professors was Professors Frederic Brenner (Tiefel), Meyer (Wendland), Lehninger (Leyrer), and Pieper (Siggelkow). Although J.P. Koehler was the man who was responsible for the actual layout of the seminary campus, he nevertheless did not live there due to his forced sabbatical in 1929 and subsequent withdrawal from the Wisconsin Synod.

While the homes did have plumbing on the newly built campus, they did not come furnished with phones. The only phone at the entire seminary in that day was located in the office. Calls to Milwaukee were considered long-distance. Students did not have phones in their dormitories either. Today seminary students not only have a phone in each room, but the majority of them also carry personal cell phones.

### The Campus Now

Although 75 years have now past since the seminary's first beginnings in Thiensville, it's amazing how many things are still the same. Students still attend classes from 7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., the courses themselves haven't changed all that much, and every day students still pass through the same halls that their fathers and grandfathers used to walk throughout the Seminary's 75 years of history on the Mequon-Thiensville campus. To top it all off, the campus itself still occupies the same piece of land that was purchased 76 years ago for a price of \$25,000.<sup>17</sup> Those eighty acres—no more and no less—continue to make history today.

---

<sup>14</sup> Meyer interview, October, 2003

<sup>15</sup> Information taken from the seminary's catalogue of the year 1929-'30.

<sup>16</sup> Meyer interview, October, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> *Seminary Building Committee Report*, December 15, 1930. WLS archives

And yet it's only natural that 75 years have also brought about some considerable changes to our seminary campus. The most notable, being the addition of a gymnasium, library, and two new sections of dorms. Rather than playing basketball in the school basement, students are now able to make use of an entire gymnasium facility complete with a weight room, racquetball court, and six hoops for intramural basketball. Not only is the gymnasium useful for exercise purposes, but it also serves as an auditorium for special concerts and worship festivals. The southern end of the gymnasium/auditorium is set off and serves as a chancel where pulpit, lectern, and altar are found. Above the altar are three stained glass windows illustrating the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of faithful preachers.

The library also has undergone a complete renovation. Today the library no longer occupies the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the academic building, but stands as its own building attached to the north end of the chapel. Currently the library houses some 50,000 volumes featuring a hymnological collection, a World Mission collection, and a collection of essays written by Wisconsin Synod pastors throughout the years.<sup>18</sup> Students no longer have to pay for their own periodical and newspaper subscriptions, and needless to say, the library has come a long way from what it used to be.

So have the dormitories. As stated before, two new sections were added on bringing the total number of dormitory sections available for student living to eight. However, all of the dormitories have undergone serious changes since the days of 1929. In 2001 the Seminary completed a special remodeling project, and as a result the interior of the dormitories now possesses a decidedly different look. Perhaps most notable is the reduction of four-man rooms to three-man rooms. The extra space allows for larger bedrooms complete with a personal study. Personal bedrooms and studies allow for more privacy. More privacy allows for better studying habits and happier students. At the same time, however, each dorm room still retains a larger suite-like living area where students are furnished with a couch, a lounge chair, a full size refrigerator, and most importantly for some students—cable TV. Each individual bedroom likewise comes furnished with a telephone and personal computer. Compare that to the attached photo of a seminary bedroom from 1929. The Seminary has clearly adapted to the times.

Not all adaptation has taken place in the dormitories though. The classrooms of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary have been adapted to fit the technological age as well. Today classrooms come equipped with power point projectors, lap-top computers, transparency projectors, video projectors, VCR's, and speakers to boot. All these are intended to assist the professor in his instruction. The students also benefit as they become more familiar with the technology they will use in their future ministry.

Perhaps the most notable difference of the seminary's 75-year existence, however, is that of the campus itself. All it takes is one look at an original photograph to understand the transformation that has taken place. Simply put, the Seminary has trees now. Lots of trees. An outsider driving onto the campus might well think that the seminary was constructed in a park, rather than on a previous farm site. And why shouldn't he? Today the roads going in and out of the Seminary are lined with all different types of trees and shrubs that bloom and bud each spring. Flowers line the buildings, are planted in the seminary circle, and are kept up by Seminary staff and professors' wives. Freshly cut grass likewise covers the 80 acres that once were barren farmland. In fact the Seminary has so much grass now that it has to hire students just to make sure it stays cut throughout the springtime and summer months. One step onto the campus during May is all that is needed to appreciate the vast beauty that has gradually changed the appearance of the Seminary campus over the past 75 years. Even a lagoon now sits at the bottom of Sem hill—an area that has always been wetter than the surrounding areas, and has been described by a previous owner as quite swampy.<sup>19</sup>

With the increase of professors over the years there has also been an increase in housing. The seminary is home to fifteen professors now with three semi-retired professors living off campus and one professor on a sabbatical overseas. One home is also designated specifically for the business manager.

