

SPOKANE--SECOND CHANCE CITY FOR WELS

By Jeff Carter

1984

Professor Fredrich

Senior Church History

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11831 N. Seminary Drive. 65W
Mequon, Wisconsin

SPOKANE--SECOND CHANCE CITY FOR WELS

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." This may not be current mission strategy, but it was done in Spokane, Washington. Actually, there was great success in Spokane for the Wisconsin Synod from 1942 to 1957. Spokane was a model metropolitan mission field. Then, in 1957, all four of the pastors and congregations in Spokane left the Wisconsin Synod, and mission work there for the WELS came to an abrupt halt. All that was left in Spokane for the Wisconsin Synod was a house and some very uneasy feelings.

In such a case, what is a synod to do? The purpose of this paper is to consider the feasibility of a second-chance mission program in the example of Spokane. Can a synod be successful starting over in the same mission field, practically from scratch, after a doctrinal split, after losing everything?

To study this example in detail, the paper will trace the history of the work of the WELS in Spokane, hopefully giving some insight regarding the special character of the people, the events and the district involved.

THE PIONEER

In order to catch the flavor of the setting in which our first missionary ventured into Spokane, let us begin with an article in The Northwestern Lutheran by Frederick H.K. Soll, former president of the old Joint Synod of Wisconsin, and first president of the Pacific Northwest District from 1918 to 1938. He wrote this from Yakima, Washington in 1940:

The Pacific Northwest District is naturally the smallest of our districts since it was the latest of our districts to be organized and since its work is different from that of other districts. In the Central States we could expect to find groups of Lutherans who were waiting for the missionary; out here we must call the people to Christ by the Gospel, and when we have won their confidence, we must teach them to like our way of church life, and to train them to become active members. Lodgism and Sectarianism are lording it, especially in the public school and in the state; we are noticed as a negligible irritant.¹

The "negligible irritant" at that time consisted only of three self-supporting congregations and eleven missions of which two were combined; thirteen pastors, one assistant pastor and one retired pastor. Soll added, "We regret that so far we do not have a day school."²

The article points out several factors that have always caused somewhat of a barrier between the thinking of a missionary in an outlying district and the typical midwestern pastor's understanding of the situation. Add to this a reluctance by the members "back east" to support his work, and one can understand why the progress was slow and difficult for the missionary in the Pacific Northwest. Soll explained:

1. Frederick H.K. Soll, "History of the Pacific Northwest District," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 27, no. 14, (July 14, 1940), p. 216.

2. Ibid.

The development of our Wisconsin Synod was at first very slow; the call for service came mainly from former members who had moved West; and many petitions were left unanswered because many of our Eastern members did not have any confidence in these remote missions.³

But Soll had a rebuttal for the Easterners. He concluded the article:

Dear reader, measured by the conditions of the East, our work here is not of great dimensions; a Milwaukee brother was right who told me: "You know I am serving more people in my congregation than your whole district together!" However, when we mind Jesus' Word, Matthew 13, 31-35, what He says of the mustard seed and of the leaven, then we understand that the Lord scatters the Word of life in small portions over the great Pacific Northwest; of us He only demands faith. He will prosper our work.⁴

In the same article Soll mentions that in 1912 he had installed Pastor Wm. Hass, who founded St. Paul Mission in Palouse, Washington, which was being served at that time (1940) by Pastor M. Witt.

Pastors of the Pacific Northwest had always looked to Spokane as a promising mission field.⁵ Meinhardt J. Witt was the pioneer who undertook the challenge. In 1938 he had come out to the small mission in Palouse, about 60 miles south of Spokane. He began looking into Spokane in 1942. Trinity, the church Witt started, was truly "the pioneer Wisconsin Synod Church in Spokane, the capitol of the Inland Empire."⁶

Meinhardt J. Witt came from a missionary-minded family. A booklet published for the twenty-fifth anniversary of Trinity describes the enthusiasm of Witt's father for taking the initiative to start missions. It begins:

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. William Lueckel, History of the Pacific Northwest District 1918-1968, Fiftieth Anniversary booklet, 1968, p. 19.

6. Arthur Sydow, "Pacific Northwest," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 32, no. 15, (July 22, 1945), p. 152.

Many congregations in Lutheran circles come into existence because of a nucleus of Lutherans who expressed an interest in the proclamation of the Word of God and the administration of the Sacraments in its midst. This was not the case as far as the origin of this congregation was concerned.

There was no nucleus. The very first impetus to explore mission opportunities in the city of Spokane was born because of the mission zeal of the devout father of the missionary who was encouraged to consider the lesson given to us in the mission activity of the Apostle Paul who carried his first mission efforts into the populated areas and then expected the fruits of God's blessings to radiate into the countryside. Goaded by this reminder again and again in correspondence from his father, the missionary son asked for permission from the St. Paul's congregation of Palouse to investigate mission opportunities in the city of Spokane.⁷

In a 1948 article about the dedication of Trinity Lutheran Church, Witt made an urgent plea for more mission effort in the Pacific Northwest District based on the demographics of the area at that time, and other developments which would increase the potential for new missions. His plea sounds familiar--lack of funds was the hindrance back then, too:

The need for missions in the larger cities of the Pacific Northwest has always been advocated by the officials of this District. Lack of funds, however, was often proposed as a reason why mission work was not begun. Today, we are in a field ripe unto the harvest. The Pacific Northwest District is located in an area which is growing in population faster than any other section of the United States with the exception of California. The huge investments of the government in irrigation projects which have been developed and which will be developed, the wealth of this country as regards minerals, lumber, the large aluminum industries, and the Hanford Atomic Project, make it imperative that we realize the extent of the work which we ought to do. Land which could not be sold seven years ago is now sold at high prices and the brisk demand for the land continues. Areas which were devoid of habitants are now being populated. Waste lands are becoming rich agricultural regions. Villages are becoming towns and cities. Anyone who is informed

7. The History of Trinity Lutheran Church--A History of God's Abundant Grace, 25th Anniversary booklet, 1967, p. 1f.

regarding the current developments of this nation knows of the industrial and agricultural expansions of the Pacific Northwest. The large influx of people, especially from our congregations in the Mid-western States, makes it obligatory that we concentrate more of our mission efforts on this District.⁸

By this time (1948) Witt was convinced that his larger-city-mission-strategy worked. He could also be fairly confident that Spokane was one of the best locations in the district. He ardently pushed for more manpower in other cities:

In recent years an effort has been made to establish missions in the larger cities with the hope of radiating from these into the surrounding towns. To this end missions have been started in Tacoma, Seattle, and Spokane. We are in need of men in other cities. We need these men now. We can't pray "Thy Kingdom Come" and overlook the opportunities which the Lord has given us in the Pacific Northwest. Spokane is the hub of the Eastern portion of the Pacific Northwest.⁹

As things developed in Spokane, Witt became more and more optimistic about the growing mission opportunities in the state of Washington. In a 1952 article entitled "The Last Frontier," he is quoted as saying, "This country is coming into its own. The wealth of natural power, mining, lumber, and ideal climate make this a country of great opportunities and growth....In the last ten years more people have moved into Washington than have ever lived in the states of North and South Dakota."¹⁰

Besides being an avid evangelist, Witt became known for another talent which came in handy to the pioneer missionary: he designed his own church in Spokane, and several others in the district. At the dedication of Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran, in Yakima, Pastor George Frey wrote, "The building program got under way when Rev. Witt of Spokane

8. M.J. Witt, "Church Dedication--Trinity Lutheran Church, Spokane, Washington," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 35, no. 4, (February 15, 1948), p. 60.

