

The Slovak Synod

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May 1, 1996
C.H. 331
Professor Brenner

Outline

I. Origin

II. Organization

III. 1908-1959

IV. 1959-1971

V. Merger with LCMS

I. Origin

In order to understand the organization of the Slovaks in America, one must realize where these people came from and how they viewed themselves. In the 19th century, there was no such place as Czechoslovakia which would logically encase the Slovak people. The Slovaks were ruled by the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary which was established in 1867 (Dolak 3). These lands held peoples with religious backgrounds in Lutheranism, Greek Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism (Bomba). They survived by speaking their own dialect of the Slovak language and by remaining a people. Some of the counties they lived in were Saris, Piestany, Zvolen, and Poprad. The tyranny of their Hungarian rulers, namely the Magyars, is what mainly drove them from their homeland (Kucharik). But that was not the only reason. Along with the despotism and exploitation, there was also a strong economic reason. There was little good land in their regions and that was taken, so they looked to America for riches and adventure (Dolak 11).

And so they came to America. According to one source, "by 1899 there were between 160,000 and 200,000 Slovaks in the United States". They came and settled in the eastern and midwestern states of Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Ohio, Illinois, and Minnesota (Nelson 277). Anna Popyak, who was born in the United States in 1903, explained how her Slovak family came to America. Her mother's father first came by himself to Pennsylvania and worked for a coal company in the boiler room. He earned enough money so that whichever of his family wanted to follow him, could.

Her mother then took her grandfather's offer and came over to America by herself to Gensville, Pennsylvania. Fortunately, they had a Slovak church in nearby Hazelton, Pennsylvania (Popyak). But not every immigrant was that fortunate. And even if they came to a city near a church, that did not mean they would be ministered by a Slovak Lutheran pastor. In Passaic, New Jersey, where Slovaks also gathered for worship, the congregation had to look to German and Swedish Lutherans for preaching and even to Czech and English Presbyterians (Centennial 4).

The Slovaks who came to the area of Buckhorn, Wisconsin, which is now Cudahy, organized themselves in a way that was not unusual. In 1892, they formed a chapter of the Slovak Evangelical Union which was a fraternal insurance company. "It is no secret that a primary purpose of this fraternal order was to found a Lutheran church" (Moravec 5). This Union played a major role in the formation of the Slovak Synod, and later on in its problems.

But before the Synod was founded, there were simply a number of independent, confessional Slovak Lutheran churches scattered around the country. Therefore, other synods had interests in bringing them into their folds. The Pittsburgh Synod of the General Council worked with Slovaks in the coal and iron regions of Western Pennsylvania, the Joint Synod of Ohio supported work among Slovaks in Ohio, and the Missouri Synod trained Slovak students for ministry (Nelson 261). But the Slovak Lutherans wanted to remain Slovak Lutherans.

II. Organization

As mentioned earlier, the Slovak Evangelical Union played a major role in the formation of a Slovak Synod. It was at meetings of the Union where the push came to organize the Slovak churches. A Seniorate of five pastors was formed on June 5, 1894, at the insistence of the laymen during meetings of the Slovak Evangelical Union in Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania. The Seniorate did not last very long, but the idea of organization did not die (Dolak 33-34).

Five years later another attempt at organization was made when a series of three meetings was held. The first meeting was held at Wilkes-Barre, Pa. on June 9 1899. A declaration consisting of Four Points was adopted. The second preliminary meeting was held at Braddock, Pa. on January 16-17, 1900. The third meeting was held on June 4, 1902, also at Braddock, Pa. (Synod 2)

The four points which were discussed and which formed the basis for the organization of the Synod in their final form after the second Braddock meeting are as follows:

Point 1

The Slovak American Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the United States of North America confesses the divinity of the Holy Scriptures (canonical). Its denial has served and (still) serves merely the cause of political oppression.

Point 2

Individual churches (or local congregations) are completely independent with regard to their internal affairs; however, in matters pertaining to salvation they are united by the Four Wilkes-Barre Points fixed in the Minutes of the Braddock Meeting.

