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WLS Symposium
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**Pastor as Exegete
With a Foundation Laid at the College Level**

Learning the Biblical languages at the college level

On May 7, 2013, the students in the Hebrew elective at Martin Luther College read the following verse in Hebrew and discussed it:

וְרַבִּים מִיִּשְׁנֵי אֲדַמְת־עָפָר יִקְיֹצוּ אֱלֹה לְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם וְאֱלֹה לְחַרְפּוֹת לְדָרְאוֹן עוֹלָם:
(Daniel 12:2)

I asked the students what doctrinal truths from God were staring them in the face as they looked at these words, used as a proof passage in our Catechism. They rightly answered:

- There will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked (יִקְיֹצוּ אֱלֹה...וְאֱלֹה).
- Punishment in hell is eternal, just as life in heaven (חַיֵּי עוֹלָם...דָּרְאוֹן עוֹלָם).

We also considered some English translations of this verse (emphasis is mine):

ESV: And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

HCSB: Many of those who sleep in the dust of earth will awake, some to eternal life, and some to shame and eternal contempt.

NIV11: Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

We noted that the more literal translations (ESV and HCSB) could be open to misunderstanding, implying that some people will not awake on the last day. The NIV11, guided by the rest of Scripture, chose a less literal rendering so that the number of people would not be limited. We commented that a literal translation is not always the most accurate or best.

Why do I bring up this classroom snapshot from MLC?

As we are considering the training of pastors for exegesis, it is important to remember our pre-seminary training program that lays a foundation for exegesis, where students can cut their

teeth in this discipline. If you followed along with the Hebrew of Daniel 12:2 moments ago and someone asked how you could do it, I'm sure you would answer: "I went to a college that taught me Greek and Hebrew." A significant factor for any success we have had as a church body in training pastors to be exegetes is the fact that we have maintained throughout our history a pre-seminary program where students are trained in Greek and Hebrew.

Today it is my privilege to say a few words about our synod's pre-seminary training for exegesis as an MLC representative.

In WELS history, seminary and college go together

If we wanted to be pedantic, I suppose we could argue whose 150th anniversary we are celebrating this year—Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary or Northwestern College/MLC. When Edward Moldehnke started the school in his Watertown home in the 1863-64 school year, he wound up with one student, Albert Siegler. This man was ordained in 1868. So was the first year of training a seminary or a pre-seminary college? The bronze plaque on the "Gardner House" at 816 North Fourth Street in Watertown reads: "Northwestern College opened in this house September 1863, with one professor and three students. In September 1865, the institution moved to its present site at College and Western Avenues."¹

If you had asked people in those years, however, I'm sure they would have said that the school in Moldehnke's home was a seminary. The *Proceedings* of the 1864 convention state: "The opening of the college had to be postponed until the necessary buildings are constructed."² "Northwestern University" didn't officially open until September 14, 1865, when the *Kaffeemuehle* building was dedicated.³

The point is, however, that seminary and college went together from the very beginning. The resolutions that established the seminary included provision for a college. There never was any separate resolution for Northwestern to be established. In the critical debate about the location of our school at the 1863 convention, this was the final resolution (emphasis mine): "It was then moved that the location where the seminary and college be established be voted on by

¹ Elmer Carl Kiessling, *Centennial Memoir: Northwestern College Alumni Society 1879-1979* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1979), 116.

² *1864 Proceedings*, trans. Arnold O. Lehmann, in *WELS Historical Institute Journal* 17:2 (October 1999): 7.

³ Erwin Ernst Kowalke, *Centennial Story: Northwestern College, 1865-1965* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1965), 33.

ballot. The result was: Milwaukee 19; Watertown 45.”⁴ There was only one governing board for the college and the seminary until 1899, six years after the seminary moved to Wauwatosa.⁵ In WELS history, seminary and college have always gone together. We have never considered operating a seminary without operating a pre-seminary college as well.

What have we tried to accomplish at the pre-seminary level? How has the pre-seminary curriculum supported exegesis?