9. Ibid.

10. "News from our Mission Fields--The Last Frontier," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 39, no. 13, (June 29, 1952), p. 202.

offered to draw plans of a building modeled after Trinity Church in Spokane...The first to step into the pulpit on dedication Sunday was Pastor Witt, designer of the church and president of the District."¹¹ And, an article on the dedication of Faith Lutheran Chapel, Tacoma, Washington, Paul E. Nitz, Pastor, notes: "The attractive new building, designed by the District President M.J. Witt, is of simple, dignified and practical Norman architecture, and will comfortably seat close to 200 worshipers."¹²

God indeed blessed the work in Spokane, in spite of the difficulties. From Witt's small beginnings, three other missions sprang up shortly afterwards. Fred Tiefel was the third missionary into Spokane, having served in Leavenworth and Mansfield from 1939 to 1948. In 1948, a few months after starting in Spokane, he wrote:

In the city of Spokane we now have three missions. All three missionaries report how God has opened the way for them to preach the Gospel. In two of the fields services are being conducted in rented school barracks. A fourth field within the city beckons. This work, as is the greater portion of the mission work in our District, is begun with unchurched adults and Sunday School children of unchurched parents. Often there is no nucleus of indoctrinated Lutherans to aid the mission in its first difficult steps.¹³

One of the problems the Pacific Northwest District has always had is getting missionaries who are determined enough to stay and adjust to the difficulties which are not as pronounced in a more "Lutheran" area of the country. The whole district has suffered major setbacks throughout its history because of a large number of vacancies. A missionary had to have a "pioneer spirit" to make it out West. Tiefel

11. G. Frey, "Dedication of Redeemer Ev. Lutheran, Yakima," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 39, no. 21, (October 19, 1952), p. 328.

12. "News from our Mission Fields," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol 43, no. 20, (September 30, 1956), p. 312.

13. F. Tiefel, "Pacific Northwest District Missions," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 35, no. 18, (August 29, 1948), p. 284.

expressed thankfulness to God, whose blessings alone were allowing the district to experience the success it did in 1948:

In this age of doctrinal laxity, the oneness in doctrine and practice voiced by both lay delegates and pastors at our conferences demonstrates how God in His grace has indeed blessed us with a love for His Word. Furthermore, He has sent into our District missionaries filled with the gift of contentment and willingness to adjust themselves to the conditions of an outlying District of Synod. Both pastors and congregations are showing zeal for reaching the unchurched. For these blessings we are thankful.¹⁴

It is good that the pastors experienced such blessings and growth in the "pioneer years" of the Pacific Northwest District. They soon would experience serious trials. But before we examine the problems, let us follow the progress made in Spokane from 1942 to 1957, in each of the four Wisconsin Synod missions which were started there.

14. Ibid., p. 283.

THE PROGRESS

Witt said he was encouraged to go into Spokane by his father and three "wise men" from his mission in Palouse: "The three stalwart voting members of the Palouse mission, with the foresight of wise men, a love for lost souls, and an eye to prudent stewardship, gave their encouragement and blessing. With such a spirit heartening the missionary, several trips were made to Spokane to investigate the field."¹⁵ He was not especially encouraged by the Mission Board until after they had looked at the situation.

After evaluating the possibilities, Witt chose the North Hill area of Spokane for intensive mission work. This side of the city had a population of approximately 15,000 and good prospects for rapid expansion. In April, 1942, Witt asked the District Mission Board to come and look at the field, and to support the mission effort. Pastor Arthur Sydow, the chairman of the Mission Board consented to review the area with the missionary on July 13, 1942. He recommended a thorough canvass of the North Hill. After Witt completed the preliminary canvass the following weeks, the Mission Board agreed to support continued efforts to start the mission.¹⁶

After spending some time searching for a place to hold services, Witt found an old abandoned store building which he could rent for \$20.00 a month. However, this building had to be transformed from a grocery store to a church; shelves and counters had to be torn out, the walls had to be painted, and the floor and windows had to be cleaned.

15. History of Trinity, op. cit., p. 2.

16. Ibid.

Witt obtained chairs, an altar, lecturn and organ, put up a sign, and held the first service on September 20, 1942.¹⁷ It was the third Sunday in September, and to commemorate the event the congregation later chose that Sunday to celebrate their annual Mission Sunday.

Waiting to see the turnout for the first service must be an anxious time for a missionary. Witt envisioned a fair crowd that Sunday, since about thirty "Lutherans" assured him they would try to attend the first service, plus some unchurched who expressed an interest. Eight people attended the first service; none were Lutherans. Eight children attended Sunday School.¹⁸

But from these humble beginnings came some heartwarming stories and unexpected surprises:

After several weeks an elderly lady started coming to services and later joined the church. "Her devotion to the menial task of scrubbing the 'chapel' floor on her hands and knees with a strong soap so that it could be painted restored the missionary's spirits."¹⁹

While canvassing that fall, Witt ran across some high school boys playing touch football in a vacant lot. He asked if he could join in, they didn't mind, and before he left them he asked if they would come to his instruction class. Two of the boys and a Mr. Orville Shenemann formed the first adult instruction class, and were confirmed on June 6, 1943. The class gave the mission the name "Trinity Lutheran Church."²⁰

The missionary stayed in Spokane from Wednesday to Sunday noon when he returned to Palouse to conduct Sunday afternoon services. To save rent money, the missionary bought an oil heater and a daveno which was adequate furniture to provide lodging in a small room adjacent to the large

17. Ibid., p. 3f.

18. Ibid., p. 4f.

19. Ibid., p. 5.

20. Ibid.

room which served as a church. Children of the neighborhood gathered in this little room Wednesday nights to hear some Bible stories.

It wasn't long before it was necessary to prepare for our Christmas Eve service. The children, a group of about 20, and the pastor became quite excited. A beautiful tree was purchased from funds taken from the collection. The Mission Board considered it highly irregular when the missionary requisitioned funds for the decorations. That first Christmas Eve service in Spokane was a delight.²¹

In April of 1943 Witt moved from Palouse to Spokane in order to give this field his concentrated attention. In 1944, he started a second Sunday School in the nearby Field School. The members contacted in connection with this Sunday School became the nucleus for the Shadle Park Lutheran Church.²²

In April, 1944 Trinity Lutheran Church was incorporated. In the spring of 1945 the congregation purchased three lots for \$1,000.00 on the northeast corner of Wall and Wellesley, and made plans to build. They had to get an architect to put their plans into a form acceptable to the City Plan Commission, and in accordance with the rigid building code requirements.²³ Meanwhile, the members started looking for bargains in building materials. This was at a time when these were only about 35 communicant members, but all the members pitched in together to acquire the materials and to build the church, as well as all the furniture inside.²⁴ It was also during wartime:

With all these materials on hand and with a mind to build our church, with volunteer labor, we thought we had a good case in spite of building restrictions due to the war, when we applied at the office of the War Production Board for permission to build. After 11 months and repeated applications, and innumerable appointments, the permit was granted on June 11, 1945. Meanwhile we