Point 3

The administration (the administrative service and not the officials) of the Slovak American Church of the Augsburg Confession in the United States of North America is conducted by the pastors who alternate for this purpose according to alphabetical order.

Point 4

As we take over the administration we do not thereby separate ourselves from anyone; on the contrary, just by using it for the spreading of the Gospel of God and its tasks (love to the new country and our people) we thereby unite ourselves with all true believers and the elect of God.

And so the path was clear for the official organization of a Synod at the next meeting on September 2, 1902 at Connellsville, PA. There they officially founded the Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in the United States. The meeting was attended by 10 pastors and 4 laymen which represented 15 congregations (SELC 1). The congregations were:

SS. Peter and Paul, Freeland, Pa.
SS. Peter and Paul, Hazleton, Pa.
St. Paul, Braddock, Pa.
St. Matthew, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.
Holy Trinity, Passaic, N.J.
Holy Trinity, Cleveland, Ohio
Holy Trinity, New York City
Holy Trinity, Yonkers, N.Y.
SS. Peter and Paul, Guttenberg, N.J.
St. John the Baptist, Charleroi, Pa.
First Slovak Lutheran Church, Raritan, N.J.
Holy Trinity, Newark, N.J.
St. John, Lansford, Pa.
St. Stephen, Peckville, Pa.
St. Peter, Connellsville, Pa. (Dolak 43)

Some at the meeting wanted to join the Missouri Synod at this time, and others wanted to pass a resolution to join the Synodical Conference. But they did pass a resolution stating that they were of one mind with the "orthodox Missouri Synod" and therefore they separated from the General Council (Nelson 277).

Approximately one-half of all Slovak Lutheran congregations did not join the Slovak Synod for a variety of reasons, some of which stemmed from early controversies in the synod and its pro-Missouri orientation. In 1919 the Slovak Zion Synod was organized to gather these congregations into a church body, and the next year it joined the United Lutheran Church in America. Even after the formation of the Lutheran Church in

America (1962) the Slovak Zion Synod continued as a bilingual nongeographical synod, the only one in the new church body. (Nelson 278)

III. 1902-1959

The first portion of the up and running history of what was lovingly called the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC) had both dilemmas and achievement. Two leading men of the Synod, President Daniel Laucek and Secretary Drahotin Kvacala, left the synod in 1905. President Laucek left because of the lack of support for his confessional prayer, and Pastor Kvacala left because of the Synod's warming relations with the Synodical Conference. Also during this first decade of existence, relations with the Slovak Evangelical Union began to deteriorate. The SELC felt that the Union, which they felt should have remained an insurance organization, was meddling in church affairs. But even with these debates going on, the SELC gained six more churches (Dolak 56-67).

Another controversy which plagued the SELC in its early years was the question of whether or not the SELC would require synod-wide communion announcements. But the acceptance of this practice was wider than what was communicated at the time. In his book, George Dolak quoted the new Synod President John Pelikan with writing that only Holy Trinity in Cleveland, Ohio had communion announcements (58). But already in 1901, Holy Trinity in Garfield, New Jersey, a charter congregation of the SELC had communion announcements (Centennial 6). But even without all the facts, the

young synod solved their problems patiently and in order, and by 1926, announcement for communion was no longer the issue it had been (Dolak 159).

The understanding and the unity that existed in the SELC is exhibited in the events of the individual churches. Their small size was an asset when it came to friendly contact and awareness of each other. St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cudahy, Wisconsin was served by President Pelikan during an extended vacancy. At times he came up from Chicago and helped them organize as a congregation and introduced the idea of synod to them (Moravec 13). In 1906, President Pelikan was called by Holy Trinity in Garfield, New Jersey, but he declined. Another man who was called by the Garfield congregation was Reverend Stephen M. Tuhy, who had helped out the congregation while he was a student. Even though he declined their call, he did end up ordaining and installing their pastor, Joseph Kucharik in 1913. This contact with Reverend Tuhy blossomed years later as he visited from Florida and was visited by Reverend Kucharik who needed to go south for health reasons (Centennial 7-23). For Reverend Tuhy, after being President of the Synod, had gone on to be a missionary and first full time pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Slavia, Florida. This church the Synod's children's home and home for the aged, Luther Haven (Capsule).

verb
missi.

