

Commitment to Pastoral Education

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The Lutheran Reformation began in a university setting. From the beginning Lutherans have emphasized the importance of well-trained clergy. Nevertheless the Lutheran Church in North America was slow to establish schools for the training of pastors. Other denominations established colleges and universities for that purpose long before Lutherans in America. The Puritans (Congregationalists) of the Massachusetts Bay Colony founded Harvard in 1636, only six years after arriving on this continent. The Jesuits established a small seminary in Quebec in 1663.¹ The first Lutherans arrived in America in the 1630s, but no seminary was established until 1815 when the Hartwick Seminary in New York began training pastors. Gettysburg Seminary was founded in 1826. Part of the problem in trying to establish Lutheran seminaries in the early to mid 19th century was that the Lutheran immigrants were not always so willing to support them. Some represented theological seminaries “as useless and costly evils that would simply impose more taxes on the farmers.”² They did not recognize the value of ministerial education. On the other hand the well-educated Saxon immigrants in Missouri understood the value of well-trained clergy and founded a seminary years before they helped found the Missouri Synod. One of the main reasons for the early growth of the Missouri Synod was the fact that it had two operating seminaries at its founding in 1847 and a ministerial education system shortly thereafter.³

Our Wisconsin Synod fathers recognized the need for establishing a seminary and acted to establish such a school relatively quickly. The Wisconsin Synod founded its school of the prophets in 1863, Minnesota in 1884, and Michigan in 1885. Each of those synods, which today comprise the Wisconsin Synod, suffered from the lack of doctrinal unity and loss of congregations to other church bodies until a seminary was established which provided a steady supply of well-trained pastors who were on the same page doctrinally.

Our synod’s commitment to pastoral education is the subject of this essay. The essay will present an overview of the history of the synod’s commitment to pastoral education, comment on the current commitment in our synod, and issue some warnings and express some hopes for the future. It should be noted at the outset that commitment is an attitude that can be difficult to measure. We can only attempt to recognize its presence or absence by looking at both words and actions.

An Historical Survey of Our Synod’s Commitment to Pastoral Education

The centennial history of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary expresses a sentiment that has long held sway in our synod.

The history of our Synod is intimately bound up with it (the seminary). It is not too much to say that what our Synod is today can largely be traced back to our Seminary. A similar close relationship between synods and their seminaries can be observed in the history of all church bodies.

Whenever seminaries stood for conservatism in doctrine and practice, whenever true Bible teaching was inculcated upon their students, that showed itself in the *publica doctrina*, in the

¹ Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 47.

² Abdel Ross Wentz, *The Lutheran Church in American History*. (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1933) p. 134.

³ In the late 19th and early 20th centuries “the Missouri Synod, thanks to a very adequate supply of pastors from its own comprehensive school system, augmented by a training school in Steeden, Germany, founded the largest number of new congregations” of any other Lutheran synod in America. *The Lutherans in North America*, ed. by E. Clifford Nelson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 360. See also p. 436.

teaching and practice of those church bodies in general. If, on the other hand, the spirit of liberalism crept into the seminaries in the course of time, the same spirit of liberalism was soon noted in the clergy who received their training in such an atmosphere. If the fountain is polluted, what can you expect of the waters which spread to the nooks and corners of a church body? That is why the teaching and training received at its seminary has far-reaching effects on an organization. For the graduates of its seminary ultimately set the pattern for doctrine and practice. In the things that really count, we may say, the history of a synod is largely the history of its theological seminary.⁴

Through most of our synod's history the majority of the synod's pastors and leaders have seemed to understand, at least in theory, that ministerial education is vital to the life of the synod and central to every aspect of the synod's work. Training future pastors and teachers is the most basic work of a church body as it seeks to carry the gospel to the world.

In the history of our synod three factors intertwine in the expression of commitment to pastoral education:

- the desire for confessionally trained men who can work in their contemporary setting;
- the desire to train sufficient numbers of graduates to meet the needs of the synod;
- struggles with the cost of operating ministerial education schools.

At different times in our synod's history one or the other factor has received more attention than the others. All three factors come into play in the decision to found a seminary and support it with a full ministerial education system.

1850-1900

The first pastors of the Wisconsin Synod were trained and sent out by the mission houses and mission societies of Europe. The standards of their education and their commitment to confessional Lutheranism varied greatly. The number of pastors coming from these sources was never enough.

The original constitution of the Wisconsin Synod committed pastors to the *Unaltered Augsburg Confession* and stressed the importance of a pastor having a good command of the language in which he was to preach. Pastors were also to possess competency in the various branches of theology including exegesis with a stress on understanding the classical or biblical languages (a qualification which neither Muehlhaeuser nor the majority of the early signers of the constitution had). Provision was made for waiving these requirements if the candidate had strong aptitude for the ministry and would devote himself to the study of theology.⁵ The constitution also provided procedures for accepting pastors from other synods and denominations. In the latter case the ministerium of the synod had to be convinced of the man's piety and theological training. The man also had to accept "the Evangelical Lutheran Confessions."⁶ Some who had served in other denominations did indeed present themselves for service in our synod and were accepted. The early synodical proceedings record instances of promising young men being assigned to an experienced pastor or a conference for pastoral training.⁷ At least one Wisconsin Synod candidate, J. Henry Siecker, received his training at Gettysburg

⁴ Im. P. Frey, "Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary 1863-1963," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, vol. 60, #3 (July 1963), p. 170.

⁵ Erwin E. Kowalke, *Centennial Story: Northwestern College, 1865-1965* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1965), p. 9. An English translation of the synod's constitution can be found in the *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 22, #1, p. 16-23.

⁶ Wisconsin Synod Constitution, Article 5, par. 10-11. *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 22, #1, p. 16-23.

⁷ e.g., see 1860 *Proceedings*, p. 18; English translation by A. O. Lehmann in the *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, vol. 13, #1, p. 16-17. Dr. Lehmann has rendered an important service to our synod to date by translating and publishing the *Proceedings* of the synodical conventions from 1849 to 1869 in various issues of the *WELS Historical Institute Journal*.

Seminary.⁸ Dr. Schaeffer and the Board of Directors of Gettysburg College seemed to have offered Siecker free schooling.⁹ Lutheran elementary school teachers at times conducted services.¹⁰ For a while the synod considered training students at Illinois State University operated by the Northern Illinois Synod and the Illinois Synod at Springfield.¹¹ By 1860 the synod broke off negotiations with that institution because of the lack of confessional integrity in those two Illinois synods.¹² Synodical proceedings also record several instances of men being removed from office or leaving the synod for doctrinal reasons, lack of qualifications, or moral offenses.

By early in the second decade of the synod's existence it had become apparent that it was necessary to establish a seminary of its own if the synod was going to survive. In his first presidential report to the synod Pres. Bading asked the convention to consider whether it wasn't time to take steps for the establishment of a seminary.¹³ A "Committee on Educational Matters" recognized that establishing a seminary was a goal toward which the synod must strive, but also stated that under the present conditions there was little chance of reaching that goal. The committee recommended that students continue to be entrusted to Gettysburg Seminary for training. No doubt, the financial straits of the synod and the firing of the opening salvos of the Civil War were "the present conditions" referred to in the report. The convention discussed the matter of ministerial education at some length and expressed the hope that the goal of establishing a seminary would no longer be distant.¹⁴

Once again in his presidential report to the 1862 convention Pres. Bading urged the synod to action in spite of the poverty of the congregations. He recognized the importance of the seminary for the survival of the synod and he provided the leadership necessary to make his dreams a reality.

In addition I take it upon myself to call the following important matter to your attention. I believe that since the beginning of the synod the praesidium of synod has not felt the lack of pastors as they did this past synodical year. Old synodical congregations have been orphaned for many months, and are struggling with the sects and schismatics to keep themselves alive. On their repeated cries for help no other comfort could be given than: wait with hope for the eventual help from the Lord. Requests for preachers coming from new congregations who had not as yet joined the synod could not be granted even a hearing. How can we find an answer if we do not earnestly think about establishing our own seminary and putting our hands more seriously and with greater faith to the task? We cannot and dare not rely on Germany. Even if now and then a worker is sent whom we will accept with sincere thanks to our Lord and to our German brothers who feel for us, it is still only like a drop of water on a hotstone. We must in our country, in our synod, establish a source from which workers will flow. If we wait with the founding of such an institution until we are rich, nothing will ever happen. How did Aug. Herm. Francke begin his orphanage in Halle? How did Pastor Harms his Mission House in Hermannsburg? With very little money, since they were poor; but with strong faith in the almighty and rich Lord. Or should we bring examples closer to home? Then let us look at the beginnings of the educational institutions of the Missouri Synod; or of the small beginning of the seminary of the Reformed Classis of this land. All of these had an unimposing and insignificant start, and look, they have not only established a life, but by the grace of God have become

⁸ 1859 *Proceedings*, p. 7-8, 14; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 12, #2, p. 7 & 13. Other students evidently were recommended to Gettysburg—see 1858 *Proceedings*, p. 12; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 12, #1, p.9. A certain von Schmidt who had trained at Gettysburg also presented himself to the synod with a recommendation from Dr. Schaeffer of Gettysburg. 1860 *Proceedings*, p. 7; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 13, #1, p. 7.