21. Ibid., p. 5f.

22. Ibid., p. 6f.

23. Ibid., p. 7.

24. "News from our Mission Fields--The Last Frontier," op.cit., p. 203.

also had difficulty with the City Plan Commission, but this body too, finally granted us the necessary go-ahead. Finally on June 24, 1945 we conducted a service on the church site and broke ground. Excavation began in July.²⁵

Pastor Witt was the contractor, rather than contracting the work out, so since most of the work was done by the pastor and members, progress was slow. The project was financed through a loan from the Synod's Church Extension Fund, but the congregation was not quite satisfied with the Synod's plan. They requested \$12,000.00 but were granted \$10,000.00 with the suggestion that they shorten the church by thirteen feet and eliminate the bell tower. The congregation refused to do either, and decided to take a chance on the \$10,000.00 being enough. They ended up having to negotiate an additional loan of \$3,500.00 because of a long delay and rising costs of labor and materials. A lumber strike halted construction from September 1945 to February 1946. The long truss members had been planed in a local mill, but they were not permitted to move them from the manufacturer's property. Work was resumed on the building after Easter. Progress was slow, because volunteer labor was very limited. The cornerstone was laid on August 11, 1946. All the brick work was done before that winter. When the plastering was completed, the congregation began having services in the basement.²⁶

After over two years of struggling and laboring, the congregation of Trinity dedicated their church building on November 16, 1947. Services were held morning and evening, and Pastor William Lueckel of Portland, Pastor T.R. Adascheck of Yakima, and Pastor George Frey of Clarkston were the guest speakers. More than 300 people attended the morning service,

25. History of Trinity, op. cit., p. 8.

26. Ibid., pp. 8-12.

which was enhanced by the singing of the choir from St. John's, Clarkston, and of the members of Trinity's confirmation class. Some visitors from neighboring Wisconsin Synod congregations travelled 250 miles to take part in the dedicatory service.²⁷ "That which was spoken of as an utter impossibility became a reality. There were many blunders in purchasing materials, in the methods of construction, and in the general supervision, but the Lord somehow made His compensations^a so that most of these ended up as definite advantages. It is our God who made the day of dedication the day of joy that it was."²⁸

By the end of 1947 Trinity numbered 45 communicants, 103 souls and 12 voters. By 1949 they increased to 67 communicants, 168 souls and 19 voters, and by 1950 Trinity numbered 85 communicants, 184 souls and 24 voters. After negotiating with the Board of Trustees of the Wisconsin Synod in 1956-1957, it was finally agreed that the Synod would reduce the congregation's debt from \$19,765.00 to \$12,364.00 if they would become self-supporting at once and agree to retire the entire indebtedness at the end of eight years. The congregation became self-supporting on June 1, 1957.²⁹

Trinity was the first of our churches in Spokane, but it was not the only one for very long. It was called "a young mother with three daughters" in a 1952 article of The Northwestern Lutheran: "Trinity of Spokane did not hide its light from the unchurched in other parts of the city. This young mother congregation of eight years can boast of three daughter congregations in the Spokane area....Sunday Schools in

27. M.J. Witt, loc. cit.

28. History of Trinity, op.cit., p. 12f.

29. Ibid., pp. 14-16.

two other housing projects...four of our missionaries serve the Spokane area."³⁰

The oldest daughter, Lincoln Park Lutheran Church, later known as St. James, was born on the other side of town. After he finished teaching the 1946 school year at the Christian Day School in Snoqualmie, Washington, Rev. Vernon Greve, Missionary at Large, was requested by the Mission Board to go into Spokane and investigate the prospects for starting a new mission there. After several months of preliminary work he began services at 17th and Mt. Vernon on December 1, 1946. Soon there was an enrollment of sixteen children and an average church attendance of ten. Services were conducted in a school auditorium.³¹

Greve wrote that on December 23, 1946 a Christmas Eve service was held at which "the singing and recitations were even better than expected. To all appearances this area for our new mission endeavor has prospects."³²

But in April 1947, the missionary wrote in the Pacific Northwest Evangelist:

Lincoln Park Mission has not experienced any sudden great growth during the last months. As might be expected, the establishment of a new parish is an uphill climb all the way. The Sunday School and church attendance remain about the same. There is an instruction class for five adults at present. On Sunday the 9th, five small children were baptized.³³

Welcome to the Pacific northwest District, Pastor Greve! Yes, it is an uphill climb, but nevertheless, the missionary undoubtedly took joy in the first Communion service of the new mission on January 4, 1948, even with only four in attendance. In any case, Greve did

30. "News from our Mission Fields-The Last Frontier," op.cit., p. 202f.

31. Papers on the history of St. James Lutheran, Lincoln Park kept current by each of the pastors.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

not go back East as some did when they became discouraged. He did accept a call to the church in Withrow, Washington, and was installed on Sunday, February 22, 1948.³⁴

Leland Grams accepted the call to the mission and was installed on Sunday, July 4, 1949, by Pastor M.J. Witt. The first Vacation Bible School was held that summer, and 44 children attended the two-week course. The congregation was formally organized as St. James on the Sunday after Easter, April 16, 1950, with nine communicants, three voters, and fifty-three children in Sunday School. The little flock began looking for a suitable building site.³⁵

In 1954 there was another change of pastors. That March Grams accepted a call to South Dakota. On July 11, Waldemar Karnitz from the Seminary was ordained and installed by none other than M.J. Witt, assisted by Pastor Robert Dommer.³⁶

There is an interesting story behind the congregation's plans to build. They had been worshiping in Franklin Public School. Early in 1951 they saw an opportunity to purchase a large piece of property-- 365 ft. by 125 ft.--in a good location on a corner next to an arterial street, for only \$1,500.00. However, it seemed that Synod did not have the necessary funds at that time to construct a chapel on the new property. In July of 1954, urged by the District Mission Board, the congregation applied for a loan to build a parsonage-chapel. At that time there was money available in Synod's newly-formed Parsonage-Teacherage Fund. But before such a loan could be granted, St. James had to obtain permission from the Spokane City Plan Commission to build

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

the structure. Since the area was zoned as residential property only, getting permission involved much labor and time. Finally, on October 6, 1954, permission was granted, but to the dismay of the members, Synod no longer had money available for the loan! The congregation waited patiently through the winter months, till the good news came at the end of March. The loan was granted, but since the Plan Commission had demanded that construction begin within six months, it meant that St. James had only a few days before the time limit would be reached! On April 3, 1955, just three days before the limit, excavation was made for the basement.³⁷

The congregation acted as the general contractor, bought all the materials, and did much of the actual labor. In October of 1955 the pastor moved in and started holding services. A combined dedication-mission service was held, with Pastor L. Bernthal of Clarkston as guest preacher. The congregation was thankful for its first permanent place of worship, but looked forward to the day when it could build a separate chapel on the corner lot of the property, being held for that purpose.³⁸ That day never came, but that property on 16th and Ray became the only footing of the Wisconsin Synod in Spokane which did not give way only two years later.

