

MERGERS INTO THE 4th LARGEST PROTESTANT CHURCH (Alphabet Soup)

For the Michigan Synod to invite me to give a 'Reader's Digest' version of the history of the SE MI Synod is exciting but audacious on my part! I'm not a historian, but bear with me.

Let's start with the Frontier Days, 1840-1875, with several questions: When and where did Pr. Friedrich Schmid, my hero, 1807-1875, give his first sermon in Detroit? When was the Homestead Act adopted? (1862-1976) Were women, freed slaves or Europeans able to purchase 160 public acres from 'depleted Native Americans land' for a fee of \$10.00 after a continuous 5-year residency? (1.6 million homesteaders 'bought' 160 million acres West the Mississippi River, looking for the Promised Land.)

With the population of the states doubling between 1840 and 1870, from 17,069,453 to 39,818,449, how many German, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish immigrants came to the States? (About 1,250,000.)

Why so many? Confusion and disillusionment caused by the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, and the Industrial Revolution, e.g., economic upheaval, steamboats, railroads, communications AND religion including the Reformation as well as a need for high standards for colleges, e.g., Wittenberg College, 1845, OH, Capital College, 1850, OH and Wagner College, NY, 1883, and seminaries! (What are their FY '22-'23 tuition costs?) Can you name the eight ELGA benevolent organizations? How many of your ancestors came through Ellis Island? Remember the Jewish poet, Emma Lazarus, 1849-1887, only 38 years old, who was unable to vote. penned these words: "Give me your tired, your poor, ... Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free ... "

Not only did "the boats keep coming," but also non-geological synods kept springing up amidst expansion, sectionalism, conflict and synthesis as they were trying to reach the immigrants and "Indians".

Let's pause a moment and look at our Churches infancy, when English, French, Spanish, Dutch, Danes, Swedes, Poles, Norwegians, Finns, Welch, Scotch-Irish, Yugoslavs and Huguenots as well as Germans were all jostling to establish trading colonies in the New World.

Colonists, including Lutherans, initially arrived on the Atlantic Seaboard along the Hudson and Delaware Rivers from 1650-1790. Many of the Lutherans settled in New Amsterdam, (NYC). The 1790 Census estimated that 125,000 German Lutherans out of 275,000 Germans lived in New England and six other states. (About 65,000 Germans lived in Pennsylvania alone.)

During the late 1700s and the early 1800s, they slowly moved westward into the Northwest Territory particularly after the failure of the German States' Revolution in 1848-49, e.g., poverty, more taxes and less freedoms. The majority of the Ohio Lutherans were German immigrants from Prussia, Saxony, Pomerania and Brandenburg "States.

Once the colonists had become more prosperous, slavery became an accepted institution. Baptisms and marriages of the slaves of Lutheran masters and others, Dutch, Sweden, etc., were recorded again and again. In 1724, "a Negress named Peggy was bought for the parsonage, for 40 pounds, in Wilmington, Delaware." (Today a dollar is worth 1.2 pounds.) She was referred to as "part of the inventory at the parsonage." Her two children were baptized later, although there is no mention of a father. After 18 years, by which time she was referred to as an "old, contumacious Negress," she was sold at auction for only seven shillings." (Today, a shilling is worth about 12 pence.)

Every community or city with a sizable German population had a Lutheran congregation. Cincinnati had one of the largest German communities where Lutheran pastors conducted services only in German. An old Lutheran when asked whether God could understand English, paused: "Ja... God understands English, but He doesn't like it."

On the other hand, immigrants strongly supported education, especially for clergy and laity, e.g., over 50 public colleges/ universities are in Ohio and 41 in Michigan even when Lutherans remained a minority among

the various religious faiths.

Lutheran Seminaries were established in 1830, Evangelical (German) theological Seminary (ELTS), Columbus and Hamma Divinity School, 1845. Springfield. They consolidated into Trinity Lutheran Seminary, 1978, Columbus, OH. On January 1, 2018, when Trinity once again became a part of Capital University.

Addendum: Personal reference-1960

In the 401st anniversary of the Reformation, October 28, 1918, about 12-15 different Lutheran bodies, after WWI, asserted their loyalty to America by using English, e.g., Hope (added to their name) "English" Lutheran Church, 9500 Stoepel St., 48208, Detroit, where the church is now named Obedient Missionary Baptist since 1985. Also, on 10/28/1918, the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA) was established after three German language Synods united; in 1917, three Norwegian Synods formed the Norwegian Lutheran Church on America (NLCA); and in 1930, the joint Synod of Ohio and the Buffalo Synod formed the American Lutheran Church (German) (ALC).