⁹ 1859 *Proceedings*, p. 13; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 12, #2, p. 12. Kowalke, *Centennial Story: Northwestern College, 1865-1965*, p. 10-14.

¹⁰ 1859 *Proceedings*, p. 20; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 12, #2, p. 18.

¹¹ 1859 *Proceedings*, p. 16-17; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 12, #2, p. 14-15.

¹² 1860 *Proceedings*, p. 14; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 13, #1, p. 12-13.

¹³ 1861 *Proceedings*, p. 12; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 13, #2, p. 11.

¹⁴ 1861 *Proceedings*, p. 25-26; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 13, #2, p. 17-18.

flourishing institutions. Let us walk in their footsteps and for once, with faith in the Lord's help, make a small beginning. I hope to God the time will also come to us when we can in this matter sing praises with the psalmist: "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy." Well, then, dear brothers and friends, let us at this synodical convention draw up a plan for the establishment of an educational institution, and call across the ocean: "We are making a beginning." I know for sure that from many a side over there an echo would resound: "We will help." How the Hon. Pennsylvania Synod for many a year as well as this year has helped us, for which we owe them many thanks!¹⁵

A floor committee recommended serious discussion of Bading's proposal, especially in the light of encouragement given by the Langenberg Society for the seminary project. The discussion on the floor centered on the need for training pastors particularly because of the inroads of the Roman Catholics and the efforts of the Methodists and *Albrechtsleute* (a branch of German Methodism). It was recognized that the synod would also have to found a college to prepare young men for the seminary. Since the financial conditions of the young synod were less than ideal, the hope was expressed that the Gustav-Adolph Society of Germany might come to the aid of the young synod. Another committee recommended that "we urgently support the recommendation of the praesidium to establish a preacher-seminary."¹⁶

By 1863 it was not a matter of whether the synod would establish a seminary but where. Even though the country was embroiled in the Civil War (the Battle of Gettysburg would be fought about a month after the convention) the synod resolved to proceed. The debate between the advantages of locating the school in Milwaukee or Watertown seems to have pitted the influence of Muehlhaeuser against Bading. Koehler suggests that the decision to locate the seminary in Watertown as a victory for the Bading forces¹⁷ and a sign of the growing confessionalism in Wisconsin. The delegates continued to express concern about finances. Watertown was expected to donate \$2,000 for the establishment of the seminary and college. If the city was not willing to do so the decision was to be reconsidered. Bading not only demonstrated leadership in leading the synod to found a seminary he also took the lead in securing the necessary funding. He traveled to Europe to raise money for the project among Lutherans in Germany, Russia and the Baltic provinces. He was able to raise more than \$10,000 for immediate use and another \$7,500 in the form of endowment funds. The synod never saw any benefit from the endowment funds because the Prussian church withheld them as the synod became more and more confessional.¹⁸

In 1864 "Father" Heyer, president of the Minnesota Synod, agreed to collect money among Lutherans in the eastern United States for the support of the seminary with the understanding that the Minnesota Synod would then be able to make use of Wisconsin's seminary. Nothing much seems to have come from his efforts. The synod in convention that year also appointed a committee to draw up an announcement, a short article, to present the need for the seminary and the need for a collection to support the school. It was hoped that the seminary would also serve to develop interest among members of the synod in Lutheran elementary schools.¹⁹

Leaders in the synod recognized from the beginning that a confessional Lutheran seminary needed a preparatory system to supply it with candidates who were capable of doing seminary level work. The synod therefore founded a college and prep school in Watertown in 1865. But the support of the pastors and congregations of the synod never seemed to match the enthusiasm for pastoral education expressed by the leaders of the synod and the convention delegates. There were frequent complaints about lack of support. Hoenecke complained in his seminary report to the 1867 convention, "Although a number of brothers have

¹⁵ 1862 *Proceedings*, p. 13-14; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 16, #1, p. 11.

¹⁶ 1862 *Proceedings*, p. 18-19, 20; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 16, #1, p. 13-14, 16.

¹⁷ J.P. Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, (St. Cloud, Minn., Sentinel Publishing Co. 1970), p. 89.

¹⁸ Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992), p. 15-16. For a more complete report of Bading's efforts in Europe see Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. 91-104.

¹⁹ 1864 *Proceedings*, p. 14. *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 18, #1, p. 8. The text of the announcement produced by the committee can be found in the 1864 *Proceedings*, p. 19-21. *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 18, #1, p. 15-16.

displayed a keen interest in our seminary, the undersigned cannot help but say that such an indifference in interest has faced him again so that he was greatly overburdened and could only limp along in the joy of his duties.”²⁰ Bading, serving as chairman of the Board of Control of the new institution, chastised the synod for lack of support.

Although we express our warmest thanks to all of these kind donors and participants for our cause, and ask God’s blessings on them, yet the impression cannot be left, that, in reference to the support of our congregations, our financial report is in error. Some of the congregations have commendably accepted our institutions and have faithfully supported the seminary with money and food stuffs; we mention this with thankful recognition. On the other hand others gave very little and some nothing. It is easy to be seen that by such participation this work cannot prosper because to the debts already there, new ones had to be added, which will be shown in the financial report later.

At times we have lamented before the Lord over such a lack of support, we feel compelled to let our complaints be heard loud and clear by the assembled synod, and to announce our urgent plea to the congregations and pastors to take God’s matter more seriously to heart and offer more serious help for our seminary. Each one judge for himself; doesn’t it have to be a painful feeling for the inspector and his wife to work with the knowledge that the hearts of the synod do not beat jointly and warmly for the seminary. Doesn’t the treasurer have to lose all joy in his job if he is deprived of all means to pay the costs which the daily upkeep of about 19 persons requires? A special joint willingness by our pastors and their congregations to give in order to keep our institution in proper condition as well as to raise annually a sum for the theological professorship is a small item for them but a major one for us. If the pastors of our synod would make the effort to encourage the families of their congregations to give annually an average of 50 cents for the support of the institution, which in this richly blessed land is not a burden, then the Board of Control would have more means at their disposal for the defrayal of costs at the seminary than is needed.²¹

The financial situation and the lack of support by many of the pastors and congregations of the synod did not seem to improve by the 1868 convention. In his presidential report to the synod Bading wrote,

Most of our pastors and congregations did as much as nothing for the gathering of professors’ salaries and for the support of our students and other household matters. . . Had the Lord given us an inkling before the founding about the difficulties which would befall us on the way, we would have at the outset probably refrained from executing our plans.²²

Later observers have pointed out the poverty of our immigrant forefathers, the effects of the Civil War, declining farm prices, and inflation as being the chief reasons for the financial difficulties and lack of support of the synod’s ministerial education system.²³ It is doubtful that Bading would have accepted those reasons as excuses.

The synod tried some creative ways of funding the Watertown institutions. Adam Martin, the president of the college, proposed establishing a \$100,000 endowment for the school through the sale of “perpetual scholarships.”²⁴ The purchase of a \$100 scholarship permitted the scholarship holder the three-year academy course. A \$500 scholarship (payable in five annual installments) entitled the purchaser and his heirs over and

²⁰ 1867 *Proceedings*, p. 34; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol 20, #1, p. 18.

²¹ 1867 *Proceedings*, p. 17; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol 19, #2, p. 21-22.

²² 1868 *Proceedings*, p. 6-7; *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol 21, #1, p. 9.

²³ Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 181. Kowalke, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

²⁴ For an English translation of Martin’s plan see *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 19, #2, p. 20-21.

over in perpetuity a four-year college course without any further charge for tuition or fees. Pastor J.H. Siecker was salaried by the synod to sell the scholarships. Although there was initial enthusiasm and funds were gathered, the plan eventually became an administrative and financial nightmare. The last such scholarship was retired from circulation in 1930.²⁵

The mutual recognition of fellowship with the Missouri Synod in 1869 presented a possible solution to the on-going financial difficulties in pastoral education. Northwestern College was to remain open. The Missouri Synod would supply a professor and Missouri Synod students would make use of the college. The Wisconsin Synod would send its seminarians to St. Louis and would supply a professor for the Missouri Synod's seminary. The agreement seemed to be an excellent solution. Students trained under C.F.W. Walther and his colleagues would receive excellent, confessional Lutheran training. Missouri sent Frederick Stellhorn²⁶ (1841-1919) to Northwestern. Wisconsin was never able to supply a professor for St. Louis. Hoenecke was called but never accepted. Missouri was gracious, recognizing the pressing needs in Wisconsin.