While the four original homes still remain each of them have had additions added on to them for extra space. The other professors' homes have been built through out the years according to the

---

<sup>18</sup> Information gathered from the seminary's website at <http://www.wls.wels.net/library/libindex.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Edgar Wille was the last owner the current 80 acres that make up Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. His story is told in Daniel Balge's essay, *A brief pre-seminary history of the western half of the northeastern quarter of section 22, Town of Mequon, Mequon: Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary EF 2144 c. 2, 1985.*

necessity of the times. Presently there are six homes on Seminary Drive, while the other ten homes line either side of Wittenberg Drive.

Other additions to the Seminary campus since 1929 have been a soccer field, one carpet tennis court, a cafeteria building, various maintenance buildings, and a parking lot that has a capacity of 146 vehicles.

### **The Academics Then ... and Now**

#### **The Curriculum Then ... and Now**

The entrance requirements of the Lutheran Theological Seminary were clearly stated in the Catalog: "[O]nly such young men are enrolled as students who have been graduated from Northwestern College at Watertown, or from any one of the full colleges maintained by the other synods belonging to the Synodical Conference of North America."<sup>20</sup> Nowadays that list is down to one school with a different name, Martin Luther College. But by and large in 1929 and today, seminarians will have spent many years in the classroom and the dormitory together with the same faces.

75 years ago, there was also something akin to our Pastoral Studies Institute. In the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, our Seminary operated a separate department that instructed young men who did not have a college education for the rigors of Seminary course work. Ultimately, this program was not able to continue due to lack of resources. Precisely, this lack was the small faculty at the Seminary who did have the proper time to spend on this noble endeavor. It is pleasing to see this concept executed well today with the many second career candidates who present themselves for full time ministry. The Pastoral Studies Institute offers specific classes to prepare these non-traditional students for Seminary work. This flexible program is already bearing fruit.

The curriculum in many ways has not changed in the years between '29 and '04. Isagogics and exegesis still form the backbone of the course of study. In 1929 Professor Meyer lectured on the first 25 chapters of Genesis to the Juniors exegetically. Professor Pieper taught the Middlers and Seniors Isaiah II and Psalms in the school year of 1929-1930 and the following year taught them Isaiah I and Psalms. Both of these sets of classes were Old Testament exegetical courses.

A careful reader might notice that the exegetical courses for the Middlers and Seniors were combined classes. This brings us to the most significant change in the curriculum over the interval of seventy-five years. Due to the small sizes, both in the faculty and student body, it was practical and somewhat necessary to use this combination of certain courses so as not to overburden the system. For the most part, this was necessary for the professors since they already were tasked with responsibilities over and above their seminary obligations.

Another aspect of this amalgamation of classes was that professors would establish a three-year curriculum. Over the standard course of a standard stay at the hill, a student would receive all his instruction at one time or another. So while one class of seminarians might study a certain course during their second year, the class of another year might study it their third year. A side effect of this combining made it quite crucial that once a commitment was made to enter the Seminary, one would continue for three subsequent years. Any emergency or extenuating circumstances that forced a student to withdraw would cause a major problem since he would be missing out on class work that would be offered for another two or three years. It also would have made a vicar year a difficult prospect.<sup>21</sup>

Returning to our subject of Old Testament exegesis, the same courses are taught, yet the times and those with whom one studies are different today. Juniors dig their way through Genesis in their first and second semesters.<sup>22</sup> Middlers translated and read their way through the Psalms. Seniors study the second half of Isaiah in their first semester. The end result is that for 75 years every class at the Seminary at any given time is always going through key books of the Old Testament.

<sup>20</sup> *Catalog of the Theological Seminary, 1929-1930*, 11.

<sup>21</sup> , 26.

<sup>22</sup> The semester system was introduced in this academic year, 2003-2004. Previously a quarter system was in use, with a fall, winter, and spring term for the seminary students and a summer quarter for the continuing education of our called workers in the field.

Seminary students also exegize capstone books of the New Testament. In 1929 first year students would carefully look at one of the Gospels, e.g. in 1929-1930 they studied Luke with Professor Lehninger and in 1930-1931 Mark was the Gospel book used. (This does differ with the approach to the study of the Gospels today. That issue will be addressed below.) The upper classes together would study one of Paul's epistles and this also rotated with the years. Professor Frederic Brenner taught Ephesians in 1929-1930 and Romans the next year.<sup>23</sup> This two year cycle was maintained so that all students would have the opportunity to study these gems of the New Testament up close.

