

**The Recent History and Possible Future of WELS Mission  
Work in the Province of Ontario, Canada**

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Church History Paper  
05/18/97  
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My reasons for choosing this subject for my Church History paper are numerous. The main reason is that I have a special place in my heart for mission work, and especially for the missions and missionaries in Ontario. I have had three separate opportunities to help our missions in this province. The first two occurred during my time at Northwestern College. I traveled to Canada to help Pastor Douglas Priestap in canvassing efforts he was making in various areas in southeastern Ontario. The third time I participated in the summer vicar program and spent the summer between my junior and middler years helping Pastor Priestap and Pastor Erich Waldek in mission work in Kitchener/Waterloo, Bolton and Oakville. During these opportunities, I grew close not only to the pastors, but also to the parishioners of their congregations.

A secondary reason first emerged immediately before my summer vicarage started and I was finishing up my junior year at the Seminary. I found out exactly how ignorant I and many of my classmates were about Canada. I was seriously asked if I was sane because I was willingly spending the summer months in such a cold climate. Some were obviously joking, but some were also serious. Since I had been to the area before, I knew the horror tales to be untrue, but sought to find an independent source to prove my point. I had gone out and bought a travel guide to Canada to facilitate my work there. I purposely chose a guidebook that briefly ran through the history of Canada and also talked about the cultural heritage of the people, besides simply offering advice on where to find the best sights to see. I was determined not to be the stupid guy from the US who knows nothing other than his home state. The guidebook included data such as average rainfall, average temperature during each month of the year for different areas in different provinces and territories and the like. This book showed me that Kitchener/Waterloo and Toronto were on approximately the same latitude as Milwaukee and that they enjoyed very similar weather patterns. I realized that it would be wiser for me to pack my shorts and sandals for my summer vicarage than

to pack the polar ice gear my classmates recommended. Therefore, another reason for this paper is simply to put the idea of mission work in Canada into the consciousness of the WELS and to remove some misconceptions and general ignorance of the work and the area.

Finally, I decided on this topic because of my experience in some of the various fields. I felt that I could condense some of the information of recent years as well as to hopefully offer some useful insight into the possible future of mission work in Ontario and point out some mistakes we have made along the way.

First I will cover some basic statistics about the Province of Ontario in order to give a feeling for the people and the land. I will make some comparisons to the state of Wisconsin in order to provide some perspective, especially since a majority of the members of our Synod and certainly most of our called workers are familiar with the state.

Canada is the second largest nation in the world, and Ontario is one of the ten provinces and two territories that make up the Federation of Canada. Ontario is the province with the highest population (almost 11 million) and the second largest in land area (412,582 sq. mi., 1/6 of which is water) [Quebec is province with the largest area, and the Northwest Territories are the largest of the twelve political divisions]. However, even though it is so large, the population is not very spread out. 90% of Ontario's population live on 10% of its landmass. This is due to the fact that the climate of northern and western Ontario is extremely severe and cold most of the year. Ontario is also the province that is gaining the most people per year (not by percentage, but by actual number). From 1991 to 1996 Ontario gained approximately 700,000 people. The city of Toronto and its suburbs have over 5 million residents, close to half the population of the entire province. To compare this with Wisconsin, the entire state of Wisconsin had approximately 5.1 million residents in 1995, with a total area (including water) of only 56,153 square miles. If we crunch all of these

figures together, we realize that the vast majority of the population of Ontario actually lives in an area smaller than the state of Wisconsin. Yet this area has more than twice the population of Wisconsin, and has gained more people than inhabit the city of Milwaukee in the past five years. All of these figures tell us that the province is growing at a rapid rate and is very urban. In fact, according to the 1996 Canadian Census, 86% of its population is urban and only 14% are rural. In comparison, the 1994 statistic for Wisconsin states that 67.9% of Wisconsin residents live in metropolitan areas.