By the mid 1870s Wisconsin began to have second thoughts about the educational arrangement with Missouri. The Synodical Conference had been founded in 1872 and there was a strong move to reorganize the synods of the Synodical Conference according to state boundaries. Although our fathers were not opposed to the original plan for reorganization, they rejected the suggested implementation of a plan that would have in reality made the Wisconsin Synod a district of the Missouri Synod. In rejecting the state synod plan, the Wisconsin Synod also resolved to re-establish its own seminary in Milwaukee. Our fathers had no objection to the training offered at St. Louis but they believed that a seminary located in Wisconsin could produce more candidates and that a smaller seminary had distinct advantages over a larger one.²⁷ No doubt, there was also the realization that a Wisconsin Synod seminary was necessary for the continuing autonomy of the synod. The decision to re-open the seminary was somewhat controversial even in the Wisconsin Synod. There were financial implications for the synod and consequent manpower reductions at Northwestern. To meet its financial obligations the synod eventually sold off a portion of the Watertown campus, thus hindering future expansion. Koehler criticizes the leadership of the synod at the time because it "used the old tricks of the time before 1868 and tried all kinds of new schemes instead of educating and enlisting the Synod's constituency for the educational work and in the meantime making ends meet."²⁸

Pastoral shortages from 1870-1881 meant that the synod had to continue to secure pastors from a variety of sources: the Iowa Synod, Missouri, Lutherans in the Eastern United States, and Germany (mainly Hermannsburg). As the seminary produced more pastors the synod began to prosper. Between 1881 and 1889 the number of the synod's congregations increased from 94 to 141. Koehler attributes this growth to "the greater youth, uniformity of work, and the 'synod-mindedness' of Synod's own sons who besides were at home in the American environment."²⁹ Training in synodical schools resulted in a number of blessings, including a greater synodical loyalty among the young pastors.

The number of seminary students in Milwaukee increased, as our fathers had hoped, to such an extent that by 1891 the seminary had outgrown its home at 13th and Vine. There seems to have been little hesitancy to proceed with moving the seminary to three acres on the old Pabst farm at 60th and Lloyd in Wauwatosa. In 1892 on the last day of the first convention of the federation known as the Ev. Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Other States ground was broken for the new seminary building. A golden age in the history of the seminary soon began. The Federation plan involved three areas of work that were considered vital to a church body's purpose: ministerial education, missions, and publications.³⁰

²⁵ Kowalke, *op. cit.*, p. 39-43.

²⁶ Stellhorn served at Northwestern 1869-1874. He left Northwestern to teach at Concordia College in Ft. Wayne. In 1881 he left the Missouri synod and joined the Ohio Synod as a result of the Election Controversy.

²⁷ Frey, *op. cit.*, 189-190; see also *Continuing in His Word*, ed. by Max Lehninger, et al., (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1951), p. 142-143.

²⁸ Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 148-149.

²⁹ Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

³⁰ See the constitution of the Joint Synod, *Verhandlung der Allgemeine Ev. Luth. Synode*, 1892, p. 8-9

Problems, however soon arose for the synod. On the night of July 30, 1894, the main building on the Northwestern campus known as the *Kaffeemuehle*³¹ was destroyed by fire. The loss of this building was such a blow to the educational system of the synod that some predicted that the fire would put an end to the Wisconsin Synod. Because the country had entered an economic depression in 1893,³² the time was not a good one for raising money to rebuild. The situation was so serious that the synod published a special edition of the *Gemeindeblatt*, the only one in the publication's history. Pres. von Rohr called a special synod convention in August of that year not to decide whether to rebuild, but to decide what kind of building was needed and to authorize construction.³³ It was not an opportune time financially, but the future of ministerial education in the synod was at stake. The training of future pastors could not be ignored.

The continuing need for pastors during the late 19th century resulted in the establishment of a "practical" course mainly for second career students alongside the "theoretical" course at the opening of the seminary in Milwaukee in 1878.³⁴ Other students were called into the active ministry before completing their full seminary training.³⁵ The future president of the synod, Gustav Bergemann, was one such seminarian who entered the ministry before completing his seminary course. In his later years he decried the practice as unfair to both students and the congregations.³⁶ In the fall of 1897 five first year students enrolled in the practical course.³⁷ No new students are listed as enrolling in the practical course thereafter. The decision had been made that year to do away with the "practical" course and to offer only a "theoretical" course for the seminary. The decision demonstrated that the synod recognized the importance of a full theological training for its pastors, including exegetical training based on the careful study of the biblical languages. When there was a move to reinstate the "practical" seminary course some seven years later the 1897 decision was re-affirmed.³⁸

1900-1945

Through most of the first fifty years of the synod's existence lack of financial support for the program of the synod was troublesome. In 1899 the synod resolved to pay off its debt by the time of the jubilee in 1900 and appointed an "agitation committee" with authority to send a special collector to congregations which desired his help.³⁹ In 1904 Northwestern needed a new dormitory. The synod was already carrying a debt of some \$27,000 with an annual budget of approximately \$46,000. The new dormitory was estimated to cost \$50,000. Pastor Richard Siegler was called to gather the funds for both the synodical debt and the building of the new dormitory. He evidently had a gift for this kind of work and his diligent efforts were quite successful.⁴⁰

In 1904 the seminary faculty also began publication of the *Theologische Quartalschrift*, originally requested at the first meeting of the federation in 1892.⁴¹ In the forward to the first volume Hoenecke stated that the journal would offer articles on points of doctrine, homiletics, and questions of pastoral practice. Attention would be given to articles of special interest to the Lutheran Church in America in general and the Wisconsin Synod in particular.⁴² The *Quartalschrift* would serve the continuing education of the synod's pastors.

After the present Wisconsin Synod was formed in 1917 by the amalgamation of the synods that participated in the federation of 1892, synodical leadership once again turned attention to ministerial education.

³¹ The building received the name "Coffee Mill" because of its resemblance to the hand powered coffee grinders in use at the time.

³² See Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), p. 287.

³³ Kowalke, *op. cit.*, 102-106.

³⁴ Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 191; Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

³⁵ e.g. during school year 1896-1897 five students received calls into the parish before graduation, (1897 *Proceedings*, p. 78).

³⁶ Edward C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*. (Milwaukee, Northwestern Publishing House, 1992), p. 134.

³⁷ 1897 *Proceedings*, p. 78.

³⁸ *Continuing in His Word*, p. 146. The question of whether to begin a "practical" course has periodically arisen since that time. See the 1955 Wisconsin Synod *BoRaM*, p. 53.

³⁹ Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 229-230.

⁴⁰ Kowalke, *op. cit.*, p. 141-143. See Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

⁴¹ *Verhandlung der Allgemeine Ev. Luth. Synode*, 1892, p. 9.

⁴² *Theologische Quartalschrift*, vol. 1, #1, p. 2.

The committee appointed to examine the educational system of the synod made many far-reaching proposals in an attempt to bring that system up to date. In 1919 the committee recommended the expansion of the course at Northwestern to a full eight years (four prep and four college), the expansion of the teacher course at Dr. Martin Luther College to six years (four high school and two college), provisions for science laboratories at the schools, and campus expansion in Saginaw. The committee also recommended that summer quarter courses be provided for both pastors and teachers, textbooks be written and published for the ministerial education schools, and a committee be established to provide ways and means to supply professors with the opportunity and means to do advanced study. Not every recommendation was accepted or immediately implemented.⁴³ Nevertheless, a start had been made to upgrade ministerial education.

A decade later another committee was appointed to look at the synod's educational system. This committee issued a report that became known in synodical circles as the "Moussa Report." The report received this name because it went out to the synod under the signature of the committee's secretary, Pastor Hans Kollar Moussa.⁴⁴ The report made some far-reaching recommendations:

- I. Every parish in our Synod should have a day school with the aim of providing eight years of instruction.
- II. Our college at Watertown and our Teachers' Seminary at New Ulm should not continue as preparatory schools.
- III. The Synod should authorize and subsidize the establishment of preparatory schools, or academies, in many different parts of its territory, preferably according to conferences.
- IV. The Teachers' Seminary should extend and vary its normal course to meet the needs of our day.
- V. Northwestern College, which now has reached the full standard of the American college, should likewise, as prudence dictates, offer college courses that would serve others than those who intend to prepare for the ministry. If the commercial department is retained, it should be open to those only who have finished a satisfactory preparatory course.⁴⁵

The committee understood the importance of Christian education on all levels. The recommendations were forward looking and would have had a significant impact on the synod's ministerial education system. The first recommendation was adopted unanimously. However, recognizing the large synodical debt still plaguing the synod the floor committee appointed to consider the Moussa Report offered more modest recommendations. Nevertheless, Northwestern Lutheran Academy was established in Mobridge, South Dakota, as a result of this committee's work.⁴⁶

Up through the 1920s the need for pastors was greater than the numbers being graduated from the seminary. This was true of most other church bodies as well. In fact, according to one historian, in the mission expansion of the 1920s "only the Missouri Synod of all the major synods seemed to have an adequate supply (of pastors) thanks to its effective recruiting institutions, the parochial and preparatory schools."⁴⁷

Synodical actions from 1919 through 1929 showed a strong commitment to ministerial education tempered by a concern for fiscal responsibility, but not everyone was satisfied with the way pastors (and

⁴³ 1919 *Proceedings*, p. 106-109.