As with the Old Testament Exegesis, the New Testaments books today are taught annually to particular classes. The Juniors thoroughly study Galatians in their second semester; the Middlers examine Ephesians in the second half of the academic year; and the Seniors dig into the first eight chapters of Romans upon their return from their vicar year.<sup>24</sup>

Another change that has been recently made along with the switch to the semester schedule is the addition of a winter interim or winterim. This two week term in the middle of January allows for intensive study on and off campus on a variety of subjects that could not be placed into the normal semester timetable.

A look at the Seminary's Biblical Theological Department would not be complete without reference to the Isagogical portion of the program. 75 years ago, all Juniors, Middlers, and Seniors would attend combined lectures on the books of the New Testament, which were not explored in exegesis, and study the historical books of the Old Testament in a more cursory manner. Today, in a slight change, Juniors study a harmony of the Gospels isagogically, not exegetically. They also look at the other books of the New Testament in their first year. Middlers are instructed in the historical books of the Old Testament. Seniors read the Minor Prophets in their second semester.

At this time we draw the reader's attention to two modifications of the curriculum. The first change is one that created a new course where before it stood as an adjunct to another class. The second alteration was the loss of a class. But both of these changes have not diminished the integrity of the curriculum. First of all a new course was created that dealt with the study of hermeneutics. In 1929 the subject of hermeneutics was discussed during the New Testament exegesis class periods. In 2004, however, hermeneutics are taught separately. It is one of the initial classes that seminary students attend on the hill. The other interesting sidelight is the course called Encyclopedia and Methodology. Here is the Catalog's description of the course in 1929-1930:

General Methodology. The true nature of theology as distinguished from the sciences and from philosophy. Survey of the different branches of theological study. Special consideration of the chief branches, with notes on their literature. Junior class, 2 lectures per week. (Prof. Pieper)

This general introduction to theology, philosophy, and the sciences is not offered as a distinct class today. Yet, the identification and recognition of these different branches of learning are still an integral part of every class, whether it be isagogics or church history.

The historical study of the church has always been and continues to be a pillar of the education offered at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. In the late 1920's a cycle system of three years was employed to study the history of the ancient church and the church of the Middle Ages up until 1300 A.D. The second period covered was that of the corruption of the Medieval church, the Reformation, and the Counter-Reformation. The final leg of this triumvirate involved modern church history and the history of Lutheranism in America.

For the most part these historical divisions are still observed in the current curriculum of Historical Theology. Juniors study Early and Middle Church History. Middlers study the Reformation. Seniors explore Modern Christianity and Lutheranism in America. Professors Lehninger and Meyer were the church historians in the early years of the Mequon-Thiensville campus; today Professors Siggelkow, Brenner, and Korthals teach the various history classes.

<sup>23</sup> Galatians was taught isagogically in a separate class.

<sup>24</sup> An elective is offered during the winterim that cover Romans 9-16.

The study of the Symbols of the Lutheran Reformation comprised the other half of Historic Theology both then and now. Today, Juniors study the Augsburg Confession and the Apology in their second semester. Back in 1929 the only small difference would be the assignment of the Apology as a side reading project and was not covered in-depth as part of in class work. Seniors then and now study the Formula of Concord, although back then a study of the Large Catechism was included in this Symbolics course. (Today the Large Catechism is used in conjunction with education courses where students prepare Bible studies after examining teaching methodology.)

Systematic Theology has remained constant throughout the years. A thorough study of Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, and Eschatology is begun in the Middler year and completed in the Senior year. The 1929-1930 Catalog recommends Dr. Hoenecke's *Dogmatik* as the textbook for the course, however, since those volumes are written in German, their required use has long since been dropped.<sup>25</sup> Professor Meyer was the systematic theologian of the Seminary for many years; today, the duties of the Dogmatics is spread out among five men.

Students of 1929 and 2004 would recognize the main elements of the Practical Theology's courses as sharing many similarities. The first major hurdle of a new seminarian is preparing for his first sermon. This was true in 1929; it is still true today. The general rule of the late twenties that a Junior cannot preach in public until after Easter is still the general rule today. The second new skill to be acquired is learning how to teach, whether that be instructing a Bible class or a Catechism course.

There are some variations, of course. Homiletics continued in the Middler and Senior year; however, each Middler was required to work up a sermon in German and preach this sermon to the whole student body without notes. A daunting task, to be sure! Another idiosyncrasy of the old curriculum is in the area of Catechetics. Today, pairs of Middlers go out every Tuesday morning during their first semester to present Catechism classes to seventh and eighth graders of our Milwaukee area Lutheran Elementary Schools. But in 1929, Seniors were required to prepare catechism lessons in German and English. Since there were no children's class readily available, the Seniors were compelled to present their lessons to the members of the Junior class.