Organizing into a synod brought many blessings to the individual congregations and to the Kingdom as a whole. One of those blessings was entering into the fellowship of the Synodical

Conference. "President Jan Pelican, president of the Slovak Ev. Lutheran Church, was present at the Synodical Conference Convention, New Ulm, Mn., August 19-25, 1908, at which time the Slovak Synod was unanimously accepted into membership by the Synodical Conference." At the time that the SELC joined the Synodical Conference, the members already in fellowship were The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod and The Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States. The (New) Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church later joined in 1920 (SELC).

The best years for the Slovak Synod seem to have been during the Great Depression and World War II. In 1933, Pastor Stephen Tuhy went to Slavia, Florida as a missionary and became the pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran Church. In 1934, the church purchased 13 acres of land for \$200 and they built a parsonage for \$2700. "The ... red-brick St. Luke's Lutheran Church was dedicated on June 4, 1939 during the height of the depression. It cost \$7,421 to build (Supplement 2)." Also during this time in Slavia, plans for an orphanage and retirement home were in the works. And finally, "on May 30, 1948 there was dedicated in Slavia, Florida a Children's Home and a Home for Old folks (Synod 9)."

The convention on which that orphanage was voted was held in Cudahy in 1937 at the height of the depression. The Cudahy congregation was thrilled to hold that convention and to house all the attendees (Moravec 15). In Garfield, New Jersey, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church voted overwhelmingly in 1934 to open a Christian Day School and to buy a new organ for the church. During these

hard years in our country the Lord did not forget to bless his people, as is shown from the Slovak Synod statistics. In 1902, the Synod started with 15 congregations and 10 pastors. But in 1939, "The Synod was made up of 64 congregations, 56 churches, 54 pastors, 4 teachers, 22,748 baptized members of which 19,889 are communicants (Centennial 25-31)".

IV. 1959-1971

Retired Pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Garfield, New Jersey and of St. Luke's Church in Slavia, Florida, John Kucharik related to me, "The Slovaks have always been strong in mission work". And that is shown in the attitudes leading up to and the action of 1959. From an early age the Slovak Synod realized the barriers put up by their ancestry.

Language was the first and most obvious barrier that they tackled. Already in the late 1920's, Pastor John M. Ondov "complied to requests for the younger generation for 'English' services and this became a reality without protest from the Slovak elders (Moravec 14)." Soon afterward, Holy Trinity in Garfield, New Jersey offered an English service once a month. And the next year, 1932, they were offered twice a month (Centennial 22-24). But not until 1939 did St. Luke's in Slavia, Florida offer even an English vesper service once a month. And it took a few more years for them to have English morning services (SELC). The Synod realized that it is hard to do mission work in an English speaking country without using the English language. The reason it took

twenty to thirty years to face this fact is that up to this time, they had been concentrating on unifying all the Slovaks who were truly in fellowship. When they started to look around themselves, instead of for each other, they saw a change was needed.

The other barrier that they faced was their name. Being the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church did not make newcomers feel completely like a part of the group. Yet they did not want to give up their rich heritage. And so in order to remove that barrier and hold on to the past, they retained the acronym SELC but changed the words for which it stood. In place of The Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Synod, "In 1959 the name of our Synod was changed to THE SYNOD OF EV. LUTHERAN CHURCHES."

Reasons: Diminishing work in Slovak language
Evangelism in our communities
Name "Slovak" was limiting, confining, misleading
(SELC)

Once the name was changed and the Synodical Conference was losing members resulting in its break-up in 1966, the SELC began asking itself the question of whether they should remain an entity unto themselves or merge with the LCMS. Pastor John Kucharik reported the feelings and attitudes of the members of the SELC as mixed. Some felt that bigger was not necessarily better. They felt that they still had a purpose to remain independent and there was still a significance for their church. By remaining an entity they could keep away from liberal and conservative extremes. Hopefully they could aid LC-MS and what would be ELCA in becoming more doctrinally sound. Some felt that if they merged, they would lose their identity, orthodoxy, familiar fellowship, and family

principles. On the other hand, many saw practical reasons for joining Missouri. The SELC was using the LC-MS to educate their pastors. Therefore, it was only natural that they needed to become closer and were leaning that way. They felt a responsibility to give support to the synod that was training their pastors. Also they felt that if they stayed apart they would simply be duplicating efforts and ~~duplication~~ administration. Most in the SELC leaned toward Missouri (Kucharik).