⁴⁴ Moussa's father, Ibrahim (Abraham) was an Arab born in the Middle East. He was cared for by a German welfare agency in Palestine and went to Germany for pastoral training. St. Chrischona sent him to the Michigan Synod. See Koehler, *op. cit.* p. 177, 180, 192. Abraham's son, Hans (1883-1927), was an exceptional linguist (he had knowledge of some 14 languages) and one of the most brilliant minds our synod has ever produced. President William H. Harper of the University of Chicago, under whom Moussa studied for a year, expressed the hope that he might some day be his successor at Chicago. Moussa's heart, however, was in the parish ministry. See F.R. Webber, *A History of Preaching in Britain and America* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1957), vol. 3, p. 589-592.

⁴⁵ 1927 *Proceedings*, p. 28. The whole report with explanatory remarks is printed p. 26-32

⁴⁶ 1927 *Proceedings*, p. 32

⁴⁷ *The Lutherans in North America*, p. 436.

teachers for that matter) were being trained in our synod. Most of the criticism was constructive. Some of the criticism was not. Pastor William Beitz leveled some very serious charges in his paper “God’s Message to Us in Galatians: The Just Will Live by Faith.” Beitz criticized the catechetical methods taught in our synod, the teaching of dogmatics, and the way the seminary taught its students to bring people to repentance.⁴⁸ Enough others agreed with him that there was something seriously wrong in our synod that a fellowship developed and the Protes’tant Conference was formed.⁴⁹ The Protes’tant Controversy had a profound impact on our synod and ministerial education. One of the unfortunate consequences was that the seminary faculty ceased publishing books for some four decades and limited theological writings to conference and convention essays and articles in the *Quarterly*.

Meanwhile, the seminary had outgrown its home in Wauwatosa. The seminary grounds were too small. The seminary building was bulging at the seams and the State Industrial Commission would not permit the synod to remodel or enlarge it. The basic construction of the building evidently did not meet the standards of the day.⁵⁰ By 1919 it was obvious that something would have to be done. A committee of seven was appointed to make recommendations to the next synod convention. In 1921 delegates approved the committee’s recommendations to build new facilities on a new campus. By 1923 the Van Dyke property in Wauwatosa⁵¹ (later to be sold) had been selected as the new site for the seminary and a massive information and fund-raising campaign began. The building committee was charged with raising the necessary money for the new seminary and to raise money to pay off the synod debt at the same time. The committee produced brochures for distribution to every family in the synod detailing the inadequacy of the old Wauwatosa seminary property and providing information on the proposed new campus. For the next several years the committee wrote article after article for the *Northwestern Lutheran* and the *Gemeindeblatt* to keep the members of the synod posted on the progress of the project and to encourage participation in the on-going special offering to fund the seminary and pay off the synod debt.⁵² It would not be an exaggeration to say that the seminary in Mequon would not have been built if it had not been for the faithful efforts of the building committee in repeatedly bringing the project before the eyes of the members of the synod and fervently soliciting their prayers and offerings.

By the day of dedication the seminary building project was paid in full. The committee continued to work on the synodical debt for four more years and came within \$35,000 of paying off the “old” synodical debt assigned to it.⁵³ Nevertheless by August 1929 the “new” synodical debt had risen to nearly \$700,000. The years 1919-1929 had seen the rapid expansion of home missions. Building projects at East Fork and the various ministerial education schools, chapels for our mission in Poland, an eighth year added to the educational program in Watertown and a sixth to the program in New Ulm, and a new campus ministry in Madison meant increased expenditures. Contributions did not keep up with synodical expansion. From a perspective of seventy-five years one could understand the difficulties for the synod’s congregations as the synod’s budget increased from \$532,000 in 1919 to \$1,100,000 in 1929.⁵⁴ These financial problems were intensified when, only two months after the dedication of the seminary, the country entered what became known as the Great Depression with the horrible stock market crash on “Black Monday,” October 28, 1929.

⁴⁸ William Beitz, “God’s Message to Us in Galatians: The Just Shall Live by Faith,” printed and distributed by the Protes’tant Conference, 1928, p. 11-12. This paper was originally presented to the Wisconsin River-Chippewa Valley Conference meeting in Schofield, Wisconsin, in the fall of 1926. It was subsequently delivered in other venues and then printed by the Protes’tant Conference in 1928 together with the seminary’s *Gutachten* and an analysis of the *Gutachten* by Pastor Paul Hensel.

⁴⁹ The causes of the controversy are complex. See Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p. 154-163.; Mark Jeske, “A Half Century of Faith-Life: An analysis of the Circumstances Surrounding the Formation of the Protes’tant Conference” (WLS Library, EF 373); and Peter Prange, “Pastor E. Arnold Sitz and the Protes’tants: Witnessing to the Wauwatosa Gospel” (WLS Library EF 2712).

⁵⁰ Martin Westerhaus, “The Seminary’s Move to Mequon,” *WELS Hist. Inst. Journal*, vol. 6, #2, p. 16-17.

⁵¹ The Van Dyke property was purchased for \$40,000. The synod later sold it for \$107,000 – perhaps the best financial transaction the synod has ever made. The profit from the sale of this property helped finance the seminary building project in Mequon.

⁵² For more detail see Westerhaus, *op. cit.*, and Loren L. Lindemann, “The Building of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary,” (WLS Library EF 2625).

⁵³ See Lindemann, *op. cit.*, appendix – “The Collection” and “The Money Situation” for a detailed accounting of the special offering.

⁵⁴ Westerhaus, *op. cit.*, p. 30-31.

At least one writer in the 1930s, however, would not allow God's people to make excuses for the synod's indebtedness. Prof. John Meyer, writing a bulletin for the so-called "Michigan Plan,"⁵⁵ offered this admonition:

Until very recently there was always a shortage of men for our work. Why? Because many people withheld their sons (from church work) because there was more material success luring them to other professions.

What did God do? When we withheld our sons from His service, He sent us the (First) World War and we had to let our sons go to the shambles of foreign battlefields! God showed us that He can – very painfully, too – take our sons, if we refuse to give them to him willingly. –After the war we gradually got more men.

Yet, although our country, our Christians with the rest, was practically wallowing in money, the contributions for missions were far from keeping step with the general prosperity. We withheld our money from God! He then sent us the Great Depression and many lost practically all that they had. God can get at our money! – if we withhold it from Him, -- get it so that it hurts, while we might have enjoyed the pleasure of giving it for His saving cause!⁵⁶

The years of the Great Depression produced enormous challenges to the synod in regard to ministerial education. For the first time in our synod's history the majority of the seminary's graduates were not assigned. Expansion of the synodical program ground to a halt. At the height of the depression in 1933 "between thirteen and fourteen million able bodied men,"⁵⁷ fully one third of the American labor force was out of work. Between 1930 and 1935 approximately 750,000 farms were lost through bankruptcy or sheriff's auctions.⁵⁸ Although the Wisconsin Synod congregations, mainly located in small towns and rural areas in the upper Midwest, were not as deeply affected as perhaps congregations located in other areas of the country, they nevertheless felt the pinch. The salaries of mission workers and professors were reduced and sometimes not paid for a month or two, but missions and ministerial education schools remained open. Professors and students continued to be fed through donations of produce from area farmers.

The impact of the financial crisis caused Pres. Bergemann and the praesidium of the synod in 1933 to ask Prof. August Zich of the seminary to deliver an essay at the synod convention on defeatism in the church. There was good reason for such an essay. The Great Depression had a devastating effect on both the individual and the synod. Perhaps the worst result of the hard times was the spirit of hopelessness or defeatism that entered into the hearts of so many. Zich writes,

First, then, let us admit that this harmful and strange attitude in the heart of the Christian has attacked the church and its workers in diverse ways and on many fronts. It needs no demonstration to show how this malady has permeated councils, and has influenced decisions, the subsequent actions of church leaders and workers, to whom the Lord has committed His labor in the kingdom of God. Our straitened finances, our restricted activities on mission fields, the timorous proposals for further cutting short and crippling the work of our higher schools and seminaries,⁵⁹ tell the tale of defeatism amongst us plainly enough.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ The "Michigan Plan" was begun by pastors in the Detroit circuit of the Southeastern Conference of the Michigan District to inform congregations about the work and budget of the synod. It involved the regular publication of bulletins distributed to congregations. In 1933 newly-elected synod president, John W.O. Brenner, hearing of the plan authorized the publications of the bulletins for every congregation that requested them.