Other regional Lutheran bodies organized the General Synod (1820) and the General Council (1867); as well as the United Synod of the South (1863). By 1882, those non-geographical synods and Council reported that "the majority of the congregations used both languages and that few congregations used one language exclusively."

The German synods included Ohio (1818), Buffalo (1845), Missouri (1847), Wisconsin (1850), and Iowa (1854); the Augustana (Swedish) Synod (1860) as well as Norwegian and Danish Conferences (1870-72) affiliated with the General Synod. The Slovak Synod joined the General Council in 1920 as did the Icelandic Synod in 1942 as none were geographical.

The 19th century witnessed an upsurge of organized social welfare (Inner Mission Societies), exemplified by William Alfred Passavant (1821-94), who has the distinction of establishing the largest number of orphanages, hospitals-including the first Protestant hospital in America in Pittsburgh (1849) and another in Milwaukee (1863), AND another in Chicago (1865), homes for the aged as well as other institutions of mercy among

Lutherans. He edited several periodicals and founded the Pittsburgh Synod (1845) and organized the General Council (1867).

Without a doubt, particularly after the Great Depression, 1929-39, and WWII, 1939-45, the 20th century was a merger mania for eight different Lutheran bodies, not counting many smaller ones, formed two major denominations by the end of the century:

1) after over 5 years of negotiations, the 2.85-million Lutheran Church in America, ULCA-(Established 1918 and retained ULCA-in1962), with 4,363 churches and 4,893 pastors;

2) the 2.25 million The American Lutheran Church, TALC-1960, with 4,959 churches and 7671 pastors; and also the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, AELC, with 103,263-members with 250 congregations and 672 pastors, which in 1976 withdrew from Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. That was the 4th largest denomination with the merger in 1988 with abt. 5,103,263 members with 65 Synods.

Previously, in 1962, the LCA brought together the ULCA - primarily German, Augustana Synod-primarily Swedish, AELC - primarily Danish and Suomi Synod - primarily Finnish.

Again primarily, in 1960, The American Lutheran Church brought together ALC-primarily German, Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC)-primarily Norwegian and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (UELCL)-primarily Danish.

Also, a postscript: other earlier mergers in the previous (19th) century) included Baptists and Methodists-now larger memberships than Lutherans. The three larger church bodies included: 1) Southern Baptist Convention, (founded 1845) with 14,480,000 members; 2) United Methodist Church, (founded 1736) and with 9,160,000 members-including the merger (1968) with the Evangelical Brethren Church, (founded 1845) with 150,000 members organized by Philip Otterbein, founder of Otterbein University, Ohio (1847), Martin Boehm and Jacob Albright; and 3) the National Baptist Convention, (founded in 1895) with 7,300,000 members, including Martin Luther King's family.

With our 1988 merger, Lutherans celebrated the completion of two mergers, bringing eight different Lutheran bodies into TALC (1960-1988} and LCA (1962-1988.) The rocky road to these two 'unions,' including finances, was neither quick nor easy, even though 2/3rds of the votes were required, several delegates spoke"... 'I hate your adulterous mergers' saith the Lord. You're derelict in helping the poor and unemployed."

Step back for a moment to recognize two earlier mergers which were preceded by three mergers in the early years of the 20th century. 1} Eastern Lutherans were the Pennsylvania and New York Ministerium, from the (slang) "dutch-german" colonial "Muhlenberg" tradition, developed the Buffalo Synod in 1845 and had reunited in 1918-1962 to form the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA); 2) Norwegian-American Lutherans overcame their differences to merge the Hauge Synod and the Nielsen Synod to form the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1917-1960 (ELG); 3) and four Midwestern German denominations, the Ohio, Iowa, Buffalo and Texas Synods, organized The American Lutheran Church (TALC) in 1930-1960.

The outbreak of the horrific WW I radically altered the stream of immigrants. Historians call the 19th Century, around 1820 to the onset of WW I, 7/28/1914-11/11/1918, "The Immigrant Century."

World War I was the costliest in deaths: abt. 9 million soldiers and abt. 5 million civilians as well as abt. 23 million civilians wounded. After the war, immigration shifted from northern and western Europe, British, Irish, German and Scandinavian to southern and eastern Europe, Italy, Austria-Hungary and Russia.