Rounding out the educational experience on the hill were classes on practical theological issues that would be faced in the local congregation and in the church at large. Professor Pieper lectured on these topics. Prof. Lehninger taught a course on liturgics to the men of the student body, which included choral singing and lectures on art history.

The class periods have not changed. They were and are now 50 minutes in duration. Classes still begin at 7:30 a.m. When the first bell rings at the bottom of the hour, however, students no longer squeeze into small wrap around single seat desks. Students now have sufficient room for the books they may to reference in a given class because seminarians of today sit two to a table. One final note: in 1929 the main technology for note taking and record keeping of a class consisted of a pencil and notebook. More often than not, these notebooks would be crammed to the edges with information. Now, of course, the Seminary is requiring incoming students to equip themselves with a laptop computer to access class notes and for in class note taking.

#### Administrative Board 1929-1931

The Administrative Board was comprised of eight members, one of those men being a member *ex officio*. In April 1931 Rev. A. F. Zich resigned from the Board to accept a call to be a professor at the Seminary. Here are the Board members as listed in the 1935 Catalog:

#### Until 1935:

Rev. J. Brenner.....	Milwaukee, Wis.
Mr. L. Serrahn.....	Algoma, Wis.
Mr. E. Wegner.....	Milwaukee, Wis.

#### Until 1933:

Rev. A. F. Zich.....	Green Bay, Wis.
----------------------	-----------------

<sup>25</sup> It is pleasing to see volumes from this valuable resource finding their way into English.



Mr. H. Albrecht.....Milwaukee, Wis.

Until 1931:

Rev. Walter A. Hoenecke.....Milwaukee, Wis.

Mr. R. C. Freihube.....Milwaukee, Wis.

Ex Officio:

Rev. G. E. Bergemann.....Fond du Lac, Wis.

In 2003, the Governing Board is larger than it was in 1929 in two ways. The most noticeable change is the size increase. Another item to note is the much broader geographical area from which the members hail.

Pastor James A. Mattek, Chairman	Watertown, WI
Pastor Harold W. Sturm, Vice-Chairman	Poynette, WI
Pastor H. Curtis Lyon, Secretary	Temecula, CA
Mr. Thomas M. Hansen	Huron, SD
Mr. John D. Jenswold	Elkhorn, WI
Pastor Eugene A. Kock	Minocqua, WI
Mr. John Postelli	Stevensville, MI
Teacher Kurt N. Schmidt	Eden Prairie, MN
Mr. Robert M. Bengry (adjunct)	Fox River Grove, IL
Professor David J. Valleskey (advisory)	Mequon, WI
<i>President, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary</i>	
Pastor Peter H. Kruschel (advisory)	Franklin, WI
<i>Administrator, Board for Ministerial Education</i>	
Pastor David N. Rutschow (advisory)	Downers Grove, IL
<i>President, SE Wisconsin District</i>	
Pastor Karl R. Gurgel (advisory)	Lake Mills, WI
<i>President, Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod</i>	

Faculty 1929-1931

There are six professors listed in the 1929-1930 Catalog of the Theological Seminary of the Joint Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Other States. John Ph. Koehler is listed as the President, although he was on a leave of absence. Acting as President in his place was August F. Pieper. Acting President Pieper taught Old Testament Exegesis and Old Testament Isagogics, along with Pastoral Theology, Encyclopedia, and Methodology. Joh. P. Meyer was Acting Registrar and Bursar. Prof. Meyer's responsibilities in the classroom included Systematics, Old Testament Exegesis, and Church History. The fourth listed in the Seminary Catalog is William Henkel who died before the academic year could begin. He joined the saints on July 5, 1929, seventy-five days before the first class was held on this new Mequon-Thiensville campus. Frederic Brenner began teaching after the year had commenced (November 1, 1929). He taught Homiletics, Pedagogics, New Testament Exegesis, and Symbolics. Max Lehninger rounds out the faculty. Prof. Lehninger started his teaching on the hill five weeks after Prof. Brenner got underway. On December 8, 1929, he began lecturing on Church History, New Testament Exegesis, Hermeneutics, Liturgics, Hymnology, and Church Music.

However, the next academic year would see some adjustments to the teaching situation and some changes in the realm of administration:

**August F. Pieper, President.**

Old Testament Exegesis and Isagogics.

(Also Pastoral Theology, Encyclopedia and Methodology)

**Joh. P. Meyer, Registrar and Bursar.**

Systematic Theology.

(Also Old Testament Exegesis and Church History)

**Frederic Brenner, Secretary and Librarian.**

Homiletics.