The biblical language curriculum at our pre-seminary college over the years

It seems incredible to me how much Latin and Greek was studied at Northwestern during its first hundred years. Northwestern truly was an education in the classics. During the 1874-1875 school year, students in the *Prima* class (= college seniors and juniors)⁶ had 8 periods in Latin per week and 7 periods in classical Greek.⁷ In 1921-1922 it was still 5 periods of Latin and 5 in classical Greek.⁸ This was on top of Latin and two years of Greek in preparatory school. All along there also were heavy requirements in German.⁹ Of course, advocates for this curriculum argued that it prepared pastors to be independent scholars who would be adept at handling language. This training would suit pastors well as they encountered God’s written revelation in the Bible and as they communicated God’s truth to others.¹⁰

The past century has seen a gradual decrease in Latin and German requirements, as illustrated in Appendix A. One could say that our pre-seminary program has shifted from a classical education to a liberal arts education with an emphasis on the Biblical languages.

⁴ *1863 Proceedings*, trans. Arnold O. Lehmann, in *WELS Historical Institute Journal* 17:1 (April 1999): 8.

⁵ Immanuel P. Frey, “Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary 1863-1963,” WLS Essay File.

⁶ Kowalke, *Centennial Story*, 173. “Until 1919 the combined preparatory and college course comprised seven years. . . . The senior college class was called the Ober Prima (the Upper First), the junior class was the Unter Prima (Lower First), the sophomore class was the Secunda. The third class was the Tertia . . . The third year of high school was Quarta, the second year was Quinta, and the first year was Sexta. But in 1919 an extra year was added at the top, and the complete Northwestern course from then on covered four years of high school and four years of college.”

⁷ *Catalogue of Northwestern University, 1874-1875*, 11-12.

⁸ *Catalog of Northwestern College, 1920-1921*, 23-24.

⁹ The first commencement exercises on July 2, 1872, began a longstanding tradition of having three formal orations, one in Latin, one in English, and one in German. Synodical conference trivia lovers will enjoy knowing that at the first Northwestern commencement, the Latin oration was delivered by Franz Pieper. Kowalke, *Centennial Story*, 73.

¹⁰ As examples see Kowalke, *Centennial Story*, 273-274, and Carleton Toppe, “The Place of Liberal Arts in the Northwestern College Curriculum,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 83:1 (Winter 1986): 55-56.

What is interesting to note, however, is that throughout all the years, Greek has been studied during all four years of college and Hebrew has been studied during the last two years. Always four years of Greek in one form or another, and always two years of Hebrew.

It is true that the nature of the Greek study has morphed significantly. In the heyday of NWC, there were 8 college semesters of classical Greek for all students. Two additional semesters of New Testament Greek were added on top as religion credits. Today there is decidedly less classical Greek. During the first 5 semesters, one group of students in each class studies classical Greek. The other group studies *koine* Greek. The last three semesters are New Testament exegetical courses, transferred to MLC from the seminary (John, Acts, 1 Corinthians). The debate continues about what is ideal.

But it is significant that in a day and age when there are pressures to add all sorts of other useful courses and at the same time to lower the total number of credits, MLC has steadily held to four full years of instruction in Greek. When the last major revision to the pre-seminary curriculum was undertaken in 1999-2000, it was suggested that Greek start during the sophomore year rather than the freshman year—to allow room in the curriculum for other subjects. This idea never gained traction with the MLC pastor track faculty. In the end, freshman elementary Greek gained a credit (from 4-5) with the understanding that more and more students are arriving at MLC without Latin and a strong linguistic background from high school, so even more time and energy is required to cover elementary Greek adequately.

I'm happy to say that Hebrew is the one language that has gained ground over the years. In the beginning Hebrew was a modest addendum to the classics for students planning on the seminary—two periods per week for four semesters. In 1904, J. P. Koehler complained mildly about the second class status of Hebrew and stated, “It ought in some way to be made possible to offer so much Hebrew that at the seminary it will be possible at once to begin with exegesis proper also in the Old Testament.”¹¹ According to Northwestern catalogs, Hebrew went from 2 credits to 3 credits per semester for the first time in the 1904-1905 school year.¹² Then with Paul E. Eickmann in 1971, the elementary Hebrew course went to 4 periods per week, as it has

¹¹ J. P. Koehler, “The Importance of the Historical Disciplines for the American Lutheran Church of the Present,” in *The Wauwatosa Theology, Volume 3*, ed. Curtis A. Jahn (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), 438. This article first appeared in *Theologische Quartalschrift*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1904). The English translation was prepared by Irwin J. Habeck and published in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (1975).