A peak year for immigration from those heavily Lutheran countries was 1882, which was a prosperous year for the US economy. More Germans and Scandinavians crossed the Atlantic in 1882 than any prior or subsequent year: abt. 250,000 Germans and abt. 105,000 Scandinavians.

In the decade, 1890-1900, facing the 20th century, German immigration declined sharply, but Scandinavians continued to arrive in huge numbers

in that decade even until WW 1, including Slovaks. The forces in earlier decades were similar to this decade: 1) economic opportunity and (2) greater personal freedom. Religious motivation was important, but secondary.

Europe experienced crises in agriculture with growing industrialization as poorer (food insecurity) laborers hungered for land. Many immigrants headed to the plain states, the Upper Mississippi River Valley and the Pacific Northwest.

Established "older" Lutherans expended enormous energies to locate "new" immigrants in providing them pastors, educational materials, etc., as well as financial support in developing congregations. Since the largest numbers of immigrants settled in Pennsylvania, their efforts are illustrative of the herculean support to assist the "newer" immigrants in Michigan, still a territory. As early as 1820, attempts to establish a Lutheran Church (MI Statehood-1837) were initiated by Jonathan Heinrich Mann of Ann Arbor, MI.

Our SE Mi history began in the New Territory, 1805-1837, when Pastor Friedrich Schmid was "called" to preach and teach in German to the influx of recently arrived immigrants and establish a congregation.

On 8/20/1833, The Rev. Friedrich Schmid arrived in Detroit (from Germany) and preached his first sermon on Sunday, 8/25/1833, in the carpenter shop of John Haik (present site of the Ford Auditorium.).

He continued to return to Detroit, riding horseback and walking all the way, round trip about 72 miles, on gravel roads, from Ann Arbor and back every five weeks for three years. In Ann Arbor, he organized, in November 1833, the First German Evangelical Lutheran Society in Scio Township which eventually became Salem Lutheran Church. As it grew into a congregation, the original log church was replaced by a frame building, partially funded by supporters in Stuttgart.

Ten weeks after his Detroit sermon, on 11/3/1833, he established a German Protestant Church or the German (speaking) Lutheran Church (last rebuilt in 1931, an architectural cathedral style). It was named St.

John's Evangelical and Reformed Lutheran Church, but to make matters clearer, in 1873, it was named Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church-as it is still named to this day.

Today, Pastor Schmid is claimed by Lutherans and the Reformed (now the United of Church of Christ) as their founding Pastor. Friedrich Schmid, 1807-1875, was born in Wurttemberg, Germany; hence Wittenberg University, and was ordained as a Lutheran Minister on 4/10/1833 in Baden-Wurttemberg upon completion of his studies at the Basel Mission House, Switzerland. German immigrants in Washtenaw County had previously requested a pastor from the Basel Mission Society so he resided in Ann Arbor. He married Louise Mann, Jonathan Mann's daughter, an immigrant from Germany, on 9/4/1834 and they had six sons and six daughters.

Pr. Friedrich Schmid was the first pioneering Lutheran pastor who helped organize and founded twenty (20) congregations in Detroit, Monroe, Ypsilanti, Plymouth, Lansing, Marshall, Adrian, Chelsea, Bridgewater, Northfield, Saline, Jackson, Wayne, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Sebewaing, Freedom Township, Ann Arbor and others. He founded the Michigan Synod in 1860 and served as its president from 1860-67. He died on 8/30/1883, a week shy of his 76th birthday. He was survived by his wife, Louise, who died on 3/10/1899.

Sermons, often prepared in the saddle, averaged 3/4 of an hour or longer. In several congregations, an hourglass was placed on the pulpit. "Will he ever finish?" Some pastors complained that if he preached without notes he was called a Quaker, but if preached with notes he lacked personal experience and piety. If he preached only about a half hour, it was not worthwhile going to church as many travelled distant rural graveled miles-on horseback.

During Pastor Schmid's ministry, he found himself caught up in various European church struggles, e.g., Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran ministers and Lutheran altars for Lutheran members, predestination, rationalism, piety, inerrancy and Symbolical books, e.g., the unaltered Augsburg Confession. He struggled with a plethora of associations and

synods which numbered 57 Lutheran Bodies through the States which organized between 1840 and 1875, speaking various European and Scandinavian languages.