In 1970, the statistics of the SELC were 64 congregations, parishes and mission stations, 21,000 souls, and 55 active pastors (Capsule).

V. Merger with LCMS

"At the SELC Convention in 1965 it was resolved to appoint a five man committee to study all aspects of merger and to meet with the officials of the LC-MS (SELC 2)." In 1968, on the occasion of the 65th Anniversary of the Synod, they decided to furnish both of the LCMS Seminaries, in St. Louis, Missouri and Springfield, Illinois with chapels. At the 1969 convention, the delegates approved resolutions of fellowship with the American Lutheran Church and merger with the LC-MS, both of which needed to be ratified by a majority of congregations (Centennial 62-72).

A historic event takes place at Holy Trinity (Garfield, N.J.), Sunday, January 12, 1971, when the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches merges with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at an afternoon service. The merger results in the SELC becoming a non-geographic District of the LC-MS. We maintain a continuing relationship with all the congregations of our former Synod. The Rev. Dr. J. A. O. Preus, President of LC-MS, and the Rev. Milan A. Ontko, President of SELC

participate to effect this merger. Other clergy participate and 363 attend this special event (Centennial 72).

Fortunately the SELC remained the SELC, but now SELC simply stood for SELC. What formerly was a synod was now the "SELC District of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod". They didn't lose their whole name in the merger so a feeling of identity remained. Basically the synod structure remained the same, but ran under a different title. The congregations of the SELC Synod all remained in the SELC District. On the map it seems unconventional to have this new Missouri District spread out over the eastern and mid-western portions of the United States and into Canada, but that was part of the merger agreement - to be a non-geographical district. The SELC didn't want to abandon the close ties and comraderie that they had between their congregations connected to their Slovak history despite the geographical distance (Kucharik).

In the years to follow the commemoration of the amalgamation in 1971, there were few questions raised as to the wisdom of the agreement. From the September 20, 1977 Synod meeting at St. Louis, these points were sent out to the congregations of the SELC District.

- a. Expressions of mutual appreciation for SELC District
- b. No inclination to withdraw nor any reluctance to continue in the agreement
- c. Expressed value in continuing as a non-geographical district (SELC 2)

But at the fourth convention of the SELC District held in Garfield, New Jersey on June 22-25, 1978, "Members of the Advisory Commission were requested to consider the viable alternatives of

continuing the SELC as a separate independent Lutheran Church body (SELC 2)." This one instance seems to be the only questioning of the amalgamation, and it came nine years after the SELC Synod voted to merge with the LC-MS, even though the consummation of the agreement had not yet taken place. But at the next convention of the SELC District on June 19-22, 1980 at Lakewood, Ohio, "The convention expressed the sentiment that 'the SELC District will not be dissolved as a non-geographic entity of the LC-MS for an "indefinite period of time"' (Centennial 101)."

The future of the SELC District of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod is debatable. Retired Pastor John Kucharik suggested that the feeling in the SELC is mixed as to forfeiting their non-geographical status as a district and fully consolidating with the Missouri Synod. If that were to happen, the remnants of the SELC would probably disappear altogether. That probability is grounds enough for there to remain a vocal argument against such a merger. On the other hand, the SELC District has been calling men from the Missouri Synod Seminaries without a requirement of Slovakian heritage, and the parishiners of the SELC, because of outreach efforts, are by no means overwhelmingly Slovak. Therefore the SELC is beginning to entertain logical arguments for total amalgamation. It seems to be the natural progression of a growing church body.

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SUPPLEMENT TO THE OVIEDO VOICE. "St. Luke's Lutheran Church Building On the Past... Looking Toward The Future." Commemorative Keepsake Edition, November 14, 1993.