⁵⁶ Quoted in "The Seminary and World Mission" by Edgar H. Hoenecke, presented at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1988 (WLS EF 1421), p. 12-13.

⁵⁷ T.H. Watkins, *The Great Depression: America in the 1930s*. (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1993), p. 115.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁵⁹ DMLC in New Ulm was often referred to as our teacher seminary in those days.

Zich noted that defeatism was basically weak faith or lack of faith which led to all kinds of other problems for God's people.

This weakening from within is accomplished by introducing doubt in the power of our weapons, the word of the Spirit, thus hindering the aggressive fighting by the church. Then follows the introduction of errors in doctrine and the stealing of our faith. The process is simple. Beginning at our schools, the broad and solid founding in the saving knowledge given to our children is gradually abandoned. Then our higher schools cannot be supplied with pupils well grounded in the faith. These colleges and seminaries of ours cannot then give the proper training to the future leaders of the church, its pastors, teachers, professors; as we observe in the inadequate training of the sectarian preachers. This lack of well trained men will make itself felt in all the work of the church. The present thoughtless complaint of overproduction will not then be heard, for we may then have an oversupply of undertrained men.⁶¹

Zich also understood the remedy for defeatism in the church. If defeatism is a lack of faith, then the cure is the strengthening of faith. If people are fearful of the future, then they need to be reminded of how God fulfilled his promises and demonstrated his power in the past. The answer to the problems plaguing the church lay in God's word and in his powerful gospel.

If we are to be healed from the prevalent weariness of spirit, that has gripped so many of us during these latter days of sore trials, we must submit to the wise ministrations of our great Healer Jesus the Christ. From the rich storehouse of His word He will gladly supply all that we need for our cure."⁶²

What is the remedy? It is the Word of God. "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Hebrews 4:12. It is the "sword of the Spirit," Eph. 6:17. We need to look to it that our "feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," v. 15. We need to understand more fully what St. Paul meant, when he so confidently asserts: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Rom 1:16. In short we need a more thorough appreciation of the gospel.⁶³

As the depression dragged on many rolled up their sleeves to do what was necessary to keep the synod and its system of pastoral education afloat. But the commitment of others to the purpose and program of the synod seemed to lag. The report of the synod's president to the synod in convention in 1937 complained,

Every congregation was left perfectly free as to the choice of a plan. And let us not say that this was not the right time for such an undertaking. This assertion is refuted by the gratifying success which they had who went to work wholeheartedly. No, we failed only because there was a lack of brotherly cooperation! What lay behind the lack in individual cases only God can know. But He does know; and it will be well for us to remember this when we ask ourselves the searching question why we have not reached our goal. – Everyone knows that our synod suffered hurt

⁶⁰ August Zich, "Defeatism in the Church," (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1933), p. 3. After the essay was read, the convention authorized its publication in pamphlet form for general distribution.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 17

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 18-19.

through this failure of achievement! Let us from our heart ask the gracious Lord to sustain the faith and zeal of those who labored with us so joyfully and hopefully only to be so sorely disappointed and make them strong to continue to labor and to battle for his cause undismayed.

⁶⁴

Today we might wonder why the synod did not close missions⁶⁵ and schools when there were such dire financial conditions in our nation and church body and when there was such an apparent overproduction of pastors. Were all these ministerial education schools really necessary? Or were they an unneeded luxury? Our forefathers seemed to recognize that a new day would eventually dawn. They were not going to dismantle a system that would be essential for supplying pastors of the quantity and quality that future expansion would require.⁶⁶ When better times arrived the synod had everything in place to take advantage of the new opportunities.

1945-1995

Faithful and continued efforts to reduce the synodical debt eventually eliminated the debt. The 1945 “Happy Convention” of the synod heard the news that the synod was now in the black. As post-war prosperity returned to the United States and our synod’s world mission program got off the ground and home missions greatly expanded, there was a renewed financial commitment to provide the synod’s ministerial education schools with the facilities necessary to provide an increasing number of pastors and teachers. Lack of construction on synodical campuses since 1929, the mission expansion of the synod, and the large numbers of the baby boom generation beginning to move into the educational system of the synod necessitated a massive building program in the 1950s⁶⁷ and 1960s. There was an increasing emphasis placed on recruitment for the ministry.⁶⁸ At the same time it was evident that the synod understood the importance of pastoral education for the future of a church body as Bible institutes and seminaries were established on world mission fields for the raising up of indigenous clergy and theological leaders.

The break with the Missouri Synod in 1961 did not mean the end of the Wisconsin Synod as some within and without the synod predicted. Rather the break ushered in an unparalleled expansion of home⁶⁹ and world missions,⁷⁰ elementary schools,⁷¹ area Lutheran high schools,⁷² and the number of students studying for

⁶⁴ 1937 *Proceedings*, p. 13.

⁶⁵ In the heart of the depression, 1936, the synod in convention resolved to participate in the Synodical Conference’s proposed mission to Nigeria. In 1939 the synod authorized the sending of a general missionary to Colorado and one to Arizona to develop mission congregations (1939 *Proceedings*, p. 12, 20). As the synod continued to struggle to pay off its debt and as it faced the financial uncertainties caused by WWII, its home mission program expanded. In the years 1939-1943 forty-four new missions were started (1943 *Proceedings*, p. 16). In the next biennium forty-four more missions were begun (1945 *Proceedings*, p. 24), for a total of eighty-eight from 1939-1945, an average of more than one per month!

⁶⁶ In the fall of 1933 a sophomore in the prep department of Northwestern asked his father, the newly elected president of the synod, whether in the light of the apparent overproduction of pastors it might not be wiser for him to study for something other than the pastoral ministry. His father predicted that by time he was graduated from the seminary our synod would have far more vacancies than candidates to fill them. Although that prediction missed the mark (in 1943 only one seminary graduate received a call on the normal call day), within a short time the prediction came true.

⁶⁷ The centennial of the synod saw the building of a dormitory at DMLC and a classroom administration building at MLS. A “Committee of Five” was authorized in 1951 to examine the needs of the educational institutions (1951 *Proceedings*, p. 18-19). The committee (now called the Institutional Survey Committee) reported back to the 1953 convention. Its recommendations for capital projects were adopted (1953 *Proceedings*, p. 82-86).

⁶⁸ 1957 *Proceedings*, p. 85.

⁶⁹ In 1961 our synod had congregations in 16 states. By 1979 we had congregations in 45 states, two provinces of Canada, and Antigua.

⁷⁰ In 1961 we were supporting missionaries among the Apaches and in Zambia and Japan. By 1979 we had entered eight more world fields.

⁷¹ In 1961 there were 228 Lutheran elementary schools, 24,308 students, 295 male teachers and 505 female teachers (WELS Statistical Report for 1961, p. 69). In 1981 there were 371 Lutheran elementary schools, 30,590 students, 586 male teachers and 935 female teachers (WELS Statistical Report for 1981, p. 3).

the ministry in our synod's ministerial education schools. Synodical programs like "*Missio Dei*"⁷³ and "Called to Serve"⁷⁴ were successful in raising funds for expansion of the synod's campuses and focusing attention on the need for more pastors and teachers. These programs required much time and effort but were necessary if the synod was going to take advantage of the many opportunities the Lord of the church was presenting.

The experience of the Missouri Synod also demonstrated how doctrinal problems in ministerial education schools could have adverse effects on a church body. Wisconsin Synod leaders, pastors, and laymen seemed to be committed not only to producing the quantity of pastors needed but also the quality. Although teacher shortages and teacher education tended to dominate synodical discussions in the decade of the 1960s, pastoral education and recruitment for the pastoral ministry were not ignored. A number of synodical committees and boards looked at virtually every aspect of ministerial education.⁷⁵

During the 125th anniversary of the synod in 1975, Pres. Naumann reminded the members of the synod again of the marvelous blessing God had given them in our ministerial education system.

One fact I dare not fail to mention. It has been called to our synod's attention in other years, but the recent experience of other church bodies ought to teach us how greatly we are indebted to our gracious God for giving us and for preserving at our training schools faculties and staffs of workers who are of one mind and of one spirit, closely united in one faith and one confession, so that there are no factions or divisions at our schools. No one in our midst should be so bold as to say "it cannot happen here." Because it surely could happen in our midst that other theologies would be espoused beside the one that we have been taught from God's clear and inerrant Word.⁷⁶

The boom times of the decades following WWII came to an end in the mid to late 1970s.⁷⁷ The synod began to have problems meeting a budget that had increased dramatically because of rapid mission expansion and expansion on our synodical campuses. Runaway inflation in the national economy exacerbated the financial difficulties. As parachurch organizations and local projects grew, a synodical committee was appointed to study kingdom balance, a balance not only between the divisions of the synod but especially between the synodical program and other organizations supported by our congregations.⁷⁸ In 1979 it was reported that the pre-budget subscription (congregational mission offerings) would have to increase by 35% in 1980 to balance the budget. Instead of making dramatic reductions the synod embarked on a six-year program to balance the budget. Pres. Mischke encouraged the convention,

We dare not take this assignment lightly. There may be those who say that this is not realistic. But do we really have an alternative, one with which we can stand before our gracious God who again and again opens the windows of heaven and showers us with his blessings? Not really!