In 1845, He become intrigued with the work of other Lutherans among Indians in Frankenmuth, Sebewaing and Shebahyonk, **MI. A** Bethany American Indian Mission requested that he send three missionaries to provide spiritual assistance to the settlers so that they might demonstrate practical aspects of Christianity to the Indians living around them-hoping to establish a church. They were offended that he-Pastor Schmid, had sent three missionaries, two of them-Lutheran, but the third was a (Calvinist) Reformed preacher, so they moved/located to established Wisconsin Synod parishes. Other issues were: 1) forms of governance, congregational or bishops; 2) use of candles, statues, etc: and (3) whether private or public confession was necessary.

Addendum: Personal reference- 2014-16, Chief Josef Greaux

Nonetheless, Pastor Friedrich Craemer (1812-91), led the first settlement (mission) in Frankenmuth, MI and established a school for children with a peak enrollment of thirty children. He baptized his first Chippewa youngsters 12/27/1846-Christmastide. But the ministry became too "taxing," when the government transferred and forcefully relocated the Indians to make room for the constantly encroaching White settlers.

From 1860-1978, 'we,' our fledging republic, established 357 indigenous industrial boarding schools in 30 States for over 60,000 native children. With over 100 distinct cultures and languages, they were given new names, allowed to speak only English, dressed in military clothing with heads shaven or bobbed and bathed in kerosene!

Five boarding schools were in Michigan: Baraga and Schoolcraft Cty., UP, Mackinac Island, Mt. Pleasant and Harbor Springs. (A slogan, replicated over many boarding school entrances: "Kill the Indian, and save the man.)

Today, 345 American Indian and 229 Alaskan Native Nations, tribes, bands, pueblos and villages have approved/negotiated federal status and have identified more than 50 burial sites. (Source: Interior Secretary Deb Harland and National Congress of American Indians)

Also, the Michigan Synod which Pr. Friedrich Schmid organized in 1860, was disbanded in 1867 because of various disagreements with the (non-geographical) Minnesota and Wisconsin synods, and legal disputes, e.g., Fugitive Slave Law, slavery disruption, the Homestead Act, Immigrants, Negroes and Indians-Bureau of Indian Affairs. (Civil War, April 12, 1881-May 13, 1865)

In 1867, Pr. Schmid, with the financial support of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, tirelessly tried again to re-organize a Michigan Synod, but the Buffalo Synod had entered Michigan to organize churches, and even formed an Iowa Synod. Synods rarely met, and only yearly, if necessary, to elect committees to recruit pastors.

None-the-less, other voluntary-unpaid presidents stepped up to re-organize the MI Synod: Pr. Stephen Kingman (1867-81) and Pr. Christoph Eberhardt (1881-90). Under their leadership, the MI Synod developed a more confessional direction although not as strict as the Minnesota and Wisconsin synods. The MI Synod primarily wanted to gain additional pastors. Vehement discussions, both theological issues as well as cultural isolation, provoked tensions of new social environments as they tried to preserve their religious and cultural heritage.

At the Chicago Theological Seminary, we were required to read "A Summary of the Christian Faith," by Henry Jacobs, Professor of Systemic Theology at Philadelphia, published 1905, and "The Book of Concord," revised English translation, 1921.

From 1875-1900, with a large number of immigrants, *(including Dr. Frank Madsen, whose parents immigrated from Denmark in 1885), it was expected that various synod bodies concentrate their energies on 'home missions,' i.e., evangelism, education/ Sunday materials, etc. They had neither energy nor resources to devote to social issues. It was considered to the church's primary responsibility to proclaim the gospel

to the individual for his/her salvation. Sin is the cause of both personal and social evils where the latter is to be combatted and remedied through ethical action of redeemed individuals, whose influence could/would leaven the social structure. An exemplary social activist was William Passavant (1821-94). But most were not inclined, with the exception of legal prohibition and movements against abuse of alcohol, e.g., strict Sunday observance.

Almost 'Business as Usual'-at the turn of the century.

With about 10 million Lutherans in the United States of America in 1900, the churches were intent in finding and drawing into Lutheran congregations' members by birth or baptism-until the Methodist Episcopal Church asked-in their Sunday School materials, "Who will make them, the immigrant-Germans and Scandinavians, Christians and Americans?" Lutherans reacted to proselytizing with indignation and missionary enthusiastic determination. Estimates that only about 25% of the newer immigrants affiliated with Lutheran churches from 1900-17.