The second of the three daughters, Shadle Park Lutheran, was back on the north side, in fact not too far from Trinity. Pastor Witt was instrumental in starting Shadle Park, as this article, written by one of the first members, points out:

The Shadle Park housing district is an example of the opportunities which present themselves to the church for

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

mission work in the Pacific Northwest District. Before many of the new homes were erected, Missionary M.J. Witt, who was working an adjacent area, "held" the new area for several years for our church by conducting Sunday School in a nearby public school.³⁹

The public school was Field School, mentioned under the section on Trinity (see p. 10). Upon Witt's request, the District Board investigated, went before Synod's General Board, and got permission to place a missionary there. Pastor Fred Tiefel of Withrow, Washington accepted the call and Witt installed him on February 8, 1948 with one adult and 16 Sunday School children in attendance. Adult instruction classes were soon started. The average attendance for that July was 14; 30 in Sunday School. Seven children were baptized, eight adults were confirmed, and another class for adults was started.⁴⁰

On March 6, 1949, Shadle Park Lutheran Church was organized and incorporated with five voting members, all adult converts. The congregation purchased lots, got a C.E.F. loan to build a Sunday School chapel, and through Synod's help also obtained a parsonage. Their plans were approved, and in June of 1949 they began construction on the chapel, suitable also for a parochial school building, and for the addition of a second story when necessary. The city building code required this first unit to be built of solid masonry. Dedication services were held in the morning and afternoon of Sunday, November 27, 1949. Guest speakers were T.R. Adascheck, Chairman of the Mission Board, and Pastors M.J. Witt and E.F. Kirst.⁴¹

Pastor Tiefel accepted a call from the Synod's Spiritual Welfare Commission to do exploratory work in the interest of our servicemen and

39. K.L. White, "Shadle Park Ev. Lutheran Church, Spokane, Washington," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 37, no. 18, (August 27, 1950), p. 277.

40. Paper on the history of Shadle Park Lutheran Mission, unsigned.

41. K.L. White, op.cit., p. 278.

women stationed in the Japan-Korea area, and to investigate opportunities for opening mission stations there. The Northwestern Lutheran called him "our first Contact Pastor to serve in a foreign area."⁴² He left from Portland, Oregon for Yokohama, Japan on February 16, 1952, but his name came up repeatedly a few years later in connection with the protests against fellowship with Missouri Synod.

Witt, then District President, served for the interim, until he ordained and installed Seminary candidate Norman Menke on July 13, 1952, assisted by Pastors Dommer and Grams. Menke stayed until 1955, when he accepted a call to Big Bend, Wisconsin. Rev. Ivan H. Zarling then accepted the call to Shadle Park and was installed on Sunday, February 12, 1956, by President Witt, assisted by Pastors Dommer and Karnitz.⁴³

Last but not least, the latest and therefore youngest of the three daughter congregations was the only one to survive to the present, along with Trinity, its mother. Missions in some cities of the Pacific Northwest did not spring up as easily as they did in Spokane. After an unsuccessful attempt at starting a mission in Tacoma, and after doing canvass and survey work in various cities of the district, Pastor Robert Dommer was called to begin a mission in the Spokane Valley at Opportunity, Washington, in June, 1951.⁴⁴

After all that moving around, Pastor Dommer and his family still had to "rough it" for a while:

Since there was no dwelling immediately available, the Secretary of the Mission Board arranged for a small, one-room cabin in a trailer court. Here the pastor and his family remained for almost six weeks, making arrangements

42. The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 39, no. 5, (March 9, 1952).

43. History of Shadle Park Lutheran Mission, op.cit.

44. Robert Dommer, Gethsemane Parish from September 1951 to September 1954, pp. 1-3.

to procure a home, and remodeling an old filling station that had been selected a few weeks before by the Spokane members of the Mission Board to be the place of worship. It was to serve in this capacity for the next three years.⁴⁵

In September a house on E. Mission Avenue, in about the center of the valley, was purchased. A mailing for the entire area was prepared with a statement of the church's message, and an invitation to services and instruction. This was sent out during the week before services began. The first service was held on September 23, 1951; 26 attended church and five attended Sunday School. The pastor began a confirmation class, and after three weeks, an adult class of two.⁴⁶

The church was first named Valley Lutheran. The remodeled filling station, located on Highway 10 just east of Opportunity grade school, was first equipped with 25 chairs, an altar donated by Shadle Park Mission, no lecturn, but an organ bought for \$10.00 from a local second-hand store. By the beginning of 1952 they had bought hymnals (before then they used mimeographed hymns), and Pastor Grams of St. James had donated an ornamental wooden post which was made into a lecturn. Lenten services were held that year on Wednesday evenings, "just like in the larger churches," and Pastor Dommer exchanged pulpits with Pastors Witt and Grams for these services.⁴⁷

This congregation gave an excellent example of making do with what facilities were available. Not only did they start out worshipping in what used to be a gas station, they found some rather unusual new facilities nearby for Sunday School: a small hamburger stand, about ten feet square, was located just east of the chapel. Some interested men in the congregation repaired and painted it, thus giving added room

45. Ibid., p. 3.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., p. 3f.

for a third Sunday School class.⁴⁸

By September of 1952 there were 12 communicants, 22 souls, and 6 voters. They chose the permanent name Gethsemane Ev. Lutheran Church of Opportunity, Washington, and were incorporated October 2, 1952, by a lawyer-member who donated his services. The first public communion service was held on Sunday, October 26, with seven participating. By Christmas they had a new communion rail, altar cloths, and a hymnboard. Fifty people attended their Christmas Eve service.⁴⁹

In the summer of 1953 the General Mission Board agreed to purchase for them a five acre plot of land which they had been considering for some time. While at first it seemed too large, now it seemed no more than adequate for a church, parsonage, parochial school, and parking and playground area. The cost was \$8,000.00. Pastor Witt designed this church also. The building committee "was helped immeasurably by the kindly assistance of Pastor Witt, who literally drew the proposed plans according to the will of the congregation, and gave many helpful suggestions."⁵⁰ The year 1953 saw the congregations first Vacation Bible School, first Mission Festival, first Adult Bible Class, and a bigger, better organ for the church. The membership increased to 33 souls, 17 communicants, and 8 voters.⁵¹

By May of 1954 the General Mission Board had still not granted them a loan to build a chapel; however it did encourage them to go ahead and build the parsonage in such a way that it could be used for services temporarily. The congregation agreed only after being assured that this plan would not hinder their chance of getting a loan for the chapel. They

48. Ibid., p. 5.

49. Ibid., p. 5f.

50. Ibid., p. 7.

51. Ibid., p. 7f.

were given the go-ahead on their plans for a parsonage-chapel, and excavation was begun August 19, 1954.⁵²

These individual histories of the mission congregations in Spokane, as far as information was available before 1957, are meant to give the reader some idea of the closeness and interdependence of these congregations, and of their dependence to a great extent upon Pastor Witt's leadership. Pastor Witt was instrumental in some way in starting all of the missions, and the congregations helped each other in many ways.

The pastors and congregations also developed a strong doctrinal unity. Being on the outskirts of the Synod, they were confronted with the trend of liberalism in Lutheran churches earlier, and to a more serious degree, than their midwestern brothers who lived in the heartland of conservative Lutheranism. Unfortunately, this fact eventually let the Spokane men to a confrontation with their own Synod, and their ^{own} spirit of unity became a spirit of separatism.