⁷² In 1961 there were seven area Lutheran high schools. By the end of 1979 there were eighteen.

⁷³ This offering for building projects was authorized in 1965 with a goal of \$4,000,000. Commitment totals reached \$5,500,000 (1967 *BoRaM*, p. 2270233).

⁷⁴ This was a special budgetary offering authorized by the Conference of Presidents for fall 1968 (1968 *Report to the Nine Districts*, p. 106-108).

⁷⁵ "Upgrading Committee" (1963 *Proceedings*, p. 132-137); "Committee on Pastor/Teacher Recruitment" (1965 *BoRaM*, p. 25-27, 1965 *Proceedings*, p. 106-108); "Committee on Teacher Training Facilities" [also called the "Blue Ribbon Committee"] (1965 *Proceedings*, p. 109-131); Advisory Committee on Education [ACE > CHE > BWT > BME] "A Statement on the Role of Secondary Education in the Training of our Future Pastors and Teachers" (1969 *Proceedings*, p. 77-82). In the fall of 1963 a junior college for teacher training was opened by the synod in Milwaukee to help with the teacher shortage. It graduated its last class in the spring of 1970 after having admirably succeeded in its mission.

⁷⁶ 1975 *Proceedings*, p. 18-19. Pres. Naumann wrote these words about a little more than a year after the Missouri Synod experienced the Seminex walkout at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The *Grace 125* offering benefited two of our ministerial education schools. The \$2.8 million goal was exceeded by about 25% (*Ibid.*, p. 19).

⁷⁷ In 1977 each division of synod was asked to reduce its budget by 3.7% (1977 *Proceedings*, p. 20).

⁷⁸ 1977 *Proceedings*, p. 27-28, 44-45.

And let's not forget that we have motivation for our task of the highest order, the love of a merciful God who thought enough of us to give up His Best and Dearest for us. May that love constrain us mightily!⁷⁹

The 1980s saw more than one special synodical offering gathered to alleviate budget difficulties and to fund capital programs. The massive "Reaching Out" offering⁸⁰ raised some concerns over methodology but brought much needed help for capital projects in home and world missions and on the ministerial education campuses. The building in which we are sitting is a result of that offering. The offering also produced the Education Development Endowment Fund which continues to benefit the ministerial education schools to this day.

Increased enrollment at the New Ulm campus and concerns about synodical finances resulted in the purchase of the former Campion campus in Prairie du Chien and the amalgamation of Martin Luther Academy with Northwestern Lutheran Academy (Mobridge, SD) on the Prairie du Chien campus in 1979.⁸¹ Soon the large enrollments at our ministerial education schools combined with budget difficulties resulted in a failure to place all DMLC graduates or seminary graduates on the regularly scheduled call days for several years. Fortunately the Conference of Presidents was able each year to place each seminary graduate usually by the beginning of the next school year. Nevertheless, for the first time since the Great Depression it appeared that the synod was producing more pastoral graduates than circumstances warranted. This perception caused enrollments to drop at our ministerial education schools⁸² and unfortunately resulted in some of the smallest classes to enroll at the seminary since the early 1960s.⁸³ This year's senior class at WLS numbering fifty-one represents a significant increase over the thirty-seven in last year's senior class. It should be noted that this increase comes ten years after the Conference of Presidents once again was able to place all of the graduates on call day.

The period 1978-1995 was a period of upheaval in ministerial education resulting in the consolidation of the synod's schools. The number of ministerial education schools was reduced from seven to four and the number of synodical campuses from five to four. The synod wrestled with matters of economy and the future needs for pastors and teachers, recruitment, facilities, curriculum, the best locations for our schools, etc., during this period of time.⁸⁴ The decisions were controversial. A minority report actually signed by the majority of the members of the floor committee in the special synod convention of 1978 urged the synod to reject the purchase of the Campion campus and urged the construction of necessary buildings for MLA on a piece of property that

⁷⁹ 1979 *Proceedings*, p. 20.

⁸⁰ The 1981 synod convention authorized this offering with a goal of gathering \$10,000,000. The offering was to be divided according to the following percentages: 50% for the Educational Development Fund, 40% for the Church Extension Fund, and 10% for the World Mission Building Fund (see 1981 *Proceedings*, p. 127-129, 138). The offering exceeded all expectations. In 1987 it was reported that a total of \$21,141,046 had been gathered (1987 *BoRaM*, p. 196).

⁸¹ The purchase of the property in Prairie du Chien was authorized by a special synod convention in 1978. MLA was to be moved to Prairie du Chien immediately with NPS to move to that campus when the population pressures on the Watertown campus would make the move necessary. Those population pressures never materialized and NPS remained in Watertown. The 1979 convention approved the closing of the Mobridge campus and the combining of NLA with MLA that very fall.

⁸² From school year 1979-80 to 1989-90 only enrollment at WLS increased (from 168-190). DMLC went from 835 students to 417. NWC went from 241 to 205. NPS went from 288 to 177. MLS went from 342 to 282 and MLPS went from 362 to 188.

⁸³ The junior class which enrolled in the fall of 1991 numbered only 31 students. That was the smallest class to enter the seminary since the fall of 1961. That fall 26 juniors enrolled at the seminary (reported in *WLS Catalog*, 1962-63, p. 7-8).

⁸⁴ See "Supplementary Report on Worker Training Facilities with Special Attention to the Needs of the Preparatory Schools," (1977 *Proceedings*, p. 49-60, 68-69); "Supplementary Report RE: Synodical Academies," (1978 *Report to the Ten Districts* p. 11-48); "Report of the Commission on Higher Education," (1982 *Report to the Ten Districts*, p. 1-6); "Report of the Commission on Higher Education, 1983 *BoRaM*, p. 1-15); "Report of the Board for Worker Training, (1986 *Report to the Twelve Districts*, p. 1-9); "Progress Report of the Preparatory Study Commission," 1987 *BoRaM*, p. 12-13); "Preparatory School Study Commission Report" (1989 *BoRaM* p. 13-34, 1989 *Proceedings* p. 72-73); "Report of the Divisional Board for Worker Training," (1991 *BoRaM*, p. 1-9; 1992 *Proceedings* p. 74-76); "Feasibility Study Committee Report," (1992 *Report to the Twelve Districts*, p. 28-57); "Report of the Feasibility Study Committee," (1993 *BoRaM*, p. 34-143; Various Memorials, 1993 *BoRaM*, p. 438-464).

had been purchased for that purpose some distance from the main campus in New Ulm.⁸⁵ The vote in 1993 to amalgamate Northwestern and DMLC on the New Ulm campus and NPS and MLPS on the Watertown campus was very close.⁸⁶ A future historian will have to answer the question whether the decisions from 1978 to 1993 saved our synod's ministerial education system or marked the beginning of its demise.

Since the 1960s the seminary has received a number of requests for more practical training of pastors. In 1961 the synod in convention requested that the seminary make a vicar year mandatory for every seminarian. The incoming junior class in fall of 1963 became the first class to be required to vicar.⁸⁷ Before this time the vicar year was voluntary with students taking a year off from the seminary studies to help busy pastors in the field. Self-studies in 1978, 1993, and 2003 looked at the entire program of the seminary and sought comments and suggestion from the synodical constituency. In school year 1978-79 the education department strengthened its offerings by adding a course on the principles of Christian education to the junior year and a few years later requiring middlers to practice teach in area Lutheran elementary schools rather than simply to teach their classmates. Additional emphasis on evangelism training began with the arrival of Prof. David Valleskey in 1984. Prof. Alan Siggelkow was called in 1991 to expand the training given to students in pastoral counseling. The worship department is currently revising the homiletics courses to improve the practical training of future pastors. In January of 1997 a program of early field training for juniors and middlers was inaugurated. Students are assigned to area congregations first to observe and then to practice several aspects of the pastoral ministry as well as to gain general impressions of congregational and pastoral life. Since money management skills are so important today, the seminary holds a financial seminar for each of the three classes on campus every year. Students are excused from their regular classes on that day. The seminary recently established a two-week "winterim" following Christmas break. The winterim allows students the opportunity to take courses in specific areas of interest or to receive hands-on experience in various aspects of the ministry including cross-cultural work off campus. The seminary continues to make every effort to ensure that graduates have the skills necessary for the parish ministry today. However, the expansion of practical courses cannot go on indefinitely without harming the core curriculum. Future additions to practical training will either have to become part of continuing education for pastors or we will have to add another year to the seminary program.