Next, let us turn to the type of people who live in Ontario. This varies greatly according to the region in which they live. Toronto (or TO as it is commonly referred to by many Canadians) is the most multicultural city in North America. This fact is partially revealed by the linguistic statistics provided by the provincial government. 76% of the province's residents are Anglophones, and 5% are Francophones, with the rest speaking various languages. The province is also very divided as to ethnicity. In the London area, much of the population is English, Irish, or Scottish descent. Around the twin cities of Kitchener/Waterloo, there are many of German, Dutch, and Scandinavian backgrounds. The Germans are by far the largest immigrant group in Kitchener/Waterloo, as evidenced by the fact that before 1917, Kitchener was named Berlin and the city is home to the largest Oktoberfest outside of Munich, Germany. The twin cities of Kitchener/Waterloo are very Lutheran, just not WELS Lutheran. The LCC (LC-MS in Canada) and the ELCIC (ELCA in Canada) have many churches in the area. In the rural area around the cities the Mennonites are one of the leading denominations. The city of Toronto is divided into 5 boroughs, York, North York, East York, Etobicoke (the "k" is silent), and Scarborough. Toronto's main immigrant group is Italian, and the English are the next largest. This has resulted in a city that is largely Roman Catholic, but with a significant number of Anglican churches as well.

Scarborough is the most multicultural of the boroughs. It has a large group of Caribbean natives, as well as immigrants from Indonesia, India, Pakistan and the Middle East. It is this borough that the WELS mission in Markham serves (Markham being right on the border of Scarborough). All of these previously mentioned areas of the province have climates much like that of Milwaukee and much of southeastern Wisconsin. Much further north (some 260 miles from Toronto) we come to the Canadian capital city of Ottawa. This area has a climate more similar to the area around Wausau, Wisconsin, but the people could not be much more different. Just as with our nation's capital, Ottawa is a city where most of the population works for the government in one respect or another. A major difference from our capital is that since Ottawa is right on the border of Ontario and Quebec, there is a high percentage of Francophones who live in Ottawa and the surrounding area. Another reason for the many Francophones is that if one is to work for the Canadian government, being bilingual is almost a necessity, since Canada is officially bilingual. As far as religious affiliation, since the Francophone population is quite high Roman Catholicism again is the dominant religion.

One aspect of mission work is always the personal views and traditions and cultural heritage of the people of the area. Here we get into a much more nebulous area. When one attempts to define people, stereotypes are easily made and individuality is often ignored. Yet, we must strive to see things from our mission prospects' eyes. Here I will strive to show how the "typical" Ontario resident would compare to the "typical" Midwesterner. One way to do this is to start with the Provincial motto of Ontario "Ut inceptit fideles sic permanent (Loyal she began, loyal she remains)". Recognizing that many of the residents of the province with English heritage had ancestors who fled to Canada during the Revolutionary War is a good place to start. Some Canadians regard the US as being a country completely without patience and also very selfish.

They feel that they have achieved almost the same goals as the US, that is a free country with no control by the British, but yet did so without resorting to war. They see our lack of gun control as something that defies logic. Some Canadians would even regard us as barbaric because we fail to provide health care to all of our citizens. Despite all these differences, Canadians generally like people from the States, as long as we attempt to understand them and see their point of view. They recognize that we cannot control all of the decisions our government makes, just as they cannot completely control their government either. In comparison with most Midwesterners, most residents of Ontario would be much more European in their outlook, and also have a much broader world-view in general. Mention the name Jean Chrétien (the Canadian Prime Minister) to most Midwesterners and you would get an incredulous look. Mention the name Bill Clinton to most Ontarians and they would immediately know that you had just mentioned the name of the US President. Yet this fault is not simply one that we should blame on individuals, but rather on the media as well. Upon returning to the US, I tried to keep up with major events in Canadian politics and was stymied. Even the election of the Prime Minister only rated a two-inch long column in the back pages of the paper. As far as religious membership, Canada lags far behind the US. As a rule, Canadians are much less churched than US residents, and especially much less than people in Wisconsin. This doesn't necessarily mean that they have no belief in a god or higher power whatsoever, but just as in the US, many cults and the New Age movement are now making inroads into the area. In Georgetown, ON (a suburb of Toronto) the Jehovah's Witnesses have a printing facility, and there is a large LDS temple in Bramalea (again a Toronto suburb). I would also say that, on average, most US citizens at least have a passing familiarity with Christianity and Christian beliefs. This is not necessarily the case with many Canadians. Part of this is caused by the large rate of immigration from countries like India and other eastern nations in which Christians are an

extremely small minority, if they are even present at all. One experience I had while canvassing in Oakville might only be anecdotal evidence, but I feel that it speaks volumes. A teenage girl came to the door, and when I stated why I was there, she asked me what Christianity was. I explained that we believe that Jesus Christ took away the sins of the world. She then asked me who Jesus was. She could have been trying to play a psychological game with me, but it didn't seem to be that at the time. She seemed genuinely ignorant. This is an experience that I have never had while canvassing in the US. I hope that though this section of the paper has been lengthy, that it has helped to increase the understanding of where the so-called "typical" Ontario resident is coming from.