52. Ibid., 9f.

THE PARTING

In the Pacific Northwest District, the battle lines for confessional Lutheranism were being drawn up as early as the Wisconsin Synod's entry into Spokane. A paper presenting "a history of the developments between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods, showing the gradual aberration of the Missouri Synod, and finally also the aberration of the Wisconsin Synod itself,"⁵³ traces offences caused by the Missouri Synod clear back to 1938. The major events up to 1949 are listed as follows:

1938--Missouri Synod Convention, St. Louis--THE MISSOURI SYNOD SHOWED A UNIONISTIC SPIRIT BY ATTEMPTING TO JOIN WITH A FALSE LUTHERAN BODY (ALC) IN AN UNSCRIPTURAL WAY...

1939--Wis. Synod Convention, Watertown, Aug. 29--THE WISCONSIN SYNOD ADMONISHES THE MISSOURI SYNOD TO DISCONTINUE ITS SINFUL NEGOTIATIONS...

1941--THE MISSOURI SYNOD REFUSES TO HEED ADMONITION TO DISCONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS. (Miss. Synod Convention, Fort Wayne, June)...

1943--THE WISCONSIN SYNOD AGAIN ASKS MISSOURI TO HALT NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE OF THE FALSE BASIS ON WHICH THEY ARE CONDUCTED. (Wis. Synod Convention, Watertown)...

1944--THE MISSOURI SYNOD PERSISTENTLY CONTINUES NEGOTIATIONS (Missouri Synod Convention, Saginaw) AND PRODUCES A SINGLE DOCUMENT...
THE MISSOURI SYNOD ADOPTS SINFUL RESOLUTIONS ON SCOUTING...
THE MISSOURI SYNOD INITIATES A FALSE DISTINCTION BETWEEN JOINT PRAYER AND PRAYER-FELLOWSHIP...

1947--THE MISSOURI SYNOD CONTINUES NEGOTIATIONS, THOUGH ON A FAULTY BASIS AND IN OPPOSITION TO PLEAS FROM THE WISCONSIN SYNOD. (Missouri Synod Convention in Chicago)...
THE MISSOURI SYNOD PUT THE MATTER OF SCOUTISM INTO A COMMITTEE FOR RESTUDY...

1947--THE WISCONSIN SYNOD ADOPTS THE UNION COMMITTEE'S ESSAY ON SCOUTING, CLEARLY SETTING FORTH ITS SINFUL ABBERATIONS. (Wis. Synod Convention, August, Watertown)

53. A Brief History, an unsigned paper which sets forth the position of Pastor Witt and those in agreement with him; lists events from 1938 to 1957.

1949--THE WISCONSIN SYNOD (in Convention in Milwaukee) SUMMARIZES
THE ERRORS OF THE MISSOURI SYNOD IN THE 6 QUESTIONS...⁵⁴

Pastor Gilbert S. Sydow, who became first vice-president of the district during the time Witt was president (1950-1957), wrote an article in 1949 obviously against the laxness of the Missouri Synod, which he could see clearly taking place in the Pacific Northwest. He wrote:

In the reckoning of conservative Lutherans there are certain practices which are deemed a gross violation of sound scriptural principles. Foremost among these are the toleration of lodge idolatry and self-righteousness, officiating at the funerals of unbelievers, participating in public school baccalaureate services and other community and state religious functions, joining with others of different beliefs in union services or religious work. Whenever a laxity and indifference to sound doctrine and an unconcern for spiritual principles enters into a church its outward manifestation is first seen in a break down of upholding these very things once considered vital to honest confession. In defense and justification for such action there now comes with monotonous regularity the stock explanation, "It's an opportunity to do mission work, to preach the Gospel, to get at the sinner..."

For the most part, it appears that those who go along on this mistaken mission policy do not follow the course of clear-cut confession...

If we would "get at the sinner" can we do without the very word the sinner needs? O men of little faith, who fear to rebuke the sins of our day!...

Let us be wary of the "fear words" that are used to explain away the wide-spread falling away from sound confession that is being found among us.⁵⁵

One specific early case of fellowship abuse in the State of Washington was cited in the Wisconsin Synod Convention Proceedings of 1951:

One of the cases brought to the official attention of the Missouri brethren by the Church Union Committee in a 1949 letter to Missouri (the six questions) had to do with cooperation with Associated Lutheran Welfare, State of Washington, that had gone far beyond mere externals.⁵⁶

The 1952 District Convention expressed early concern over the Synodical Conference in the matters of Scouting and the Common Confession.

54. Ibid., pp. 1-3.

55. G. S. Sydow, "Mission Work--True or False?," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 36, no. 6, (March 13, 1949), p. 92f.

56. Proceedings, 1951, p. 137.

When no decisive action was taken either by the Synodical Conference or the Missouri Synod, and after the Wisconsin Synod declared itself to be in a state of protest, but went no further, pastors in the Pacific Northwest District began to wonder about their own synod's position. By 1954, after the first meeting of the Missouri-Wisconsin committees produced no agreement, President Witt reported to the pastors of the district, "I can not say that we made any progress toward healing the breach. It looks hopeless to me and I feel that continued relations would be a dangerous course and contrary to God's Will."⁵⁷

President Witt opened the 1954 District Convention with a sermon based on Revelation 3:11, applying it to guarding the truth against errors and heresies.⁵⁸ Since the second meeting of the Missouri-Wisconsin committees had produced no discernable progress, and showed a "difference in spirit," the District Convention resolved: "...we cannot but heed the direction of Scripture to avoid them. Romans 16:17. It will always be our prayer that men turn from lies to the truth."⁵⁹

These may seem like some strong words, considering how much longer the Wisconsin Synod stayed in fellowship with Missouri. Such a resolution would not have been made in the Pacific Northwest District years before. In the early days of the district the men were few, overworked, and detached. This led to a liberalizing tendency among some. At the time Witt, Tiefel, Sydow and others graduated, when there were enough graduates to send some to this outlying district, they noticed the liberalism, and had to admonish their brothers. The pastoral conferences at that time were battles--heated debates--sometimes even involving father against son.

57. A Brief History, op. cit., p. 6.

58. L.G. Bernthal, Reporter, "Pacific Northwest District Convention," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 41, no. 16, (August 8, 1954), p. 250.

59. Ibid., p. 251.

By the 1950's the conferences were not dogfights anymore, but rather very edifying. After having to fight the battle with their own brothers, their polemical teeth were sharpened for the external battle against other synods. The Pacific Northwest was on the vanguard of liberalism. While they used to hold joint conferences with Missouri, by 1953 these had ceased, and in their minds, the issues were pretty well settled already. That is how Witt and the entire district could seemingly be ready to leave not only Missouri but also, if necessary, Wisconsin Synod as early as 1954. However, at this time apparently those who would leave in 1957 exercised for the next three years the same brotherly admonition as the rest of the synod exercised for the next seven years. And who can say which body exercised the proper amount of admonition?