Over the years concerns for the continuing education of pastors resulted in the establishment of an annual pastors institute in 1952⁸⁸ and the annual summer quarter in 1972.⁸⁹ The seminary program of supplemental studies currently offers the following degrees: STM, MAR, MPT.

For many decades the financial support of the seminary and seminarians by the synod was exceptional. For the school year 1929-1930 tuition and room were free to seminarians. The only direct payment by students was \$80.00 for board.⁹⁰ Even as recently as school year 1961-1962 there was no tuition charge for seminarians. The seminary catalog stated, "Since it is understood that young men who enter the Seminary offer themselves for the sole service of the Church, no tuition is charged. No charges are made for the use of rooms. . . However, a sum of \$275.00 per annum is charged for board.—In addition a fee of \$5.00 is required for incidental expenses."⁹¹ Seminarians were charged an educational fee (tuition) of \$100.00 for the first time in school year 1962-63. There was a \$300.00 charge for board, no charge for room, and the incidental fee of \$5.00 was dropped.⁹² Twenty-five years ago student costs were still quite reasonable—tuition - \$690.00, board - \$600.00, room - \$180.00, incidental fee - \$10.00, parking fee - \$10.00, for a total of \$1,490.00 per year.⁹³ A student

⁸⁵ 1978 *Proceedings*, p. 35-37. The resolutions proposed in the minority report were defeated by a vote of 61 for and 220 against.

⁸⁶ The vote was 195 for and 176 against (1993 *Proceedings*, p. 68).

⁸⁷ *WLS Catalog*, 1963-64, p. 17.

⁸⁸ See seminary report in 1953 *Proceedings*, p. 65.

⁸⁹ 1971 *Proceedings*, p. 77. *WLS Catalog* 1973-74, p. 31-32. Summer Quarter has always been self supporting and receives no synodical subsidy.

⁹⁰ *Seminary Catalog*, 1929-30, p. 12.

⁹¹ *WLS Catalog*, 1961-62, p. 14.

⁹² *WLS Catalog*, 1962-63, p. 14.

⁹³ *WLS Catalog*, 1979-80, p. 14.

could usually earn enough through summer employment and a part-time job during the school year to pay for his education. In recent years student costs have risen dramatically.

From the early 1860s on our synod has been committed to maintaining a ministerial education system to provide a sufficient number of qualified candidates to man its pulpits and serve on its mission fields. There have been many ups and downs. Shortages of candidates for the holy ministry have been more common than apparent oversupplies. While maintaining the basic curricular structure there have been many additions to the seminary program to prepare graduates for the setting in which they will serve. Providing sufficient financial support for the ministerial education schools has often been a struggle, particularly in times of economic depressions and financial collapses. Although there have been many times when the synod's commitment to pastoral education seemed to be in doubt, in every case men came to the fore who recognized the importance of ministerial education and came to God's people over and over again to remind them of the importance of this work and the need for their prayers and offerings.

Commitment to Pastoral Education Today

It is more difficult to comment on commitment to pastoral education today than it is to look at the past with the benefit of historical perspective. There are many reasons to be thankful today and some things that cause concern.

The commitment in our synod to pastoral education can be seen particularly in the strong interest in continuing education for pastors. Attendance at summer quarter has greatly increased over the past few decades. Congregations seem to be more willing than they once were to allow their pastors time off to attend sessions at the seminary. There also appears to be an increasing willingness to include money in the congregational budget for continuing education. The seminary's summer quarter and its program of offering satellite summer quarter classes and pastors institutes has become more and more popular with pastors in the field. The establishment and acceptance by the synod of the seminary's Pastoral Studies Institute demonstrates a concern for pastoral education and the desire to have a system in place to facilitate the training of non-traditional students, particularly candidates from diverse ethnic groups.

The seminary has also been the recipient of many spontaneous and unsolicited gifts and bequests from individuals. Area congregations have quietly provided gifts to individual students and the married student food bank. Congregations have been very generous to our married students at Christmas time. Several congregations in Michigan for the last several years have been transporting a truckload of canned goods, paper goods, and cleaning supplies along with gifts of cash for the married student food bank. These are evidence that many in the synod are appreciative of their own pastors and are committed to the task of raising up a new generation to serve in the synod's congregations and mission fields.

Although every ministerial education school in the synod has shown a decrease in enrollment this year (with the exception of WLS), enrollments at these schools have continued to be rather solid in spite of rapidly rising costs to students and warnings that there may not be enough calls to go around for all of our graduates. That is a singular blessing of God!

Nevertheless there is also reason for concern about commitment to pastoral education. The American mindset is pragmatic and business oriented. Historians have noted that in the 1920s "as never before success was measured in financial terms and worshiped as the goal of life. The great god business was supreme in the land and all aspects of life, even religion and the church, came to be measured by his attributes."⁹⁴ Has this also become true of our synod? One sometimes hears people speak in terms of "marketing the gospel" or calling the gospel "the product we sell." One sometimes hears our ministerial education students referred to in a rather impersonal way as "products" produced by our schools and our synod's congregations as the consumers. At

⁹⁴ *The Lutherans in North America*, p. 416. Another historian speaks about the "frenzied effort of some churches to 'merchandise' religion with the huckstering methods of Madison Avenue" beginning in the 1920s and 1930s (Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America*, p. 346).

best this represents a sloppy use of language. At worst this might be evidence that a secular spirit has begun to enter our synod.

During the last few decades we have very appropriately emphasized the greater involvement of our laity in the work of the church. Has this proper emphasis, however, had the unintended result of leaving some with the impression that the theological training of our pastors and teachers is not really that important? Are all those years of study and all that educational expense really necessary?

It is no secret that educational costs are rising throughout our country, in fact, rising much faster than the rate of inflation. That shouldn't necessarily surprise us. The inflation rate is modified by productivity gains in the workplace. Educational institutions don't tend to have productivity gains. Therefore rising salaries, health insurance costs, and utilities expenses are not offset by greater productivity. These costs constitute the largest portion of the budget and are for the most part beyond the control of the individual schools. In the last couple of years as costs have risen the percentage of the budget of our schools derived from synod mission offerings has been shrinking (particularly at MLC). The ministerial education schools must either cut salaries and staff or raise tuition or find other sources of income. Since the schools do not have large endowments to help support them, calls have been terminated and tuition and fees have risen at a rate far in excess of the rate of inflation.⁹⁵ For some time the amount of financial assistance available to seminarians from seminary and synodical sources was keeping pace with the cost increases. For the last few years that has not been the case. In fact, if it were not for the generous financial assistance available from the Siebert Foundation and the Salem Lutheran Foundation many students might not be able to afford a seminary education.

Already in the 1860s our forefathers recognized the importance of having a school system that would provide young men with the training necessary to do seminary level work. Historians have noted the advantage that the Missouri Synod had for many decades because of its ministerial education system, including prep schools, colleges, and seminaries. Because the Missouri Synod has allowed that system to be dismantled Missouri's seminaries now have to provide remedial training for incoming students who consequently have limited ability to do thorough exegetical work on the basis of the original languages. There is little doubt that Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary will survive the current financial crisis in the synod. The seminary's ability to train the kind of pastors that confessional Lutherans have come to expect, however, will be compromised if that system is allowed to deteriorate or to be dismantled.

An advisory delegate informed a floor committee at the synod convention in 2003 that if financial conditions did not improve in the next biennium we would lose both of the prep schools and the teacher track at MLC. A more recent assessment has extended that prediction to six years. Our synod is in a crisis when for financial reasons calls are being terminated at our schools and on our mission fields and when we are withdrawing missionaries from world mission fields and have no plans to open home new home missions for the foreseeable future. And all these things are happening at a time when the economy is reasonably strong⁹⁶ and God is presenting us with unprecedented opportunities for the proclamation of the gospel. Are the people in our congregations really aware of the cutbacks in world and home missions and ministerial education? Do they understand that we are in the midst of the most serious financial crisis to hit our synod since the Great

⁹⁵ **Student Costs in 2004-05 at WLS**

General Registration Fee	\$ 410.00	
Tuition	5,310.00	
Room & Board (14 meal plan)	4,365.00	
Weekend meals (optional)	630.00	
Computer* & books (app.)	2,000.00	(*Required of incoming students 2004-2005)
General Dorm Fee	350.00	
Less average student aid from all sources	- \$ 4,570.00	
Total (with weekend meals)	\$ 8,495.00	
Without weekend meals	\$ 7,865.00	

⁹⁶ According to a recent report the unemployment rate now stands at 5.4% -- for the last several decades 5.4% would have been considered full employment.