"THE SYNOD OF EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCHES, 65TH Anniversary, 1902-1967." (Attached)

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st. luke's lutheran church

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December 31, 1970

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

In a recent brother-to-brother letter from the president of our Synod we were reminded of the merger in which the SELC becomes a non-geographical District of the LCMS. This step formally takes place on January 1, 1971. Among his recommendations Dr. Preus suggested that, where feasible, Missouri Synod Congregations arrange for a joint service on January 1 or soon thereafter with an adjacent SELC parish in either one of the two churches, depending on size and preference, with the choice to be given to the SELC congregation and with the Missouri Synod pastor perhaps offering to fill the pulpit.

Dr. August Bernthal acted on these recommendations and appointed a committee to arrange for such a service. We are inviting you to join us for that service at St. Luke's Ev. Lutheran Church Route 426 near Red Bug Road, two miles South West of Oviedo on Sunday, January 10, 1971 at 4 P.M.

President of the Florida-Georgia District will speak the sermon, Pastors H. Abram, G. Seaman, J.J. Kucharik, G. Marcek, and Dr. Daniel will serve as liturgists. Other clergy are invited to worship, attired please in clerical suits (not vestments) and join in a processional. Pews will be reserved for pastors. Adjacent pews will be reserved for pastors wives and families. We are also holding several pews in reserve for the Boards of Directors of the nearest sister churches, Ascension, Prince of Peace, Trinity, and Redeemer Sanford.

Following the service the ladies of St. Luke's will serve light refreshments in the school.

Cordially in Christ,

The Committee
H. Abram
G. Seaman
J. J. Kucharik

CAPSULE HISTORY OF ST. LUKE'S

Oviedo (Slavia), Florida

March 17, 1912 congregation founded. Small church erected from lumber of old shacks. Visiting pastor and summer vicars supplied spiritual food during almost 20 year period. October 15, 1933 Pastor S. M. Tuhy came as missionary. In July 1934 Pastor Tuhy granted Call by St. Luke's, accepted and installed July 31. October 1934 thirteen acres of land purchased. New parsonage 1935. Pastor Tuhy married Olga Pankuch January 1936. New church dedicated in 1939. All Slovak worship until this time. English vespers begin once a month. In a few years English morning services begin. In 1939 Masaryk town congregation organized and served by S. Tuhy 14 years. In 1937 five acres offered SELC for a Lutheran Haven (children's Home and Home for aged). Haven chartered as nonprofit corporation in June 1946. First two buildings dedicated in May 1948. Today it comprises 60 acres, two children's cottages, home for the aged (to be expanded 23 additional residents), superintendent home, and a retirement village of 8 cottages. Cottages consist of some four apartment units and some two apartment units. 1944 St. Luke's starts nursery school. 1947 opening of Christian Day School, grades 1 and 2 and 4, one teacher. Grades added each year. Currently K - 9 grades with staff of 11 teachers. Church enlarged in 1957. April 1952 radio broadcasting begun from WTRR Sanford, later WKIS Orlando. Still broadcast each Sunday, 9:30 A.M. December 1967 S. M. Tuhy died. May 1968 J. J. Kucharik installed.

S Y N O D (SELC)

Founded 1902 Connelsville, Pennsylvania. At very outset declared fellowship with LCMS. Trained all our pastors and teachers at LCMS schools and seminaries. Entered into Synodical Conference in 1908 and retained membership until its final dissolution. Presidents of SELC: D. Laucek 1902 - 1905; J. Pelikan 1905-1913 and 1919-1921; S. Tuhy, Sr. 1913 - 1919; J. Somora 1921 - 1922; J. Bradac 1922 - 1939; A. Daniel 1939 - 1949; P. Rafaj 1949 - 1962; J. Kovac 1962 - 1969; M. Ontko 1969 - ~~1972~~. At one time were almost successful in uniting all the Slovak Lutheran Congregations in U.S.A. into 1 Synod. There exists today a LCA Slovak Synod operating as a District. SELC Missions concentrate particularly in the Canadian field, Montreal, and Ontario, working particularly among Slavic immigrants. Over a quarter century ago began Mission work Jugoslavs and Slovak immigrants in the Chaco Province of Argentina, South America. Field now supports three native pastors, two of which work in Slovak and Spanish. Our largest concentration of SELC members exists in the metropolitan areas of the East and Midwest of U.S.A. Latest statistics 64 congregations and parishes, mission stations 21,000 souls, are 55 active pastors. "We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord."