(Also New Testament Exegesis and Symbolics)

**Max Lehninger, Campus Director.**

Church History and New Testament Exegesis.

(Also Hermeneutics, Liturgics, Pedagogics, and Hymnology)

**August F. Zich.**

(Accepted position Apr. 12, 1931. Will assume duties at the beginning of the fall term, Sep. 1931)

Old Testament Exegesis and Isagogics.

(Also Church History)

The faculty now in 2003-2004 currently consists of sixteen men who instruct the students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. There are also two semi-retired positions held by Professors Armin Panning and Richard Balge.

David J. Valleskey (1984)	Pastoral Theology, New Testament
James J. Westendorf (1982)	Old Testament, Homiletics
John F. Brug (1982)	Systematic Theology, Old Testament
James P. Tiefel (1985)	Worship, Homiletics
Alan H. Siggelkow (1991)	Pastoral Theology, Church History
John M. Brenner (1991)	Church History, Education
Forrest L. Bivens (1993)	Systematic Theology, Old Testament
John P. Hartwig (1995)	Missiology, Library Director
Mark G. Zarling (1996)	Education, Old Testament
John D. Schuetze (1997)	Systematic Theology, Pastoral Theology
James F. Korthals (1997)	Church History, Homiletics
Daniel P. Leyrer (1998)	Pastoral Theology, New Testament
Richard L. Gurgel (1999)	Systematic Theology, Education, Homiletics
John C. Lawrenz (2000)	Old Testament, Education
Paul O. Wendland (2001)	New Testament, Homiletics
Paul E. Zell (2002)	New Testament, Homiletics

**The Students Then ... and Now<sup>26</sup>**

Life for a student in 1929 was largely confined to the Seminary campus. Although there was a urban streetcar that ran from Thiensville to Milwaukee, it was often cost prohibitive—fifteen cents for a one-way ticket (with the pastor's discount). This, along with the fact that only two or three students were privileged enough to have cars, were the primary reasons why students spent their days on the seminary grounds. As Pastor Meyer commented, "Nobody had any transportation, and there wasn't any place to go." Unlike the city of Mequon-Thiensville nowadays, the majority of the area was farmland. And even if there were various places to visit and shop, students did not have the money to be spending on such

---

<sup>26</sup> All information in this section was gathered from an interview with Pastor Henry Meyer, October 2003. Pastor Meyer attended Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary from 1936-'39. However, Pastor Meyer's father was the late J. P. Meyer, a professor at WLS. Thus, Pastor Meyer also lived on the seminary campus at its founding.

luxuries. With school to pay for and the beginning of the depression to contend with, students simply could not afford to pay for entertainment the way we can today.<sup>27</sup>

However, students did get off campus to preach once in a while. Pastor Meyer recalls how students would guest preach at area churches much in the same way we still do today. There were seminary-owned gowns for the students to use as well. That way students would not have to pay for a gown of their own before receiving their permanent calls. Preaching at that time, however, was done in both German and English. But although German was still popular, there was an ever greater push in the Synod in making the transition to English. With all the negative attention caused by WWI, many churches saw the need to make the change from their German heritage and make room for English—all for the sake of the gospel.

And yet German was still the principal language at the Seminary. While classes were conducted in both languages, the majority of the classes were given in German. One only has to sift through the many notebooks of students around this era to see this was indeed the case. Just about all of the notes are written in German. Even an old class schedule from the year of 1929 was typed up in German. And yet the faculty did see the importance of being able to work in the English language. Pastor Meyer recalls having to type one Dogmatics paper in English, the other in German. The same was true for Homiletics. Every student had to preach in front of the student body in both English and German.<sup>28</sup> When asked how proficient the students were in both languages, Pastor Meyer answered that it varied. All students could actively work in the two languages, but depending on their family background, some could speak German better, while others English. This should not come as a surprise to anyone since the country itself was becoming more and more "Americanized". Those students coming from areas with a lower concentration of German immigrants would only naturally be more proficient in English.