¹² *Catalogue of Northwestern University, 1903-1904*, 14.

remained to this day.¹³ While every other language was losing credits in the curriculum, Hebrew gained from a total of 8 required credits originally to 14 credits today.

In the 1999-2000 MLC curriculum revision, the idea was entertained that Hebrew start in the sophomore year, to allow three years of instruction in this marvelous language. This very attractive idea did not win the day, however. It would have necessitated three languages in the sophomore year for everyone—a situation that we knew had to be avoided.

In short, our Greek and Hebrew requirements, in regard to total number of college years, remain where they have always been. Throughout Northwestern's history and throughout the first 18 years of pre-seminary training at MLC, students have studied four years of Greek and two years of Hebrew. The reason for this is obvious. We want to equip our pastors to be exegetes who can study the Bible on the basis of the original languages.¹⁴

The current goals

In regard to the content of Pastor Goetzinger's paper, I have very little to say, because what he is advocating is exactly what MLC hopes to accomplish with its pre-seminary language courses. We try to guide students to look carefully at the original texts, using the available linguistic tools. We read individual texts in light of the larger context of the entire Scriptures.

I especially like Pastor Goetzinger's emphasis on *Zusammenhängendes Schriftstudium*. If there is one modest emphasis that I have attempted in Hebrew instruction at MLC, it is trying to open students' eyes to the possibility of reading larger quantities of Biblical Hebrew. We now have a "rapid reading" unit in the last semester of senior Hebrew, as well as a Summer Hebrew Institute. If "conversational biblical Hebrew" is to become a goal at MLC, as has become popular among some Hebrew teachers, it will take someone other than me to put it into place. For my part, I think a more important goal is guiding students to read more and more of the 1600 pages in our God-inspired Hebrew Old Testament.

In regard to Pastor Goetzinger's practical comments, I'm sure that we all have our own preferences. I, for one, never diagram Scripture texts, and I confess that I have never guided students to do it. I also like reading 8-10 different commentaries whenever I write a sermon, and

¹³ *Catalog of Northwestern College, 1970-1971*, 37.

¹⁴ Just recently someone shared with me the Hebrew exercise book of Arthur Tacke from 1911-1912. It is fascinating to see an artifact that brings to life the Hebrew training of a previous generation, and especially it is interesting to see the marvelous calligraphy of this student! See Appendix B.

I commonly find that I gain significant benefit from them. Good commentaries are among the most treasured books in my library. But these are differences on the surface. At the heart of the matter, we all share a common commitment to uncovering the message that God has inspired in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. We want to be guided totally by what the text of God's Word says.

Pastor Goetzinger opened up the topic of computers in Bible study. It may be of some interest for symposium participants to know that computer use has been a regular topic of discussion between the WLS faculty and the MLC pastor track faculty. At this point in time, there seems to be a universal consensus that it is best for MLC to introduce Greek and Hebrew without the use of computers. The thinking is that students should learn how to use the books first, and then later at the seminary they can take up computer Bible programs. Learn to walk without crutches, and then get the crutches later. I agree with Pastor Goetzinger's optimism, however, that this new tool could help the exegetical process for many pastors in their gospel ministries.

The blessings that come to our church body through our pre-seminary program

It is fair to say that most denominations operate three or four year denominational seminaries. WELS is certainly not unique in that regard. But how many denominations expect that their pastor candidates usually attend a denominationally run, pre-seminary college? Here is something uncommon and truly special. For four years at the college level we can deepen our pastor candidates in a Word-centered mindset focusing on Christ as the Savior of the world, and we can give them the tools they need to be serious theologians. Our seminary professors do not need to fritter away their time teaching elementary Greek and Hebrew, but can dive into exegesis from day one. Here is a great blessing from our God.¹⁵

Students of our synod's history know that the topic of a "practical seminary" has come up on numerous occasions. In simple terms, a practical seminary would allow students to bypass the pre-seminary college. Our Wauwatosa seminary actually ran a "practical course" from the time

¹⁵ For a fine articulation of this point, with discussion of how the pre-seminary program supports exegesis, see Joel D. Fredrich, "Our College Pastoral Training Curriculum: A Channel of Blessings from Our God," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 106:1 (Winter 2009): 34-48.

of its establishment in 1878 until 1897 when the synod voted to discontinue it.¹⁶ According to synod records, the issue resurfaced in 1903, 1907, 1909, 1911, 1955,¹⁷ and 1961.¹⁸ Every time, the discussion has come to the same conclusion. We want well-trained pastors. We don't want short-cuts in our pastor training. As a general rule, we want pastors to complete the program at our pre-seminary college.¹⁹