Depression? How many pastors and other called workers really grasp the seriousness of the situation? Will this be the first generation in our synod's history to keep silent and not bring these challenges before God's people? Will this generation sit still and allow our synod to lose those things for which our fathers were willing to work so hard and to sacrifice so much? In times past our synod went to God's people tirelessly with the value and importance of ministerial education. Do we no longer value ministerial education enough to do the same today?

The Synod's Commitment to Pastoral Education in the Future

No one but the Lord of the Church knows the future. In many ways it is presumptuous to try to make predictions (see James 4:13-17, Ecclesiastes 8:7, 9:12, 10:14). One can, however, raise questions, express concerns and warnings, and offer hope.

America poses some real challenges for confessional Lutherans. The more American we become, the more we may have difficulty distinguishing between Americanism or American culture and Christianity. Americans are pragmatists. Americans tend to be oriented toward the practical rather than the theoretical.⁹⁷ Religion in America has historically downplayed the importance of doctrine and elevated the importance of religious experience. Many American seminaries therefore have limited the theoretical (sound exegesis based on the study of the Greek and Hebrew, dogmatics, historical theology) to concentrate on what is considered the practical (psychology, counseling, administrative and leadership skills, etc.). For the sake of growth doctrinal differences are downplayed or ignored. The scriptural doctrines of church fellowship, the role of man and woman, and even infant baptism (check how many questions on infant baptism and baptismal regeneration come to the WELS web site) are seen as hindering growth and preventing success. Will we remain committed to training confessional Lutheran pastors or succumb to the spirit of America that demands tolerance and disparages doctrinal integrity, that ignores false doctrine and false practice for the sake of numbers and outward success?

American pragmatism often emphasizes the "how to" at the expense of the "what," methods over the means of grace. Pragmatism suggests that if only we can discover the right way to do something, success will have to follow. Will confidence in methods replace confidence in the gospel? Or in reaction to this spirit will we go to the other extreme and disparage all practical training as if there is no need to work on improving communications skills, listening skills, management skills, leadership skills, and all the other practical skills so useful in the pastoral ministry today?

Americans tend to expect quick success. The emphasis in our society is on the ability to make rapid adjustments rather than to do long range planning. In times of financial constraints will our commitment to pastoral education fade as we succumb to the temptation of quick fixes and compromise so that we lose the ministerial education schools that are so important to the future and long-term health of our synod?

Americanism is built on the idea of progress. Americans generally have little sense of history and see no need for it because they believe in progress. What does the past have to teach us when we know so much more today than they did back then? Products are advertised as new and improved rather than tried and tested. It is true that we can see progress in technology, although one can also wonder whether every technological advancement has been an improvement. The problem, however, with applying the notion of progress to history is the faulty assumption based on evolution that things are going to get better and better. A study of history rather shows periods of advances and declines. American business must create dissatisfaction with the present so that people will want their new products. It is true that Christians will never be satisfied with their lives of sanctification and will strive with God's help to do better. But there is nothing particularly Christian about promoting dissatisfaction or keeping people in a state of turmoil to promote change with the idea that change is progress. Philipp Spener, the father of Lutheran Pietism, described the state of the church of his day in such horrible terms in his *Pia Desideria* that people began leaving the church. Spener was surprised by that. He should not have been. People read what he said and concluded that the church was past hope and that they

⁹⁷ See E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 2-3.

ought to leave it. If we keep harping on problems in our ministerial education system and synod without also pointing to all of God's blessings and all the positives which ought to be apparent, should it surprise us that people no longer value our ministerial education system or feel any loyalty to our synod and its program? When we criticize that criticism should be constructive rather than destructive.

When it comes to training confessional Lutheran pastors and teachers it is very difficult to make rapid adjustments in numbers. It takes eight to twelve years to recruit and train a young man for the pastoral ministry. Defeatist thinking and gloomy forecasts about the future need for pastors and teachers will eventually result in fewer students willing to train for the ministry. Do we understand that such forecasts may very well hinder our work eight to twelve years down the road?

The religion of Americanism is materialism. We are affected by our culture in so many ways that we often don't even recognize how materialistic we have become until we look at third world countries. Will we be willing to address this materialism in a forthright way?

We need to take action today to ensure a sufficient number of confessionally trained pastors for the future of our synod. We need to emphasize the value of Christian education in general and ministerial education in particular. We cannot expect that the members of our synod understand what it takes to train a pastor.⁹⁸ If our focus is primarily on cost, the pressing needs of the short term and the bottom line will lead to more and more cuts. This kind of American pragmatism and shortsightedness may hamstring any future expansion and lead to a training of future pastors and teachers that is more interested in externals than on doctrinal integrity, the ability to do sound exegesis, and understanding the proper distinction between the law and the gospel. We will want to articulate as clearly as possible the purpose and value of our curriculum. We cannot take for granted that people understand or appreciate the length of time devoted to the biblical languages, dogmatics or history. If we focus on value and stress the importance of the thorough training of pastors and concentrate on the long term, we are more likely to retain those things which Lutherans have always properly considered to be of primary importance in pastoral education and less likely to lose them.

We will want to hold up the high calling of the pastoral ministry to a new generation, a generation which has not always heard pastors referred to in glowing terms. If we have some pastors who are lazy or inept then those who are entrusted with supervision will have to work with them to improve or counsel them to leave the ministry. However, a shotgun approach that implies that many if not most of those serving in the pastoral ministry have serious defects is not honest, helpful, or productive. We will want to give greater attention to the qualifications Scripture sets down for the ministry than those suggested by various business models.

We will want to be careful how we present projections for our future need of pastors and teachers. Historically our projections have not proven to be overly accurate. Talk of oversupply is self-defeating and a hindrance in encouraging young people to consider training for the ministry. Our Savior's words, "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few" and his encouragement to pray for workers (Matthew 9:37-38) are as valid today as they were 2,000 years ago. If God gives us an increase in the number of candidates for the holy ministry it is incumbent upon us to find ways to send them into his fields which are ripe for the harvest.

Financial support will continue to be important. We will want to do careful stewardship training of God's people. We may very well have to authorize some special synod-wide offerings to help us make ends meet in the short term. It is troubling when the first course of action today when it comes to financial difficulties seems to be cutbacks and raising tuition rather than going to God's people tirelessly with the message of the importance and value of ministerial education. In the future we will undoubtedly have to make more use of endowments for student assistance and even for budgetary purposes in our ministerial education schools. There are few in America today who attempt to operate the kind of system we have without sizeable endowments. In building endowment funds we will have to be careful not to foster unhealthy competition between the schools that results in a survival of the fittest mentality. We cannot allow the schools to become so

⁹⁸ John M. Palka, "The Impact of Societal and Educational Trends on Theological Education in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," *Concordia Journal*, July 2004. Palka quotes a study that appeared in *Theological Education* – "In a world where many voices compete for public attention, theological schools are seldom heard. Their work is poorly understood, *even in the churches and communities that are closest to them.*"

independent of direct synodical support that the tail wags the dog or that members of the synod no longer see these schools as their own schools providing an important service to them. At the same time we are seeking major gifts for these purposes we will not want to give the impression that the smaller gifts of God's people are not as important.

We will want to make sure that people realize that their synodical mission offerings also serve the purpose of providing them with pastor and teacher insurance. Their offerings help train those who will serve them when their congregations experience vacancies. Those who report the synod's income and expenditures will want to make their reporting system so transparent and easy to understand that the average person (not just accountants) can look at those reports and know exactly where the synod's money is coming from and exactly how it is being used.

We will want to thank God for all of the blessings he has showered on our synod, groups and organizations within the synod, and individual members. We never have any reason to apologize or feel ashamed of the blessings that God has showered on us, but we have every reason to thank him and use those blessings wisely. That also means setting priorities in our synod. We are doing more and more things, all of which are good and God pleasing, but we have to understand what is essential to the operation of a synod.⁹⁹ Ministerial education is vital to everything else we do. Mission work is central to the tasks God has assigned to the church. These finally have to be the priorities of the synod.

As we look to the future we can take comfort and confidence in the fact that our victorious Savior is at the right hand of God directing all things for the sake of his church (Eph 1:20-23). He has given his powerful word and sacraments to accomplish the work he has given us to do (Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15-16) and has promised that his powerful word and gospel will not return to him empty (Is 55:10-11, Rm 1:16). He tells us that he answers our prayers (Mt 7:7-8; Jn 14:13-14; Jas 5:16b). He encourages us to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord because our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Co 15:58).

To him alone be the glory.

⁹⁹ In 1974 total congregational giving for all purposes (local, parachurch organizations, synod, etc.) was \$42,686,361. Synod mission offerings were \$6,815,258 or 15.97% of the total. In 2002 total congregational giving was \$261,852,046. Synod mission offerings were \$18,468,488 or 7.05% of the total. The percentage of congregational offerings going to the synod has steadily decreased over the past 30 years.