The day schedule at the seminary ran much the same as it does now. Classes began at 7:30 am and finished at 12:30pm. However, instead of rushing off to afternoon jobs, most students would return to their dorms to work on studies. Interestingly enough, the reason for this was not so much a lack of jobs, but rather a lack of transportation. Thus students spent their afternoons playing cards and working on their studies. This is also where Pastor Meyer recalls that many nicknames and stories concerning professors were invented. Professor Pieper had the nickname "Pips", although no student would ever dare call him that to his face. When it came to the professors there was definitely "no joking around." So while students did have a relationship with their professors, it was one of respect, and not the type where they could joke around one on one.<sup>29</sup>

One might wonder how students paid for their schooling without any jobs, not to mention that students rarely received any support from their home congregation. On the contrary, students and family were expected to put themselves through school. This was not necessarily bad, however, since the total cost for a year of schooling amounted to \$80. That is because students were only required to pay for their board. Since tuition and room were considered "free" at that time, the \$80 dollars required of each student went to the food they would consume in the cafeteria. "Ma' K" was the cook at that time, and Pastor Meyer recalls fondly how the food at the seminary was not "too bad". As an aside he also mentioned how the food seemed to improve with each institution he attended as he made his way through the Synod's school system.

It should be noted that with reference to the students' personal life, the faculty looked askance at girlfriends. Pastor Meyer chuckled at the logic regarding this matter. He said that a student was not supposed to have a girlfriend while at school, and yet he was expected to be married the summer after he graduated. One of Professor Pieper's sayings concerning seminary students and females was, "Put her on the shelf and then marry her!" Professor Pieper was a man of his times.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the year 1929-1930, however, was that Call Day was deemed, "not a big deal" among the students. As Pastor Meyer says, "there were no calls." While no records could be found as to the actual number of calls issued in May of 1930, we do know that Rev.

---

<sup>27</sup> Radios were also a luxury among the students, so the common form of music was classical music played on a victrola.

<sup>28</sup> Seniors had to deliver a sermon in English before the entire student body while Middlers had to deliver a sermon in German before the student body. Both were to be delivered without notes.

<sup>29</sup> Students did, however, have a relationship with their professors that consisted of shoveling the snow of professors' sidewalks much like today.

Mittelstaedt, a member of the first class to graduate from the campus in 1930, was assigned to St. Lucas, in Bay View. Once more, a newspaper clipping dated around 1955 reveals that in 1932 there were only two positions available for the graduating class. Carl Lawrenz happened to be one of the students to receive a call that year. He was sent to St. Paul's congregation in North Fond du Lac.

Pastor Meyer, on the other hand, didn't graduate until 1939. Although he attended Northwestern College during the year of 1929-'30, he was a non-traditional student in that he spent some time at Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. When graduation rolled around in 1939 he was one of the fortunate ones to receive a call. A faculty member asked him one evening how he would like to teach at the academy in Mobridge, South Dakota. Pastor Meyer said, "Why not?" and soon afterwards headed out for the Great Plains.

On a sad note, a newspaper clipping was found circa 1933 concerning the drowning of two seminary students from the Thiensville campus. Chester Bender, 21 and Arnold Gotz, 24 were swept over the dam of the Milwaukee river while bathing one Tuesday afternoon. The excerpt from the newspaper reads as follows:

Two students at the Lutheran Theological seminary in Thiensville were swept over the dam in the Milwaukee river Tuesday afternoon while bathing and were drowned. Their bodies have not yet been recovered.

The victims are Chester, Bender, 21, of Milwaukee and Arnold Gotz, 24, of Winona, Minn. The youths had been swimming for about a half-hour when Bender decided to swim across the river, a distance of about 100 feet. He disappeared in the strong current and Gotz went to his rescue. Both were swept over the dam.

The drownings occurred in full view of a third seminarian who was unable to help them. Coroner George Horn, the Thiensville Athletic Club, and several neighboring groups joined efforts to recover the bodies while swarms of persons from Milwaukee and neighboring communities looked on.

### The Students Now

Where student life in 1929 was largely confined to the campus, student life today could be described as anything but confining. That's not to say that students no longer spend much of their life on campus, but with the availability of transportation nowadays, students are able to come and go as they please.

No longer are there only two or three students on campus with a vehicle. Today every student at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary owns a vehicle; some are even fortunate enough to own a new vehicle. That means that students today are able to get off campus and visit places that students in 1929 simply were not able to visit. It means that students today are able to go to work and enjoy entertainment—things that students in their twenties must have longed for during the Depression. Indeed, transportation also means that students are even able to live off campus. A look at the student directory reveals that out of the 128 students attending the seminary in the year 2003-'04, 56 of them live off campus.<sup>30</sup> Some students even live as far away as the cities of Iron Ridge, Watertown, and Kiel.

Such a change has obviously had an effect on student life as a whole. Students rarely sit down and play cards together like they used to. Nor are the majority of them around in the afternoon to chat and study. Whereas students in 1929 would return to the dorms after classes, students today rush off to their various part-time jobs. Some work in the afternoon. Others work at night.

These jobs are essential for the seminary student in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. No longer does schooling cost a mere \$80 for board. Today it costs a student \$10,325 to go to the seminary for one year.<sup>31</sup> Without jobs, then, the seminary student would not be able to pursue a career in the pastoral ministry.