In the past few years, it has seemed to me that our pastor track enrollment at MLC is disturbingly low, given the number of WELS pastors who will be reaching retirement age in the next decade (See Appendix C and Appendix D). Our current enrollment of 154 is the lowest pre-seminary enrollment since 1959. Certainly there is a need to ask God to raise up pastors and a need for us to continue to recruit the brightest and best of God's gifts of young men for this noble work. It is interesting to note, however, that the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, numerically about six times larger than WELS, had only 178 pre-seminary students in all 10 of its Concordia universities last year.²⁰ If you talk with LCMS seminary professors, they envy our WELS system. We should be thankful that we have as many pastor candidates as we have, and that God has allowed us to maintain a dedicated ministerial college.

Our pre-seminary program has done much to foster Biblical exegesis among us for 150 years. It is my hope that our commitment to thorough pre-seminary training remains strong as long as WELS exists. What was self-evident to our forefathers in 1863 is still true: seminary and college go together.

¹⁶ *Continuing in His Word* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1951), 146; and John M. Brenner, "Commitment to Pastoral Education," 2004 WLS Symposium, 7.

¹⁷ *1955 Reports and Memorials*, 27.

¹⁸ *1961 Proceedings*, 80-84, 145-167. Especially useful are pages 155 and 164-167, where E. E. Kowalke gives information about the 1903-1911 discussion.

¹⁹ Perhaps the issue has now been laid to rest with the changes that have been made in the pre-seminary curriculum. Also, we now have the Seminary Certification Program, which generally allows older men who are college graduates to enter WLS after two years at MLC, where they receive a good foundation in Greek and Hebrew but are not required to study a non-Biblical language.

²⁰ <http://blogs.lcms.org/2012/cus-enrollment-climbs-to-record-29597-students>

Appendix A
WELS Pre-seminary Language Curriculum over the Years
Years when significant changes were implemented
Total Latin/German credits per year are indicated

1933 (First time no Greek in high school)							
HS Fr	HS So	HS Jr	HS Sr	Col Jr	Col So	Col Jr	Col Sr
Lat	Lat	Lat	Lat	Lat 10	Lat 8	Lat 6	Lat 6
Ger	Ger	Ger	Ger	Ger 8	Ger 8	Ger 6	Ger 6
				Grk	Grk	Grk	Grk
						Heb	Heb

1937							
HS Fr	HS So	HS Jr	HS Sr	Col Fr	Col So	Col Jr	Col Sr
Lat	Lat	Lat	Lat	Lat 10	Lat 10		
Ger	Ger	Ger	Ger	Ger 10	Ger 8	Ger 8	Ger 8
				Grk	Grk	Grk	Grk
						Heb	Heb

1961 (157 total credits – prior to this, 211 credits were required)							
HS Fr	HS So	HS Jr	HS Sr	Col Fr	Col So	Col Jr	Col Sr
Lat	Lat	Lat	Lat	Lat 6			
		Ger	Ger	Ger 8	Ger 6	Ger 3	Ger 3
				Grk	Grk	Grk	Grk
						Heb	Heb