Relations went from bad to worse between the Synodical Conference and Wisconsin Synod, between Missouri and Wisconsin Synods, and between the Pacific Northwest District and Wisconsin Synod. In a special Pastoral Conference in Yakima, 1955, Witt protested the continued appointment of committees with Missouri, calling it sinful and contrary to God's Word. Witt and others, including Dommer and Gethsemane congregation, protested the synod's failure to carry out the Saginaw resolutions of 1955, which declared fellowship with Missouri to be terminated. The Pacific Northwest District rejected the majority report of the CUC which saw a ray of hope in the actions of the Missouri Synod Convention at St. Paul, 1956. The district endorsed the minority report presented by Witt which again demanded obedience to Romans 16:17 at the coming August 1956 recessed convention. When that convention voted to "hold in abeyance" the Saginaw resolutions, the Pacific Northwest Pastoral Conference in Clarkston protested, emphasizing "that we not only believe that Romans 16:17,18 should be applied to the LCMS, but have been and now are applying it. Lest a false impression

be gained we gave our District President a unanimous vote of confidence and adopted a motion that this be made known. We want it understood that we consider him a conscientious and faithful representative of our stand and convictions."⁶⁰

In a special Pacific Northwest Convention in Tacoma, 1957, the entire district made the protest of the Pastoral Conference its own, protesting the synod's action at Saginaw, 1955, and at Watertown, 1956.⁶¹ It is hard to say whether all those who voted in favor of this protest realized all the implications, or whether they were ready to go as far as Witt was. Obviously some were not, but all of Spokane was. Those who had gained experience fighting their own confessional battles in the district, especially since they had already broken fellowship with Missouri there, would claim that they could be more objective than those back east with more personal ties. They felt they were the leaders in the battle.

It's true they were more distant from personal ties with conservative Missouri Synod pastors, but according to Professor Paul Nitz, who served in Tacoma from 1953 to 1961, the pastors in the district were receiving a biased report from their representatives. Nitz says, "I'm sure Witt felt he was giving an objective report, but we didn't have the full picture." Nitz took a vacation back to Wisconsin one winter, during which he attended a synod meeting. When the information had filtered out to the Pacific Northwest, Pastor Witt's version was reported, but any details Nitz tried to supply were discounted. Nitz explained that Pastor Zimmermann had a similar experience, and so did not follow Witt and Sydow when they resigned. But the younger pastors did follow along with what was reported to them, and joined in on the unanimous resolutions. They were not inclined to say much, and when they did, they spoke "the party line."

60. A Brief History, op. cit., pp. 7-10.

61. Ibid., p. 12.

But what was inevitable happened at the 1957 Synod Convention for Pastor Witt. After hearing just what he wanted--the final committee recommendation to break with Missouri--then hearing the vote go against the break, he felt he had no other choice but to resign right then and there. He read his resignation as President of the district, and as a pastor representing the Wisconsin Synod, on the last day of the convention, August 19, 1957. He announced his action to his congregation the following Sunday. On September 8, 1957, the congregation withdrew as a member of the synod.⁶²

No district felt the effect of this crisis as keenly as the Pacific Northwest District. In rapid succession this smallest district of Synod had lost about one-third of its pastors and their congregations. In the Spokane area where the Wisconsin Synod was at long last fostering four mission congregations and where CEF loans had built churches and parsonages for them, all mission work came to an abrupt stop. All the pastors and churches which stayed with the Synod were determined to continue in the spirit and to build upon the sound principles which had guided the district when it was organized. "The Lord of the Church did not forget His little flock in the Pacific Northwest; the work of the District has prospered."⁶³

Why was Spokane hit so hard? The answer should be obvious by now: President Witt. Professor Nitz commented that both the Pacific Northwest and the Dakota-Montana Districts had a lot of raw candidates, who were definitely influenced, if not dominated, by the leadership of the older pastors (Witt's father and brother Herb were in the Dakota-Montana District). President George Frey agrees that the strong influence of Witt's leadership was the reason all of eastern Washington left the Synod. But he

62. History of Trinity, op. cit., p. 17.

63. Lueckel, op. cit., p. 21.

adds that Witt was convinced that it was the only course to be taken, and that it was a purely doctrinal, confessional split. Pastor Adascheck, District Historian, also agrees: "There is no question in my mind that Witt's leadership exerted a tremendous influence on the other men in the Spokane area. They were all younger." And speaking of younger men, Tom Henning was one of them. He recalls: "The situation in Spokane takes me back to the very first days of my ministry." Henning, on his way to south Seattle, his first call, stopped by Spokane the night before Witt returned from the 1957 Convention. The next day the first thing Witt said to him was, "I resigned from the WELS." Henning writes, "I feel very strongly that Pastor Witt was the influence in bringing these young men, Karnitz and Zarling, into the CLC... It was indeed a confusing time for a young seminarian... I feel very strongly that it was the influence of Pastor Witt which carried the day in the Spokane area." And he adds, "He acted according to conscience and with a convinced missionary zeal."

Witt himself said that the Pacific Coast Conference supported his position, E. Kowalke and President O. J. Naumann understood completely, and other districts took a strong stand too, "but some wouldn't carry through when the chips were down." Sydow followed Witt's lead, and Witt fully expected Zimmermann to do the same, right down the line of district officials. But, as Professor Nitz explained, after one pastoral conference back east, Zimmermann went back with a new outlook.

So, in his opening report to the 1958 Pacific Northwest District Convention, "President Elmer Zimmermann struck a note of sorrow which recurred often throughout the Convention... that five pastors and six congregations have withdrawn from our District since the 1957 Convention." The district still protested continued fellowship with Missouri, stating that present discussions should be carried on only as a final stage of brotherly admonition

during which fellowship is suspended; however, they made it clear that they were not charging the Synod with sin or doctrinal error.⁶⁴

Zimmermann probably did more than anyone else to stem the tide of misinformation regarding Synod and of withdrawal from Synod. Apparently there was still danger of losing more pastors in 1959, and rightly so, since Synod still had not broken with Missouri. But Zimmermann, in a letter to the Spring Pastoral Conference in April, 1959, wrote:

I wish to emphasize the necessity of employing factual evidence in arriving at convictions which, in turn, are to become the basis for our actions. Well might we ask why we are experiencing such inharmonious actions within the membership of our Synod. I believe we shall find the answer in this: that not all are operating from the same premise. The actions of some are based on their own interpretation or understanding of synodical resolutions while others are resigned to base their stand on the official interpretation of these resolutions. Shortly after our last conference two protests, which had originated in our District and which had expressed disagreement with our Synod's action, were withdrawn because of enlightenment gained from an understanding of the official interpretation of synodical resolutions. Before further protests or statements go forth from our District, whether they be expressions of individuals, of the pastoral conference, or of the District as such, I would recommend that we first of all make every effort to obtain a clear and factual picture of the course which our Synod is pursuing so that any future statement, which we may wish to direct to our Synod, will be based on properly formed convictions. I have repeatedly received notice from individuals or groups within our Synod concerning action or suggested action against our Synod. In all of these cases I find that the official explanation of our Synod's position is being completely ignored. I understand that a statement, drawn up by several men in the New Ulm area, is being circulated for signatures and that some of the pastors within our District have received such a statement. I would advise that you consult with me before signing such statements or documents. Several groups within our Synod have written to Pres. Naumann voicing their stand in the form of what appears to be a threat or ultimatum: Either our Synod break with Missouri this summer or else we break with our Synod. Such procedure... has no place in the Church.⁶⁵

64. G. Haag, "Pacific Northwest District Convention," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 45, no. 18, (August 31, 1958), p. 283.

65. E. H. Zimmermann, letter to the Spring Pastoral Conference held at Snoqualmie, Washington, April 7-9, 1959.

The distance factor can play into the picture of any outlying district, and can lead to poor communication to the laity regarding Synod. This writer feels that it definitely contributed to the widespread discord and negative feelings toward Synod which were fostered in the Pacific Northwest and especially in Spokane.