Now I will cover the recent history of the various churches in Ontario (and one in Quebec). I will cover approximately the last ten years of history of these congregations, since in 1988, Douglas Priestap recorded the history of the congregations up until that time.

The first WELS mission in the Toronto area was Divine Peace in Mississauga. In 1987 the congregation was officially disbanded and Pastor Enderle accepted a call out of the area.

The second attempt to start a mission in the Toronto area was begun in 1986. In that year authorization was given to start calling for manpower to explore Newmarket, located 30 minutes north of Toronto by mass transit. On October 13, 1987, Pastor Thomas Haar was installed as that mission explorer. The focus of the exploratory then moved from Newmarket to Markham, a bedroom community right on the border of Scarborough, the most northeastern borough of Toronto. The results of the work there looked very promising and instructional classes were begun. There was also thought given to adding manpower to the effort. On September 11, 1988 Pastor Douglas Priestap was installed as an associate to Pastor Haar. Pastor Priestap was called to the area after completing colloquy work necessary for his switch from the LCC to the WELS for confessional reasons. Pastor Priestap brought a thorough knowledge of Canada to the work, as he was and still is

the only native Canadian WELS minister serving in Canada. Pastor Priestap's presence in Markham was a direct result of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Ottawa, which provided Pastor Priestap's salary for the time he spent in Markham. On September 7 of 1989 Pastor Priestap left the mission in Markham to begin work in Bolton. In 1990 the mission in Markham, now called Hope Lutheran Church, was granted multi-cultural mission status by the Board for Home Missions (BHM). At that time, the congregation numbered 31 communicants. The Board also started investigating the possibility of purchasing a parsonage in the area. In 1992 the congregation officially applied for membership in the North Atlantic District. The congregation also started operating a daycare through which they sought to gain more prospects for the young mission. It was reported in the North Atlantic District proceedings that as a result of the daycare a family from Sri Lanka was attracted to the mission and Pastor Haar was ministering to them. During these years the Lord blessed the mission work of Pastor Haar, and recently a second worker was added to the field. Pastor Edgar Herman was called and was installed at Hope just after Christmas in 1996. However, just a few weeks ago Pastor Herman suffered a heart attack and the full results of this development are yet to be determined. In my phone interview with Pastor Haar he stated that Pastor Herman had just gotten into the swing of things when his heart attack occurred. Pastor Haar indicated that in about a week Pastor Herman intended to get back into the work, but that the extent of his involvement would have to be seen. We pray that Pastor Herman might quickly recover and have full health to continue his work. Pastor Haar was able to report on some of the various problems his mission faces, and also to tell of a new and exciting development.

The congregation of Hope is extremely diverse. There are members from Jamaica, Antigua, Trinidad, Tobago, Guyana, Somalia, India, Sri Lanka, a Chinese man born in Trinidad, another Chinese man born in India, a transfer from our mission in Bulgaria, a few Canadian families, and



besides Pastor Haar's own family, one other US citizen. When asked about friction within the congregation from so many different nationalities and cultures, Pastor Haar stated that this was present to some extent. He also stated that it lies under the surface and usually is only mentioned to him privately by the various members. He made the general statement that the closest neighbors are the worst at getting along with each other. By this, he meant that often the various peoples of the Caribbean region, whom we would see as being quite similar both in appearance and in culture, often have rivalries with each other. One problem that exemplifies the difficulties is that of immigrants from Trinidad. The majority of them come from two different ethnic backgrounds, either they are Africans, brought into Trinidad as slaves, or they are East Indians, who came into Trinidad as indentured servants. When the island became self-governed, problems arose. Those of African slave ancestry were more numerous and gained much of the political power, but those of East Indian ancestry, although far fewer in number, held most of the wealth. Many of these problems and prejudices do not stay in the home nation, but come with the immigrants to Canada. Pastor Haar said that despite all these differences, the Gospel overcomes prejudices and problems. One area that he states is affected is outreach. The welcome a person receives, and his or her own racial and cultural prejudices can of course have a great impact on a prospective member. Another problem the mission faces is that they now rent their facilities from another church. This church added on and built a new sanctuary, but they kept their old sanctuary intact for its historical value and also to be able to use it as a rental facility. Pastor Haar said that in the beginning the arrangement worked out well and the price for the rental was not bad. However, at this point, the situation is that Hope is chafing under working their schedule around the schedule of the church they rent from. Another problem is that they are not the only group using the rental facilities, and that can also present scheduling and other problems. Pastor Haar is hopeful that the DMB will