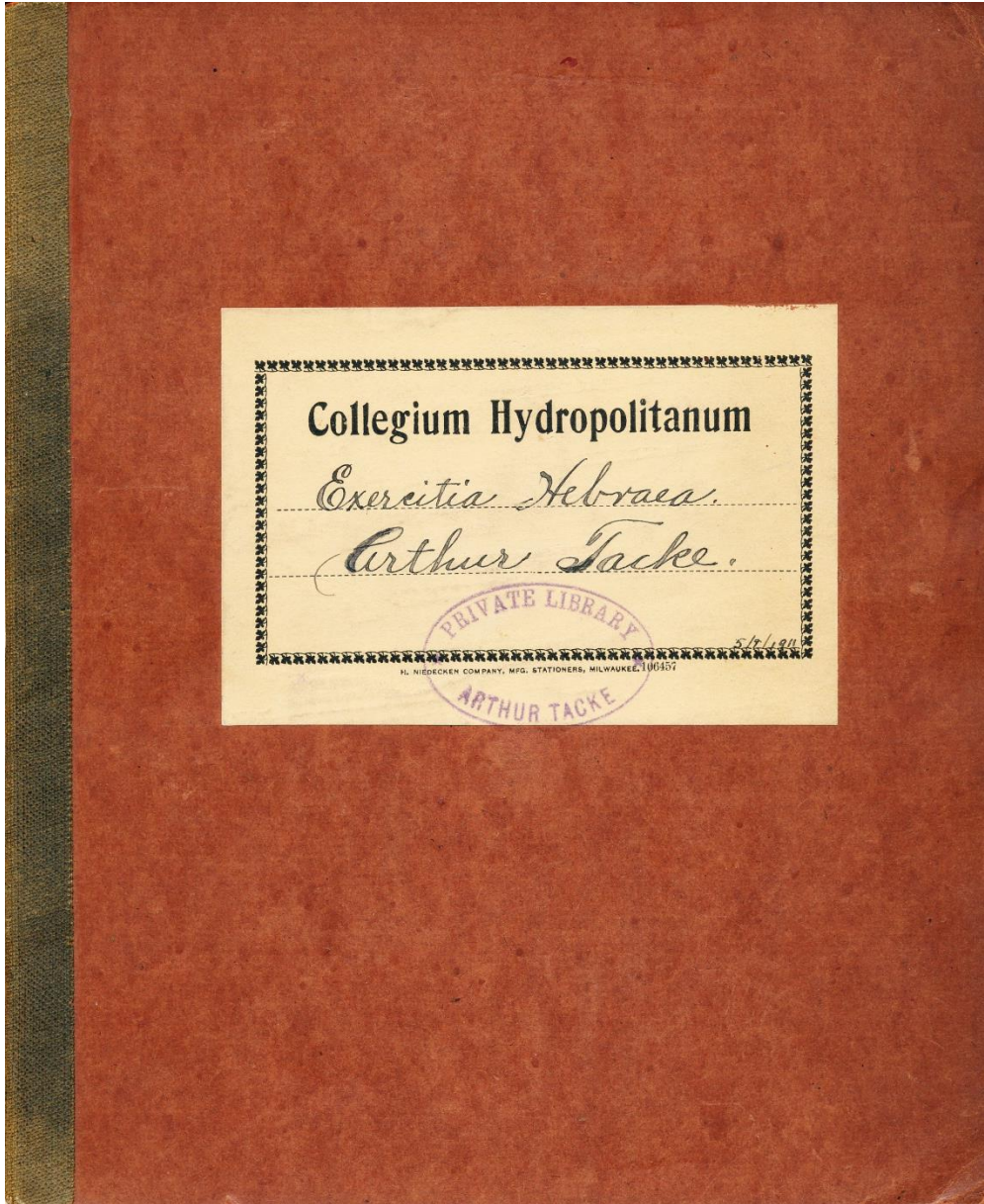
1971 (153 total credits)							
HS Fr	HS So	HS Jr	HS Sr	Col Fr	Col So	Col Jr	Col Sr
Lat	Lat	Lat	Lat	Lat 6			
		Ger	Ger	Ger 6	Ger 6		
				Grk	Grk	Grk	Grk
						Heb	Heb

1986 (134 total credits)							
HS Fr	HS So	HS Jr	HS Sr	Col Fr	Col So	Col Jr	Col Sr
Lat	Lat	Lat					
		Ger	Ger	Lat 9 or Ger 12			
				Grk	Grk	Grk	Grk
						Heb	Heb

2001 (133/134 total credits)							
HS Fr	HS So	HS Jr	HS Sr	Col Fr	Col So	Col Jr	Col Sr
		Lat / Ger / Spa ²¹		Lat 13/Ger12/Spa12			
				Grk	Grk	Grk	Grk
						Heb	Heb

²¹ This is the entrance requirement for MLC. Thankfully, Luther Preparatory School and Michigan Lutheran Seminary require more language instruction than this. At LPS and MLS all students take Latin during the freshman year. Then they continue with Latin for three more years, or take German or Spanish for three years. They can also take a second language.

Appendix B
Hebrew Exercises from 1911
“Collegium Hydropolitanum” = Watertown College = NWC²²



²² Here is a good reason why you should shred your college Hebrew papers. You never know whose hands they may fall into, and what use may be made of them a hundred years from now!

Den 9. Nov. 1911.

Stück 39, 13. Sätze 1-5.