New issues emerged, e.g., evolution, Biblical criticism and social issues including sweatshops, child labor, prison reform, working conditions, trusts and monopolies-corruption.

At the beginning of WWI, Lutherans were criticized for their 'quietism' but quickly overcame fear and reticence and learned how to protest unjust accusations. While language was undoubtedly the most drastic change, their loyalty from now on would have to be American, e.g., support for Soldiers' and Sailors' welfare. Plans were made for the United Lutheran Church in America merger, established in 1918, presided over by Pr. Frederick H. Knobel (1870-1945), Pastor of the Church of the Atonement and first President of the ULCA, 1918-1944 with over 600,000 members.

During the 'roaring twenties,' the ULCA rarely took any action on a variety of social issues, e.g., crime, housing, prohibition, labor strife, law enforcement, war and pacifism, marriage and divorce. Lutherans were largely confined to "inner Mission" or welfare institutions. Even

the 1924 Immigration Act did not provoke any debate or action, but new theological issues over biblical authority sparked heated debate, namely "inerrancy" and "infallibility."

As WWI and the Great Depression, 1929-1939, sharply accentuated the industrial needs, the steady stream of population from the farms to the cities was significant. Lutherans were far more rural than urban, even though the most 'urban' ULCA Lutheran congregations had about 30 % of their churches located in cities. In 1926, the US Census of Religious Bodies (churches) counted for the ULCA, 1,527 Urban-2,123 Rural; Augustana, 486 Urban-694 Rural; and Missouri Synod, 1,335- Urban-2,582 Rural.

The Great Depression traumatized all churches which can be understood only with difficulty apart from the vicissitudes and unfavorable changes, including finances-lack of money; theological reconstruction; and inter church relationships. Recall the demonstrations by the unemployed, e.g., the Bonus Army March on Washington in 1932 and Roosevelt's New deal.

Our parishes were thrust into a moral crisis as they struggled with huge debt which tempted them to use funds needed for benevolence, institutions and foreign missions.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, Lutherans, except LCMS, urged a policy of neutrality and peace by endorsing the Oxford statement of Life and Work, 1937, and reacted to totalitarianism by opposing all forms of militarism, until the attack by Japan on Pearl Harbor, 12/7/41.

The National Lutheran Council and the LCMS inaugurated, in the mid-thirties, a corps of trained and highly qualified chaplains. By 1940, the number of Lutheran chaplains in the armed forces met the assigned quota.

The National Lutheran Council, established 1918, formed what was called Lutheran World Action (LWA) in 1941, raised over \$500,000 (in two years) to support orphaned missions and war refugees. LWA was the Lutheran churches' "Marshall Plan."

By 1965, almost \$80 million was raised and distributed as aid to thousands of people in 75 countries around the world.

Today the ELCA has eight benevolent organizations: LWR- formerly LWA, Living Water Outdoor Ministries, LIRS, Women of the ELCA, Fed Up Ministries, Global Ministries, Lutheran Disaster Relief and World Hunger. Now step into a time when two teenagers from Lanolin, Denmark, immigrated from Denmark, married and began farming 160 acres (Homestead Act) outside of Ludington, MI. They had five boys and the youngest was Frank Peter Madsen. He went to (Danish) Grand View College, completing his degree (1927) at Midland College, established 1883, in Fremont, Nebraska. He attended the Chicago Theological Seminary was ordained in 1930 and also accepted a call to Redeemer Lutheran Church. Lansing, MI.

In 1936, he accepted a call to Luther Memorial Lutheran Church, Detroit and was also elected (voluntary) secretary of the moribund Michigan Synod. He was elected as an unpaid part-time president and served 1939-42.

In 1941, he accepted a call to Hope Lutheran Church, Detroit, a debt-ridden church, and parish hall with a third-floor apartment for housing. As an able preacher and parliamentarian, he retired their debt, developed two Sunday services, Sunday School, choirs and purchased a parsonage on Sorrento Street as well as becoming the largest ULCA church in Michigan.

In 1952, he was elected the first (paid) full-time president of the Michigan Synod, ULCA. In 1962, he was elected the first president and bishop of the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) until retirement on 8/31/1972. While bishop, he earned two honor doctorate degrees: Wittenberg University and Carthage College.

His successors up to the 1988 merger were: Pastor/Bishop Howard Christensen, D.D. and Pastor/Bishop Raymond Heine, D.D.

Pr. William Moldwin, respectfully submitted, May 2023.

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