agree to allow Hope to look into purchasing their own facility. Now let us look at the new development. Pastor Haar said that the Chinese people have stated that they have great difficulty in worshipping and mixing with other races and cultures. It is not necessarily a problem of racial or cultural prejudice, just an issue of what they are used to and with what they are comfortable. Recently the mission in Hong Kong has agreed to send over a Chinese-speaking pastor or evangelist. Pastor Haar said that there is already a nucleus of ten good solid Chinese families, and that this would be an opportunity to open up a new mission in the area devoted specifically to outreach among the Chinese immigrants. We hope and pray that the Lord of the church continues to bless this mission which reaches out to the varied cultures and peoples of Toronto with the truth of the Gospel.

As I mentioned above, in September of 1989 Pastor Douglas Priestap began exploratory work in Bolton, a community located approximately 30 minutes northwest of Toronto. Bolton serves as a bedroom community for Toronto. It is a small town nestled in a valley among green hills and nearby farm fields. In 1990 there were 25 communicants in Bolton, and the church chose the name Abiding Word. In 1990 the DMB also was looking into purchasing a parsonage in the town. In 1992 Pastor Priestap celebrated his 10-year anniversary in the ministry (taking into account both his time in the LCC and in the WELS). In 1992 there were other events in Pastor Priestap's ministry as well. He started exploratory work in Bramalea and in Oakville with the DMB picking up the costs and a preaching station in Kitchener/Waterloo, which was started at no cost to the DMB. On July 11, 1993, Pastor Erich Waldek was installed as a mission explorer in Waterloo, which by this point had chosen the name Word Eternal Lutheran Church. The mission in Oakville took the name Cross of Life and regularly held services at a local hotel. In the summer of 1994 summer vicar Martin Wegner aided the mission effort in Oakville. He spent approximately half of

his time helping Pastor Priestap and the other half helping Pastor Waldek. Kingdom Workers who came up late in the summer to help canvass various areas also aided the mission. An exciting development started to fall into place late that summer. Pastor Richard Schleicher, chairman of the DMB came to Oakville to look at a storefront facility being considered for rental by Cross of Life. This location seemed to be a good one. It was strategically located on one of the three main thoroughfares that ran from the outskirts of Oakville to Lake Ontario. It also was in a good location on the street. It had a dry cleaning store on one side and a bank on the other, therefore providing good foot traffic past it. That storefront was rented and is still being used by the mission. Eventually it was realized that Bolton was not growing as had been anticipated. Most of the members were elderly and the membership dwindled and the mission was closed. However the Lord blessed the mission in Oakville, and Cross of Life tried a new idea. It started what they call a Christian Information Centre. It is manned partly by lay members of the congregation, and Pastor Priestap spends approximately 20 hours a week at the Centre, not counting Sunday worship and Bible Class. Pastor Priestap has found that the Centre has worked quite well for the mission. Besides drawing interest from people, the Centre also distributes videos and tracts and Bibles to those who are interested. It serves as a lending library of books, audiotapes, and videotapes, and it also freely distributes certain things, such as tracts and Bibles, to those who want them. Pastor Priestap's wife Doris videotapes nearly every service at Cross of Life, and members who live too far away to attend every Sunday utilize these tapes. These are people who live in St. Catharines (near Niagara Falls, an 80 mile drive), Sudbury (260 miles north and west of Toronto), and in Waterloo (a 50 mile drive). Pastor Priestap stressed that he still canvasses the area, but that the Centre has made a great impact on the work. He feels that it helps those who have questions to have somewhere to go and it helps to fight the ever-increasing influence of the New-Age movement. We hope that this

growth in Oakville continues and that the Christian Information Centre continues to lead people to Christ.