By the 1960's things had settled down in the district, especially in Spokane, which was simply left to the remaining (now) CLC Churches. Because of financial difficulties and other factors, St. James congregation disbanded and dissolved in 1958, and Shadle Park did likewise in 1963. Many of their members joined Trinity. Zarling had started working for the City of Spokane. Karnitz, for a time, was still receiving subsidy from Synod while he was training to be a social worker for the State of Washington! He had been living in the parsonage-chapel of St. James, to which the District Mission Board still held the title. Professor Nitz commented,

Possibly the congregations of these men went back to Trinity before they needed other work. Trinity needed the support of the people in the missions which Witt had started. He simply spread himself too thin. The only way Trinity could go self-supporting was to have its indebtedness written off (which was done just before the split). It was to Synod's advantage to do so, but if he had stayed as one congregation, Synod would have been better off. Eckert, the Synod treasurer at the time, was almost in full sympathy with Witt, and probably helped to bring about the deal. Dommer tried to do the same thing later, but Synod wouldn't let him.

The two remaining churches, Trinity and Gethsemane, are still active.

Professor Nitz recalls that the 1960 District Convention at Omak was "a calm convention." At the June, 1961 Pastoral Conference in Ellensburg, just before the break from Missouri, the district still expressed sincere concern over the state of affairs within the Synodical Conference. But also apparent was a "renewed eagerness and zeal for reaching and gaining the unchurched in our midst." They discussed at length the opening of

new missions and various methods of gaining the unchurched.⁶⁶ The field was ripe, and the workers ready to start again in Spokane!

THE PERSISTENCE PAID

There was a lull in the action in Spokane from 1957 to 1961, and understandably so. There was not much information available as to what actually went on, however there was a somewhat humorous note in Zimmermann's 1959 letter which reflected the mood of the situation:

Pastor Robert Dommer is in possession of the delegate conference minutes and is not making much of an effort to send them to me. He was to be our secretary this summer. I shall appoint another in his place. The District's mimeograph has been retrieved. A balance in the Evangelist treasury in the amount of \$3.38 was turned over to Pastor Warren Steffenhagen to assist toward reimbursing him for his trip to Spokane during which time he picked up the mimeograph and supplies.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, in The Northwestern Lutheran, 1961, Zimmermann reports, "A wholesome trend has developed in our district, namely, that more and more emphasis is being placed on the winning of adults from among the unchurched." He mentions more and bigger adult classes than ever before, and interest in the work of the Board for Information and Stewardship and the Commission on Evangelism. He adds, "After years of dawdling and even a degree of indifference toward this vital phase of the Church's work, this new and wholesome trend is gaining in strength day by day." Rev. Lee Sabrowsky, Chairman of the District Mission Board, reported that the Board was carrying on explorations in South Portland, South Seattle, and Spokane, and, "In each of these large metropolitan areas there is a desperate need to begin new missions."⁶⁸

66. A. H. Zimmermann, "Direct from the Districts," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 48, no. 12, (June 4, 1961), p. 184.

67. Zimmermann, letter, op. cit.

68. A. H. Zimmermann, "Direct from the Districts," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 48, no. 24, (November 19, 1961), p. 374.

Pastor Adasheck recalls, "Even after the defection, our district felt strongly that we still belonged in Spokane and that there was a need for us being there. The fact that we had property there certainly played a part, but I don't think it was the overriding issue."

Professor Nitz said he was sure they discussed Spokane and wanted to get a man in, but knew they would meet with hostility. He feels that the WELS could not have gotten back into Spokane any sooner--there was no nucleus, and it would have just incensed people to go back in immediately. However, he thought there were a couple families there who were the first contacts for Steffenhagen.

It appears the District Mission Board had Warren Steffenhagen, from Withrow, come down to Spokane for exploratory work in 1961, before calling him permanently. In any case, Steffenhagen accepted their call in August 1962 to begin a mission in Spokane, using the property of the old St. James Mission.

The church was named St. Matthew Ev. Lutheran Church by its first members; Alan R. and Esther Annis, Charles and Evelyn Beach, Kurt and Elise Flechel, and Leo and Lillian Johnson. These families worshipped in the living room of the Synod's parsonage, located at 16th and Ray.⁶⁹

After several months of worshipping this way, they rented a small store building in Lincoln Heights for services. During this time they had no piano, but Steffenhagen and Esther Annis would record the liturgy and hymns for each Sunday at the Annis home, Esther playing piano, and Steffenhagen singing. During the service he would operate the tape recorder with a foot pedal. After several months of this arrangement, the two of them bought a used piano for the services.⁷⁰

69. History of St. Matthew, scrapbook compiled by members and pastor.

70. Ibid.

But, District President George Frey recalls, "Steffenhagen was the type of man who was getting frustrated there, having to start from scratch." And the Mission Board minutes of 1963 include a letter from Steffenhagen, stating that things were "not too encouraging in Spokane," even with four families totaling twenty people. It was also a hindrance not being able to find a place more suitable in which to hold services until a chapel could be built.⁷¹

Steffenhagen accepted a call in 1964, and during the vacancy St. Matthew was served by Pastors Albrecht, Adascheck, Tessmer, Widmann, and Vicar Carlson. John Henning received the call to be our Synod's resident missionary in Spokane, and was installed August 29, 1965. Services were again held in the parsonage. Henning was also to serve as contact pastor for Lutheran students attending Washington State University in Pullman.⁷²

St. Matthew adopted a constitution March 6, 1966. The first baptism was of Dawn Nollmeyer, April 3, 1966. The first confirmation was of Bob Annis Jr., and was held in the parsonage.⁷³

The congregation started looking for property on which to build in the spring of 1966; in October they started renting the gymnasium of Linwood School on the north side for \$30.00 per Sunday and held services there. They started both Sunday School and a choir that year.⁷⁴

In a special congregational meeting on April 7, 1968, they decided to buy the property at Country Homes Boulevard and Cedar Road for \$9,184.65. A Building Committee was formed to plan the church and parsonage, and that summer Mr. Darrel Stebbins was contacted to begin work as the architect with a preliminary plot plan. The plan included the

71. A. H. Zimmermann, "Direct from the Districts," The Northwestern Lutheran, vol. 50, no. 10, (May 19, 1963), p. 157.

72. History of St. Matthew, op. cit.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

present church, parsonage, future school and future church expansion. His plans were approved in February 1969. In April the congregation accepted a bid of \$22,412.00 from Larry Christian to build the parsonage; the church was built by Sutherlin and Son. Ground breaking was held in the spring of 1969. The concrete foundation for the church was poured in September. Both church and parsonage were under construction at the same time.⁷⁵

Pastor Henning moved into the new parsonage on Saturday, January 17, 1970. On March 8th the first services were held in the new church. Pews were installed on the 16th, and the dedication service was held April 5, 1970. The cost of building the church was \$78,000.00, excluding furnishings and work done by members. The cross, altar, pulpit and lecturn were built by Garnet Stoltenburg, a member.⁷⁶