Americas - 1972

*Australia - Fort Casey -
(Melbourne)*

April 27, 1984

1st Convocation
Cudahy, Wisconsin

SELC DISTRICT OF LCMS

Introduction: The Slovak Immigrant

Historical Background:

THE SLOVAK EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
(Slovensko-evanjelicka Augsburgskeho vyznanie celocirkev
v Spojenych Statoch Americkych)

"Celocirkev" = designates a general Church Body

Organized: September 2-4, 1902

Connellsville, Pa. @ St. Peter Lutheran Church

Representation: 10 pastors; 4 laymen; 15 congregations;

4 laypersons as guests including Jan Bajus

First President: The Rev. Daniel Z. Laucek

English Secretary: The Rev. Karol Hauser

Ten Tasks:

The Constitution

The Seal: The Good Shepherd

Sacrament of the Altar to be administered to mature Christians

First CEF?: Each congregation should appoint a special
collector of monies for the Synodical
Building Fund.

LCMS: The new Synod was of one mind with the "orthodox"
Missouri Synod.

DOLAK: "The Synod was confronted by a multitude of problems which clamored for solution.
The Synod was eager to gr-w and to gain new pastors, but it was determined not to
relax its requirements for membership."

"Church Inspector": Chiefly concerned about the care of
property; not the pastor, doctrine
or spiritual matters.

THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE

Organized: July 10-16, 1872 at Milwaukee and at that time held its first convention.

The Synodical Conference was a federation of four synods:

The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (1872)

The Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States (1872)

The Norwegian Synod of the American Ev. Lutheran Church (1920)

The Slovak Ev. Lutheran Church of America (1908)

President Jan Pelikan, president of the Slovak Ev. Lutheran Church, was present at the
Synodical Conference Convention, New Ulm, Mn., August 19-25, 1908, at which time the
Slovak Synod was unanimously accepted into membership by the Synodical Conference.

The Synodical Conference held its last convention, July 1966, in Chicago, with the Convention Service at Zion, Norridge, Il., July 13, 1966.

THE NAME CHANGE

In 1959 the name of our Synod was changed to THE SYNOD OF EV. LUTHERAN CHURCHES.

Reasons: Diminishing work in Slovak language
Evangelism in our communities
Name "Slovak" was limiting, confining, misleading

TOWARD BECOMING A DISTRICT

Climate of the time: Dissolution of the Synodical Conference
Relationship between SELC and LCMS
Pastors and teachers trained by LCMS

LCMS Convention: At the LCMS Convention in Detroit, June 16-26, 1965 and invitation was extended to the SELC to merge with the LCMS.

SELC CONVENTION: At the SELC Convention in 1965 it was resolved to appoint a five man committee to study all aspects of merger and to meet with the officials of the LCMS.
At the 1967 SELC Convention the Merger Study Committee reported to the convention and was authorized to continue its study of merger. In 1969, Clark, N.J., resolution 69:01 called for the SELC-LCMS Union Agreement which was approved.

SELECTED CONDITIONS OF THE AGREEMENT

1. A change in the corporate name of the SELC to "SELC District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod."
2. The SELC shall become a non-geographical district, to be known as the "SELC District".
3. The plan of merger was to be effective on or about the opening day of said 1977 LCMS Convention. "With the consent of each party, the effective date of the merger may be advanced or postponed.
4. Upon the Consummation Date the President of Synod shall assign the congregations, pastors and teachers of the SELC to the proper geographic districts of the Missouri Synod.
5. The Consummation Date may be advanced or postponed either by the Missouri Synod of the SELC District, and the SELC District is also free to withdraw from this agreement.
6. The agreement may be amended by mutual consent.
7. There is also a Church Extension Fund Document.
8. There is a Pension and Annuity Document.