As mentioned above, Pastor Erich Waldek began his work in Waterloo in July of 1993. Pastor Waldek brought a wealth of experience to the work (he celebrated his 40th year in the ministry in 1993). He had previously opened numerous missions both for the LCA, and then for the WELS after leaving the LCA for confessional reasons. The reason that Pastor Waldek was able to come to Waterloo was the direct result of a gift by the Barker family, members of Word Eternal. This family donated the use of a house to whoever would be called to Waterloo. Thus, despite synod-wide financial problems and an extremely bad outlook for the North Atlantic District region in general, the WELS was able to expand its efforts in Canada due to this generous gift. Pastor Waldek worked in the area under an agreement made with the DMB that if a viable nucleus was not gained in two years, the mission would be closed. A few months before the termination date in 1995, Pastor Waldek received and accepted a retirement call to Liverpool, NY. The mission was then converted into a preaching station manned by Pastor Priestap. Now the remaining members are served twice a month by services at the Waterloo Inn. The tape ministry from Oakville also serves them and occasionally there is an audio-link service with Oakville. One of the major problems in the work in the Kitchener/Waterloo area is that it is already a very Lutheran area. Many people belong to local LCC and ELCIC congregations. Those for whom the ELCIC is too liberal are for the most part satisfied by the LCC, which is still fairly conservative in this region of Canada. It is very difficult to explain the differences between the WELS and the LCC to people while you are standing on their doorstep, and many people are put off by the lack of a permanent facility. There is also very little name recognition of the WELS, and the name is often a hindrance to the work. A number of times while canvassing in the area I was asked what synod Word Eternal

was. When I stated "Wisconsin Synod", most people responded by asking, "What are you doing in Canada if you are from Wisconsin?" This problem will be further discussed in the upcoming section of the paper that will deal with the lessons learned and possible future of the WELS in Ontario.

Approximately two years ago in 1995 a small group left an LCC congregation in Sudbury. This group asked for the WELS to serve them, and Pastor Priestap took over the shepherding of this group. At first hopes were high that another WELS mission could be started in the area, but soon it became apparent that this was not to be. At first it was a preaching station, and Pastor Priestap would take the bus to Sudbury and stay overnight at the home of one family. In this way he was able to work on the bus using a laptop computer or simply to rest, and the family's hospitality saved the expense of a hotel. Since that time the situation has changed. Some members of the group have moved and some have rejoined the LCC. The group that is left is too small to justify having regular services. So far in 1997, Pastor Priestap has only made the trip to Sudbury once. This is understandable considering the great distance from the Toronto area (260 miles). It is an area with many Francophones, and partly as a result of that it is also a highly Roman Catholic area.

Now we turn to the area around Canada's capital city of Ottawa. Four congregations cover this area. St. Paul is located in the city of Ottawa, Divine Word in Nepean, which is a suburb on the West End, Abiding Word in Orleans, a suburb on the East End, and 45 miles north of Ottawa, is Good Shepherd in Poltimore, which is actually in the province of Quebec. Because men stationed in Ontario originally started the work there, and again since 1970 have served it, I will also discuss the status of Good Shepherd in Poltimore, even though it is technically in Quebec.

St. Paul in Ottawa was the first WELS congregation in Ontario. Since for almost the past 30 years Our Shepherd in Poltimore has been served by pastors from St. Paul, it is almost impossible to