<sup>30</sup> This number does not include the vicar class nor the enrolled/off campus students not attending school this year.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the seminary's website at <http://www.wls.wels.net/catalog2/finance/finindex.htm>. The above figure includes board for dormitory students and the weekend meal plan.

Consider for example that board alone costs \$4,095—and that's without any weekend meals. To eat on the weekend a student has to pay an extra \$630.<sup>32</sup>

So clearly transportation is vital to the survival of the seminarian. Many seniors hold a senior vicarship at one of the area churches as well. Such students are required to preach on a regular basis. In fact, most seminarians today are able to preach off campus once in a while. But unlike their forefathers, today's students no longer preach in German. Times have simply changed too much. While some students can still read and translate the Wisconsin Synod's mother tongue, it is rare to find a student comfortable enough to preach it.

Obviously, then, classes are no longer conducted in both German and English. And yet that is not to say that the present student body is uncultured. In fact, the argument could be made that students attending the Seminary today are more cultured than ever. Consider for a moment that three of our current students are from foreign countries,<sup>33</sup> one is from the Apache reservation,<sup>34</sup> four are of African American descent,<sup>35</sup> and two are of a mixed Latino descent.<sup>36</sup> Consider again that the seminary's total student population in 2003-'04 is only 184.<sup>37</sup> While both numbers may not seem that high, the ratio is still higher than anything the seminary has ever seen in the past.<sup>38</sup>

At the same time, the student body in general is seeing the importance of being involved with other cultures. Many seminarians have already spent times living in a different culture overseas. Some even come from a different background right here in the United States. Likewise, the Seminary itself sends out two students each year to serve their vicarage in a foreign language. Clearly, then, students today have opportunity upon opportunity, and blessing upon blessing. With special programs that involve trips to New York and Mexico City, it seems that not only is student life changing here at the Seminary, the entire student body is changing—changing for the better, changing with the times—yet all the while still maintaining sound doctrine and biblical practice.

Another key difference between the student body of today and that of 1929-'30 is the addition of student wives. Recall Professor Pieper's axiom: "Put her on the shelf and then marry her!"<sup>39</sup> Today such an axiom would fall on deaf ears. Of the 184 students enrolled at our seminary, 88 are currently married.<sup>40</sup> In 1929 zero students of the 67 enrolled were married while attending the Seminary.<sup>41</sup> While the percentages of married students do increase with the upper classes, it is not uncommon for students to be either engaged or married upon entering the Seminary their Junior year. Thus, no longer does the seminary faculty look down upon the married life. In fact, so great have the tides changed that those students who are not married by graduation are clearly in the minority, usually maintaining an average of less than ten. So much, then, for "life on the shelf".

On a final note ... another key difference pertaining to student life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that Assignment Day is no longer deemed, "Not a big deal."<sup>42</sup> Quite the opposite is true. Today Assignment Day has become such an enormous event that in 2004 the seminary has decided to have a separate day for the assignment of vicars. Previously the crowds had become so large on Assignment Day that the auditorium was unable to accommodate them. Far from being a minor event, then, Assignment Day has turned into the "biggest deal" of the senior year. Seminary seniors await the day with eager anticipation wondering where the Lord will send them to begin their career. Could the possibility exist of having a shortage of calls? Certainly. Already last year there were concerns as to whether the entire graduating class would receive assignments. As far as this year goes, only God himself knows. But as last year, rumors have again spread that there is another shortage of vacancies in the Wisconsin Synod. However,

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Tom Park (Korea); Joshua Yu (China); Jason Richards (Antigua)

<sup>34</sup> Fidel Dazen

<sup>35</sup> Phil Moore, Brandon Wiggly, Gary Young, Leonard Freeman

<sup>36</sup> David Salinas (Mexican), and Carlos Leyrer (Puerto Rican)

<sup>37</sup> Cf. the seminary's *Student Directory—2003-2004*

<sup>38</sup> It should also be noted that two men of Hmong descent will be graduating this year from the seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI).

<sup>39</sup> Meyer interview, October 2003

<sup>40</sup> WLS Student Directory – 2003-2004

<sup>41</sup> Catalog of the Theological Seminary, 1929-1930, p. 6

<sup>42</sup> Meyer interview, October 2003

it's too early to tell. Call or no call, the seminary's 75<sup>th</sup> Assignment Day will be a "big deal." It has to be. It will be the day that the Lord sends out pastors to tend his wayward sheep.