HISTORY - as the SELC District

SELC became an LCMS District as of January 1, 1971.

Service of Commemoration: January 12, 1971, at Garfield, N.J.
President J.O.A. Preus and President Milan Ontko

1st Convention: November 14-16, 1972 at Slavia, Florida

2nd Convention: August 23-25, 1974 at Bloomington, Mn.

Call to extend the Consummation Date for 3 primary reasons:

1. Funding the Pension Fund
2. Plans for amalgamation of U.S. & Canadian Missions
3. Continuing operation & support of the Lutheran Haven

3rd Convention: August 13-15, 1976 at Cudahy, Wisconsin

Call for an Interim Report for 1978 SELC Convention

Call for the appointment of a 4th member to Merger Commission

Call to study all aspects of the proposed amalgamation including relationships of SELC Congregations to the geographical districts of the Synod.

IMPORTANT MEETING - September 20, 1977 at St. Louis, Mo.

- a. Expressions of mutual appreciation for SELC District
- b. No inclination to withdraw nor any reluctance to continue in the agreement.
- c. Expressed value in continuing as a non-geographical district.
- d. SELC will continue to study all aspects of the consummation and will survey our congregations.
- e. Agreed on an "open-ended" date regarding consummation

SURVEY REPORT

51 out of 55 congregations responded to the survey. 28 replies indicated there would be no advantage through the proposed amalgamation; 27 responses indicated no disadvantages to continue as at present.

4th Convention: June 22-25, 1978 at Garfield, New Jersey.

Members of the Advisory Commission were requested to consider the viable alternatives of continuing the SELC as a separate independent Lutheran Church body.

5th Convention: June 19-22, 1980 at Lakewood, Ohio

Report of the Advisory Commission presented:

- a. That we continue as a non-geographical LCMS District
 - b. That we rejoice in fellowship with LCMS
 - c. That together we continue to serve the Lord.
- Report was accepted together with recommendations.

6th Convention: June 10-13, 1982 at St. Louis, Mo.
The matter of forming a Canadian Circuit in Ontario was tabled.

7th Convention: April 1985 at Slavia, Florida

N.B.: No meeting of the full commission is scheduled.
The consummation date remains open-ended.

BENEFITS, BLESSINGS, PRIVILEGES, RESPONSIBILITIES AS A DISTRICT OF LCMS:

1. Training of pastors and teachers; assignment of vicars; calls to candidates.
2. Concordia Health Plans: Health Benefits; Retirement Program; Death benefits.
3. Mission opportunities through cooperation with geographic districts of LCMS.
4. Growth opportunities through cooperation with geographic districts and Synod for officers, board members and committees.
5. Support of Synod, especially in the Mission of the Church. Ex. F.I.R.

N.B.: We are not coasting as a district.

THREE CIRCUITS OF THE SELC DISTRICT:

<u>Western Circuit</u>	<u>CENTRAL Circuit</u>	<u>Eastern Circuit</u>
Counselor: Rev. E. Velebir	Counselor: Rev. J. Kucera	Counselor: Rev. Kritsch
1st V.P.: Rev. L.J. Bajus	President: Rev. Dr. A. Marcis	2nd VP: Rev. Jos. Kucharik

Size: 39 Districts in the LCMS. Six districts between 15-20,000 communicants.

We are not the smallest district. (Two are smaller in numbers.)

Convocations: "Circuits shall arrange for a Circuit Convocation, which is a larger gathering of members from Circuit congregations held during a year in which there is no synodical or District convention. Its purpose is to provide a setting in which congregational members may know of and celebrate the ministry pursued by each congregation, may review and discuss the work of the Circuit Forum, and may receive information on various phases of the work pursued through Districts and the Synod. As such, its emphasis should be on inspiration, education and motivation." (4.51 Functions p. 128)

Circuit Forum: "Each congregation shall be represented at the Circuit Forum at least by its pastor and one member designated by the congregation, although each Circuit may request additional representation depending on its adopted objectives. The Circuit Forum will meet at least twice a year." (4.31 Representation p. 127)