separate its history from St. Paul's. Both St. Paul and Our Shepherd came to the WELS from the LCC under the leadership of Pastor Thomas Pfotenhauer. Pastor Pfotenhauer had a strong family connection to the LC-MS, but he recognized that the doctrinal problems of the Synod forced <sup>him</sup> ~~he~~ and St. Paul to leave and to join the WELS. This change took place in 1970. At the same time a group left the LCC church in Poltimore and called Pastor Pfotenhauer as their pastor. St. Paul has always served as a mother church for all of Ontario. As was mentioned earlier, St. Paul paid the salary of Pastor Priestap while he served in Markham. This is but one instance of the type of church St. Paul has been for the whole province of Ontario, and especially in the greater Ottawa area. At this time in St. Paul's history, we recognize that it has helped in the formation of many daughter churches. Among these are the ones already mentioned as being in the Ottawa area, and also one in Pembroke (100 miles west of Ottawa) which has since closed. Since the time that St. Paul joined the WELS, Pastor Pfotenhauer had been the only pastor of the congregation, but it also had a number of vicars. In 1990 Pastor Pfotenhauer celebrated having been at St. Paul for 25 years. The situation at St. Paul changed in 1993. On August 29, 1993, Pastor Roger Knepprath was installed as an associate pastor at St. Paul. In the next four years a number of changes would happen at St. Paul. First, Pastor Pfotenhauer decided to retire. This became effective on December 10, 1995. Then St. Paul called Pastor Brett Voigt as an associate. He accepted the call and was installed late in 1995. Just recently on February 21, 1997, Pastor Allen Lindke of Divine Word in Nepean accepted a call to Mt. Sinai in Montrose, Michigan. This has seriously affected St. Paul as Pastor Voigt is filling the vacancy in Nepean, which includes ministering to the congregation in Pembroke. Immediately after his retirement from St. Paul, Pastor Pfotenhauer did not go into complete retirement but continued to serve Our Shepherd in Poltimore. However now Pastor Knepprath has taken a larger role in Poltimore. Part of this is no doubt due to the fact that he is taking French classes. The current

vacancy in Nepean has also affected the situation, and Pastor Pfothauer is helping by supply preaching wherever he is needed. St. Paul is located in downtown Ottawa and is literally a few blocks away from the university there. As a recent immigrant to Canada, Pastor Knepprath stated that he is eligible for free language classes, so he has taken advantage of the opportunity and is taking French at the university. Pastor Knepprath just recently conducted his first baptism in French and will help in conducting a French VBS at Poltimore this summer. Our Shepherd is an established congregation, but Pastor Knepprath feels that this is perhaps not the best for the congregation. They really don't have the finances to do much outreach, and without their own pastor he feels that it will be difficult for them to grow. He stated that perhaps it would be better for Our Shepherd to be a mission with funding for a pastor from the DMB. In this way they could grow and then once again become self-supporting, but with a congregation which is able to do more in the way of outreach and even for the benefit of having their own pastor. The situation in Ottawa for St. Paul is that right now the pastors are quite stretched to cover 4 congregations. This has prevented St. Paul from moving forward in certain areas. One such area is campus ministry. I asked Pastor Knepprath if St. Paul had a campus ministry, especially because of their proximity to the university. He told me that they have a presence, but that it is not an active one at this point. Pastor Knepprath has a university card that gives him access to the facilities of the university for 5 years. He also contacted the university's coordinator for campus ministries. St. Paul is listed as the Evangelical Lutheran Fellowship and have Pastor Knepprath's name and number listed. He hopes to conduct a Bible study next fall and use the millenium as a topic because of the increased interest as we draw closer to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As far as what will happen in the future for St. Paul, that is not completely certain, and as in all things, we leave that up to the Lord. In 1996, the congregation had 326 communicants. The population of Ottawa has seemed to remain fairly stable. Pastor Knepprath

told me that recently the Canadian government cut around 50,000 jobs, but that the people seem to be staying in the Ottawa area anyway. Instead of leaving they are pursuing other jobs or becoming entrepreneurs. However, the financial outlook for the area is poor. At this point St. Paul is in the middle of the Parish Planning program with the help of Ronald Heins. It is a three-step process. First the congregation discovers where it is, then it discovers where it wants to go, and finally it discovers how to get there. St. Paul is working on step two at the moment. Pastor Knepprath mentioned that the work is slow, but that it has opened his eyes to various things that need to be done. When asked about the manpower situation in the Ottawa area, Pastor Knepprath offered the opinion that Ottawa could support another congregation. He said that with the large variety of people in the city, it is difficult for one congregation to serve all of them.