אֲנִי אֶפְתָּח וְיִשְׁבַּח אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתָי
כִּי-תִזְכְּרוּ וְיִזְכְּרוּ אֲדָמָה
תִּפְתָּחוּ וְיִזְכְּרוּ אֲדָמָה אֲרָצָה אֲרָצָה
וְתִזְכְּרוּ לָכֵן תִּזְכְּרוּ וְתִזְכְּרוּ אֲדָמָה
כִּי-תִזְכְּרוּ וְתִזְכְּרוּ אֲדָמָה
וְתִזְכְּרוּ אֲדָמָה וְתִזְכְּרוּ אֲדָמָה
וְתִזְכְּרוּ אֲדָמָה וְתִזְכְּרוּ אֲדָמָה
וְתִזְכְּרוּ אֲדָמָה וְתִזְכְּרוּ אֲדָמָה

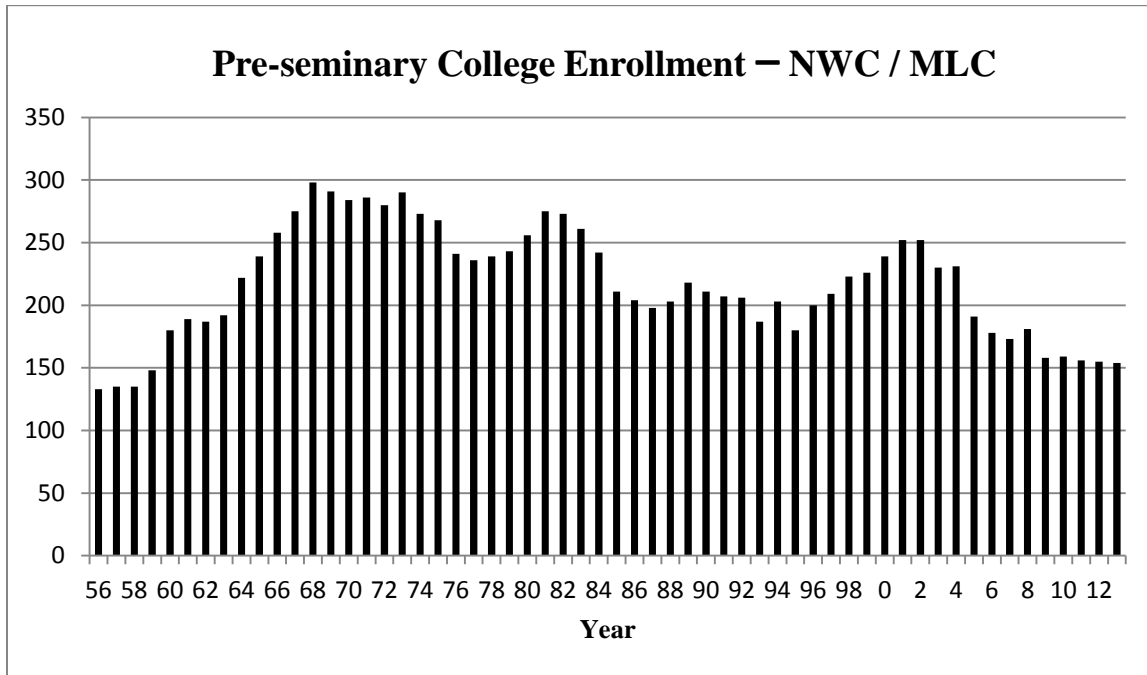
v.

Translation:

- 1) My soul will praise you.
- 2) What is man that you remember him and a son of man that you pay attention to him?
- 3) Pharaoh said, "I am not giving to you straw."
- 4) Gideon built an altar in Ephrath. Up to this day it is still there.
- 5) And Enoch walked about with God, and he was not, because he took him.²³

²³ The Hebrew professor in 1911-1912 was William F. Notz, the son of F. W. A. Notz, who had taught Hebrew previously. E. E. Kowalke began teaching Hebrew in January, 1914, and continued for 52 years until 1966. See Kowalke, *Centennial Story*, 152; and Toppe, *Holding the Course*, 16.