St. Matthew School held its first classes September 1971 in the church basement. The teachers who first served, in succession, were: Jane Rodmyre until June 1972; JoAnn Nunnenkamp from September 1972 to February 1974; Linda Pantier, Jane Price, Judith Vater and Terry Vanderlin, emergency teachers for the rest of the 1974 school year. David Johnson was called to be principal for September 1974. In the spring of 1975 the School Planning Committee was organized to buy a teacherage and to build a school building, and ground-breaking for the school was April 24, 1977. David Johnson took a call to San Jose, California, and Leo Frese was called to be the new principal. School construction began that summer of 1977 and the dedication was February 26, 1978. The upper classroom of the school was completed the summer of 1979, Rebecca Brandt taught as an emergency second teacher for the 1979-1980 school year, and grades 1-4 were taught upstairs; grades 5-8 downstairs. Jane Wade was called to teach grades 1-4 and came the summer of 1980. Leo Frese resigned the

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

spring of 1982, and David Sauer of Citrus Heights, California was called to be the present principal.⁷⁷

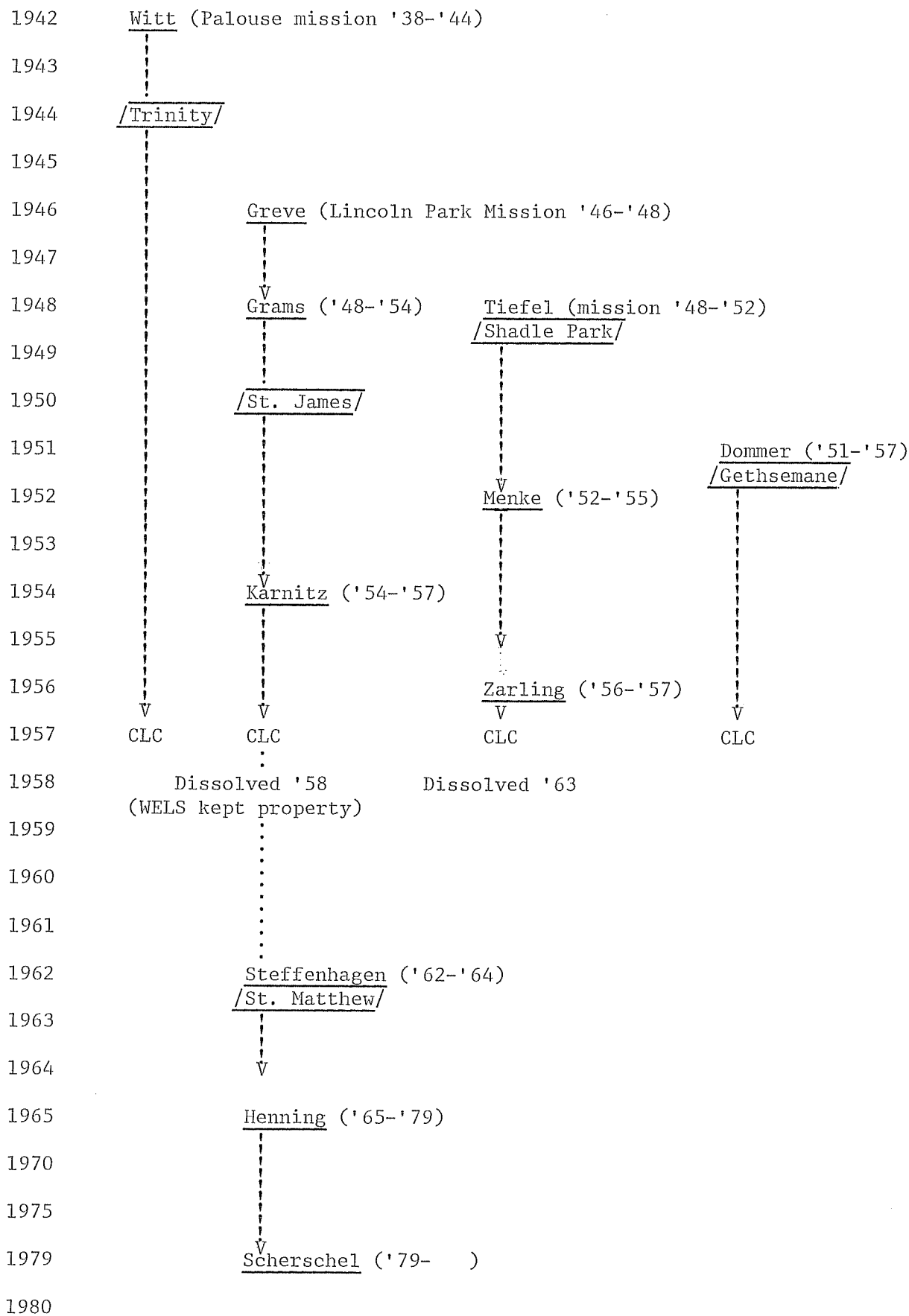
An Anniversary celebration was held June 22, 1975 to honor Pastor Henning's tenth year of service in Spokane. Pastor Henning took a call to Holy Trinity in Kent, Washington in January of 1979. Pastor Christian Sulzle from Pullman served as vacancy pastor. That May, Douglas Scherschel received a call from the Assignment Committee at Seminary and was ordained and installed July 19, 1979. In 1980 St. Matthew became self-supporting. In the first seventeen years of its existence, St. Matthew's annual budget and membership have increased from \$7,400.00, 19 communicants and 28 souls in 1966 to \$113,629.00, 165 communicants, 230 souls, and a Christian Day School enrollment of 36 in 1983.⁷⁸

Truly the Lord has notably blessed St. Matthew Ev. Lutheran. Its existence and continued success are attributable not to the talent, the missionary zeal, or the persistence of the workers, but really only to the God of grace, who sends the workers and causes his Word to accomplish what he desires. Nevertheless, the Lord calls on us to be persistent in spreading that Word, in reaching souls in new places, even in trying again to reach souls in places we have been before, even under opposition. Whether or not the Lord would give our Synod a second chance in other cities as he did in Spokane, no one can guarantee. But it is our duty and our joyful privilege as ambassadors for Christ to try, everywhere, and to "quench not the Spirit." It worked in Spokane. There were too many souls to reach with the precious gospel, too much work to be done, to keep the WELS out of Spokane for very long.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

Has the persistence paid in any additional ways? At a time when the WELS was no more welcome in Spokane, exactly one month after Maynard Witt resigned from the WELS, an insignificant red-headed baby was born about one mile from Trinity Lutheran Church, who was a graduate of Shadle Park High School, who was confirmed at St. Matthew Ev. Lutheran, who is now a Senior graduating from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, who compiled this history. He thinks so.

WELS IN SPOKANE

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. The Northwestern Lutheran, various articles and authors from 1940 to 1963.
2. History of the Pacific Northwest District, Compiled by Pastor William Lueckel in 1968 for the Occasion of the Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Organization of the Pacific Northwest District of the WELS 1918-1968.
3. Histories of Trinity, St. James, Shadle Park, Gethsemane, and St. Matthew, compiled by their pastors and members.
4. A Brief History, a paper which lists major events regarding the positions on fellowship of the Synodical Conference, Wisconsin Synod and Missouri Synod, up to 1957.
5. Personal interview with M. J. Witt, December 28, 1983.
Personal interview with Professor Paul Nitz, April 16, 1984.
6. Telephone interviews with Pacific Northwest District President George Frey and Pastor John Henning, December 29, 1983.
7. Letter from Pastor Tom Henning, February 23, 1984.
Letter from Pacific Northwest District Historian Tim Adascheck, February 5, 1984.
8. Letter by Pacific Northwest District President Elmer Zimmermann to the 1959 Pastoral Conference, September 13, 1959.