Now we turn to Divine Word in Nepean. This is another daughter church of St. Paul. Pastor Allen Lindke had served it for its entire history until his recent acceptance of a call. The progress of this congregation has been fairly swift by Canadian standards. By spring of 1982 they were worshipping in a new church instead of a WEF, and in 1986 they bought a parsonage with a CEF loan. In 1988 Divine Word celebrated its tenth anniversary and had 75 communicant members. In that same year Pastor Lindke celebrated his tenth year in the ministry. By 1990 the congregation soon expected to become interest-subsidized. It was looking at a land deal and had 77 communicants. By 1992, the congregation was no longer receiving an operating subsidy and was doing well. In 1994 the congregation achieved its goal of progressing to interest-subsidized status. They had achieved this by selling a portion of their land and using the money to pay off their loans. Late in 1994 the congregation in Pembroke disbanded and Pastor Lindke took on the job of serving the members there. In 1996 the congregation had a communicant membership of 82. As previously stated, since Pastor Lindke's acceptance of a call, Divine Word has been served by Pastor Voigt of



St. Paul. The congregation hopes to have a graduate assigned to fill the vacancy.

The congregation on the East End of Ottawa is Abiding Word in Orleans. In 1986 Pastor Edward Spreeman was the pastor at Abiding Word. At that time Orleans was authorized to sell its current parsonage and use the money to construct an on-site parsonage together with CEF money. At that time the congregation also was nearing interest-subsidized status. In 1988 Pastor Spreeman resigned from Abiding Word because he had doctrinal differences with the WELS. On July 7, 1988, graduate Kevin Schulz was ordained and installed as the pastor at Abiding Word. At that time the congregation numbered 71 communicant members. By 1990 the congregation numbered 78 communicant members and although not officially listed as such, expected to be interest-subsidized that year. It did happen that by the 1992 district convention, Abiding Word was officially listed as an interest-subsidized congregation. In 1996 Abiding Word had 88 communicant members.

Finally let us look at the history of Redeemer in Pembroke. It was started in 1978, and by 1988 had 11 communicant members and was served by Pastor James Shrader. All of that time the costs for Redeemer were being provided by St. Paul. In 1988 it was granted exploratory status and was listed as a non-subsidized mission because of the support of St. Paul. In 1990 Redeemer became an operating-subsidized mission and the financial support was taken up by the DMB instead of by St. Paul. In 1990 the mission had a total of 31 souls. On July 15, 1991 Pastor Shrader resigned from Redeemer and left the WELS because of doctrinal differences with the Synod. Pastor Karl Schmugge was then called and was installed on January 19, 1992. However the mission in Pembroke failed to grow as was hoped. At the time the mission became funded by the Synod, the area around Pembroke was growing and becoming more of an attractive area to tourists after years of depressed conditions based on the logging and lumber industry. However this growth did not

translate into growth of the mission. Pastor Knepprath of St. Paul observed that Pembroke is already a very churched and very Lutheran area. Again we can see the problem of a small mission in a small building competing with large churches and many people who do not recognize the doctrinal problems of the LCC and ELCIC. In 1994, in anticipation of the closing of the mission Pastor Schmugge received and accepted a call to Christ in Columbia, Maryland. After this, the church and parsonage were sold and Pastor Lindke of Divine Word in Nepean served the remaining members. In 1996, the congregation numbered 21 communicant members. These members now have services at a local nursing home. Pastor Knepprath said that this has proved to be a blessing because besides the regular members, many of the nursing home residents attend the services and there are usually 20-30 people at each service. Now since the vacancy at Divine Word, Pastor Voigt from St. Paul has been serving the members.

This concludes the portion of the paper that covers the recent history of the WELS congregations in Ontario. Now I will try to cover some mistakes the WELS has made in Ontario and some personal opinions of changes the WELS could make to conduct a better ministry in Ontario. These opinions will be both my own opinions from my experience in Canada, and opinions of pastors who serve in the province.

Many problems that could get a pastor into some minor trouble are easily solved. One trait that many Canadians have and a trait we need to be sensitive to is that they get offended when we take the name "American" and use it exclusively for US citizens. They are from North America just as much as we are, and could also call themselves Americans. They would rather that we say we are from "the United States" or simply "the States". This is obviously something that is relatively easy to change. However the underlying opinions which many US citizens have are much harder to get over. These opinions and US patriotism can sometimes get in the way of mission work in