Appendix C
Pre-seminary College Enrollment – NWC / MLC



NWC Enrollment

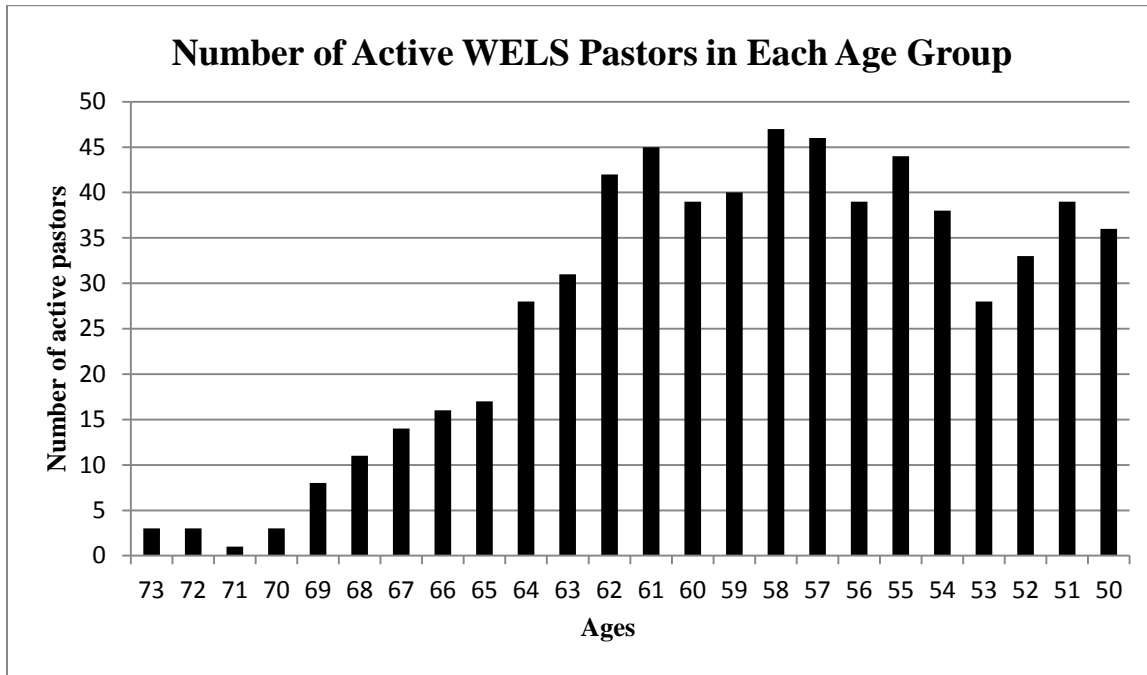
1956 – 133
1957 – 135
1958 – 135
1959 – 148
1960 – 180
1961 – 189
1962 – 187
1963 – 192
1964 – 222
1965 – 239
1966 – 258
1967 – 275
1968 – 298
1969 – 291
1970 – 284
1971 – 286
1972 – 280
1973 – 290
1974 – 273
1975 – 268

1976 – 241
1977 – 236
1978 – 239
1979 – 243
1980 – 256
1981 – 275
1982 – 273
1983 – 261
1984 – 242
1985 – 210
1986 – 204
1987 – 198
1988 – 203
1989 – 218
1990 – 211
1991 – 207
1992 – 206
1993 – 187
1994 – 203

MLC Pre-seminary Enrollment

1995 – 180
1996 – 200
1997 – 209
1998 – 223
1999 – 226
2000 – 239
2001 – 252
2002 – 252
2003 – 230
2004 – 231
2005 – 191
2006 – 178
2007 – 173
2008 – 181
2009 – 158
2010 – 159
2011 – 156
2012 – 155
2013 – 154

Appendix D
Ages of Active WELS Pastors (as of September 2013)



Number of Active WELS Pastors in Each Age Group
Listed by Birth Year and Approximate Age (as of September 2013)

1940 (73) – 3	1952 (61) – 45
1941 (72) – 3	1953 (60) – 39
1942 (73) – 1	1954 (59) – 40
1943 (70) – 3	1955 (58) – 47
1944 (69) – 8	1956 (57) – 46
1945 (68) – 11	1957 (56) – 39
1946 (67) – 14	1958 (55) – 44
1947 (66) – 16	1959 (54) – 38
1948 (65) – 17	1960 (53) – 28
1949 (64) – 28	1961 (52) – 33
1950 (63) – 31	1962 (51) – 39
1951 (62) – 42	1963 (50) – 36

Average number of pastors ages 54-62 = 42 per year

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