### The World Then ... and Now

#### The Great Depression

1929 was a turbulent year. In 1929 a brief spell of relative economic prosperity gave way to a full-blown national crisis. The Depression as a phenomenon was nothing new. Recessions and depressions like this happen about once in a decade. But what happened in 1929 was in many respects unprecedented. Industrial production not merely contracted as it did before, but was actually thrown back to where it was at the turn of this century. It also sent unemployment sky-high. Even in the world's richest country, the United States, the unemployed subsisted on a meager ration of just one plate of soup a day. When the Great Depression struck on Black Tuesday, few people could imagine that the downturn would be so protracted and overwhelming. On October 29 intense speculative trading sent the Wall Street stock market crashing down. Share prices slid by 10 billion dollars devastating the financial systems of the United States and the rest of the world. The US banks suspended all their loans to Europe Germany stopped paying reparations and Britain and France put on ice their foreign debt obligations. The world was running desperately out of cash and business activity had ground to a near standstill. As a result, international trade fell threefold thus exacerbating even further what was already a very serious problem of overproduction.

All these factors added to the economic burden that the Synod was already bearing. The expensive capital project of building the Seminary and general Synodical debt were two problems made worse by the unforeseen Crash of 1929. The early years of the Seminary were trying times, but through faithful stewardship, the work of training future pastors for our churches continued. (Even though many of the candidates for ministry were unable to be placed into a parish upon their graduation leading them to seek outside employment when possible in the interim.)

Costs of Living		
	1929	Today <sup>43</sup>
Bread:	\$0.09/loaf	\$1.02/loaf
Milk:	\$0.58/gal	\$2.85/gal
Eggs:	\$0.48/doz	\$1.52/doz
Car:	\$525	\$23,500
Gas:	\$0.25/gal	\$1.44/gal
House:	\$7,246	\$235,700
Stamp:	\$0.02	\$0.37
Average Income:	\$1,582/year	\$71,032
DOW Average:	248	8,342

#### In 1929

In 1929 the Vatican, the official residence of the Pope and the nucleus of the Vatican city-state, the smallest independent political entity in the world, was established in 1929 as the spiritual center of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1929, the construction began of a major fortification line named after one of its sponsors, the French war Minister Andre Maginot. Stretching along the French northern frontier with Germany, the line consisted of a number of fortifications mostly in the form of formidable bunkers and underground tunnels. The Maginot line boasted powerful anti-tank defenses, but despite the huge construction outlays

<sup>43</sup> 2002 statistics. Source: dMarie Time Capsule. <http://dmarie.com/timeap/final.asp?unique=37955.6232060185> accessed on November 13, 2003:

and the seemingly impregnable layout, the Germans easily got around it during their 1940 invasion of France.

In 1929 Radio Comintern began broadcasting to the world. 70 years on, the Voice of Russia World Service airs its programs in 33 languages to 160 countries across the world.

In 1929 the most popular singers in America were Mitchell Parish, Irving Caesar, Edgar Leslie, Clifford Grey, William Rose, Jo' Trent, and Lorenz Hart. Warner Baxter and Mary Pickford won the Academy Awards for Best Actor and Best Actress and *Broadway Melody* won Best Picture.

In 1929 the best selling novels included *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf, *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. In 1929 Austria banned the book, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, from army libraries. The novel was a best-seller in Germany. This became official Austrian policy on August 18.

In 1929 Herbert Hoover takes over as President from Calvin Coolidge. Charles Curtis was Hoover's Vice-President.

In 1929 Canada and the United States agree on a plan to preserve Niagara Falls.

In 1929 the Seeing Eye Dog organization is formed.

In 1929 Martin Luther King, Jr., Audrey Hepburn, Yasser Arafat, and Anne Frank are born.

In 1929 Wyatt Earp dies.

In 1929 Leon Trotsky is exiled by Stalin from the USSR.

In 1929 seven gangsters who were competing with Al Capone in Chicago were massacred on St. Valentine's Day.

In 1929 Grand Teton National Park is created.

In 1929 the Kellogg-Briand Pact (signed in 1928 by many of the world's leading powers) goes into effect. It renounced war an instrument of foreign policy. Kellogg wins the Noble Peace Prize.

In 1929 the German airship *Graf Zeppelin* begins a round-the-world flight in August. It lasts 21 days.

In 1929 Amos and Andy make their debut on the Monday after the Seminary is dedicated.

In 1929 JC Penney goes national with stores in all 48 contiguous states.

In 1929 on New Year's Eve Guy Lombardo plays *Auld Lang Syne* for the very first time.

In 1929 the first public demonstration of a mechanical color television, by H. E. Ives and his colleagues at Bell Telephone Laboratories in New York. The first images are of a bouquet of roses and an American flag. The images are transmitted between New York and Washington.