Ontario. They might not be always openly expressed, but some of these feelings can obstruct a pastor's work. I remember having a conversation with a pastor in Canada. He and his wife had come from the US. He was becoming concerned that his children were growing up more as Canadians than as US residents. I recognize that the country we come from does have a great impact on our worldview, but I really didn't see his point. Perhaps it is because I don't have children, or perhaps it is because my mother is an immigrant to the US from Germany, but I couldn't see why it made a difference to him. If your children are good Christian people, does it matter which country they consider their homeland that much? Especially since his children were raised speaking English as their first language and the fact that Canada is a close neighbor to us, it didn't make sense to me what the difference would be. I believe that such feelings could lead to resentment of the people you work among, and a feeling of separation from them instead of a fellowship. I suppose part of the problem can be caused by the stereotype of how US citizens think vs. how Canadians think. The stereotype of US residents is that they are seen as thinking that the US can do whatever it wants because it is bigger and stronger, and everybody else just has to take it. The stereotype of Canadians is that they have a Napoleon complex when they compare themselves to their more populous and prosperous neighbor to the south. It is the exception that any person exactly would fit such a stereotype, but there is also a little truth behind these profiles, and a pastor from the US has to recognize this and be sensitive to the feelings of his parishioners. As far as the WELS is concerned, this means that those called to serve in Ontario need to be sensitive men who are willing to gladly adapt to a different culture, and who are perhaps given some good orientation by other pastors in Canada before beginning their call. Another aspect for the WELS to consider is whether it is best to treat missions in Canada as home missions. Even though the cultures of Canada and the US are similar, I feel that this sometimes serves to allow us to underestimate the differences

between Canada and the US. One problem with missions in Canada is the lack of transfers to add to congregations. In many areas of the US home missions are started with a nucleus of WELS people already living in the area. This almost never happens in Ontario. Pastor Priestap pointed out that in the last four years, the mission at Oakville has only gained three transfers. He did not make this statement to complain, but rather to point out that almost all members of missions in Ontario are converts. Pastor Priestap made the observation that we need to “Start thinking like an outsider”. He meant that often we forget that the vast majority of people in the world have never heard of the WELS, and the name has little <sup>or</sup> no meaning to them. It would be good for the WELS to consider treating missions in Canada more like world missions. The discussion of the name WELS is also a point to bring up. As I stated earlier, the name often serves as a barrier to the work in Ontario, and Pastor Priestap said that he really downplays the name until he has had a few evangelism visits with the people. He stated that even the name of the Northwestern Lutheran is confusing for Canadians. These are historic names, but are we more willing to alienate possible prospects rather than change a historical name? The whole area of WELS publications is another issue. Pastor Priestap made mention that many of the publications of the Board of Evangelism make mention of the US, or “we Americans”. Some videos have contained scenes from Washington D.C. and Pastor Priestap said that these things often made them unusable for him and others in Ontario. He stated that phrases referring to US government and the like are also often present in the Meditations booklets. Obviously, mature members would not have as much of a problem with this, but the continued repetition can even get on their nerves, and we can see that to do this to prospects could be very negatively seen. Pastor Priestap also stated that often the Meditations are written more for mature Christians than for those new to the faith, as almost all of his members are. He would like to perhaps start a Meditations-type booklet series aimed more at those very new to the faith. This

booklet series would also strive to avoid any country-specific terms, or perhaps would be solely produced and used by WELS pastors in Canada. I am not saying I have the answers to these problems, but they are questions that deserve thought and discussion. Pastor Priestap did praise BHM administrators Harold Hagedorn and Peter Kruschel. He felt that they had a good feel for the work in Ontario and did their best to help in whatever way possible.

If the WELS truly wants to reach out to those in Ontario, and Canada in general, all of the above history and mistakes made and lessons learned need to be examined carefully. We say that we want to reach out, but are we willing to do what is necessary for that outreach? I am not seeking to pronounce judgment on any part of the WELS administration. These men have difficult jobs and truly want the best for our Lord and for the WELS in particular. We in the WELS need to constantly be evaluating our work and reevaluating it. We need to do this to make our best effort to obey the command of our Lord to “go and make disciples of all nations”. Let us all strive to become more attuned to missions, both home and world. Let us encourage our missionaries. Let us go forth and preach the word in a way that obstructs it as little as we can. We do this that God’s Holy Spirit might work faith in people the world over. That is the Lord’s holy will and let it be our mission and creed as a Synod and also as individual Christians.

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