

Canada is its own village

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The two natures are so united in Christ that God and man cannot now be separated and divorced from each other. I may not say: at this point Christ is God; here Christ is man. Rather I must say: Where Christ is God, there Christ is man; and, again, Where Christ is man, there Christ is God; whatever Christ the man does, the Christ who is God also does; and, conversely, whatever the Christ who is God does, Christ the man also does.¹

In these words we hear that Martin Luther is explaining the two natures of Christ. Luther explains that Christ has two inseparable and indivisible natures. Christ was born this way and this way he will stay and will not change. This is an essential truth of the Bible that is taught in confirmation and Bible instruction classes all over the world. It is during this section that I use myself as an illustration. I was born in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. I was a natural born Canadian citizen. I was also born to Allen and Mary Beth Lindke who were natural born citizens of the United States of America. Because of these two facts I have two natures. I am a 100% Canadian citizen and 100% citizen of the United States of America. I do realize that it is a little presumptuous to relate myself to Christ in this way but it makes the point clear to the students that I am teaching. It is also because of this fact that I still and will always have a love for the nation of Canada. It is my mother land. It is the place where I was born and raised. It is the place that I will always be able to claim as my first home. I am proud to be a Canadian just as much as I am proud to be a citizen of the United States of America. It is with this in mind that I have decided to study further the relation of my other citizenship; my citizenship of God's holy and eternal kingdom.

As I stated before I was born in Canada and I spent the first 13 years of my life there. I enjoyed my life and cherish the time that I spent there. In the spring of 1997 my father, Rev. Allen Lindke, accepted a call to serve the congregation of Mt. Sinai Evangelical Lutheran Church in Montrose, Michigan. My time in Canada was my time for youth and childhood. Some

¹ Plass, Ewald M. *What Luther Says: An Anthology*. Concordia Publishing House; St. Louis, Missouri. 1959 p. 172

may say that it is really in your later teenage years that you become who you really are, but we cannot forget the impressionable years when we are just figuring out what we will be like. My time in Canada was a time that has greatly shaped me as the person that I am today, both in a positive and a negative sense.

I have lived in the United States almost as long as I had lived in Canada and have now found this to be my new home. As most people, I found a way to distinguish myself from the rest of the people that surrounded me and ^{USE}using my origins just made perfect sense. In my years of school in the United States, I have found that there are some misconceptions about Canada and what it is really like. It is because of this reason that I have chosen to explore this topic here today.

The idea of what Canada and Canadians are like is varied by how much contact a person has had with the country. In this paper I will be discussing not only what the general idea of what Canada is from the perspective of those who live in the United States of America but also from the perspective of those who live in Canada. I will also talk about how the WELS as a church body has been involved in Canada in both a positive and a negative sense. In correlation to that I will be discussing the entity known as WELS-Canada and what they are and what they are doing. But most importantly I will discuss how God has been involved in Canada and how the Holy Spirit has blessed the land and how we can continue to spread his message to all of those who live in that great nation.

In the United States of America there are many names that they have for the country and people of Canada. Some of these nicknames are said in a loving way, such as friends would give one another; like, "The Great North" or "America's Neighbor to the North." But there are some that are used in a more derogatory sense; like, "Canuk," "America's Hat" or "The 51st State." It

is these names that show how many Americans really think about Canada. The term “Americans” is even something that is not appreciated by Canadians. This shows that those who live in the United States think that they are the true residents of this continent and think of Canada as a secondary thing, when both countries are apart of North America. It is this idea that Canada is a second rate place or just the same as the ^U ^S united states that colors the view of most of its citizens. As I have found in my years both in Canada and in the United States, there is a certain misunderstanding of the nation to the north. As I attended high school in the United States there were just these same misunderstanding that you would come to know and understand as common ideas of Canada. One of which is the fact that all of Canada is a frigid wasteland; that if you go there, no matter what the season is, you will need your winter gear to survive, when in fact, the city of Ottawa, is at about the same latitude as Milwaukee is. “I found out exactly how ignorant I and many of my classmates were about Canada. I was seriously asked if I was sane because I was willingly spending the summer months in such a ^{cold} clod climate”² When talking about mission work in Canada this is something that really needs to be taken into consideration. The differences between these two great nations are just that great and need to be understood before we can bring the ^g Gospel to the people so that we don’t put stumbling blocks in the way of the people.

To understand why there is such a difference we can look at just how these two nations were founded. The United States of America got its independence through a bloody war. The revolutionary war, in which the United States gained their independence from British rule, was one that was hard fought and devastating on both sides of the battle. It was not this way in Canada. They didn’t believe in fighting to gain freedom but they patiently and persistently

² Wegner, Martin N. *The recent history and possible future of WELS mission work in the province of Ontario, Canada*. Senior Church History Paper, 1997. p. 1

worked through the system to gain their freedom from the United Kingdom. “The United States of America sinfully rebelled against her God-given authority in the person of George III and in the form of the British parliament.”³ This is the bare truth of it all. The United States was founded by breaking the law of the land and going against the government that was the ruling body.

Canada patiently waited and respectfully asked for her independence. As a nation, she obeyed the fourth commandment. She began her existence in 1867 with the British North American Act. Peace and order marked her birth rather than rebellion and anarchy. The authority for this new nation sprang more from the will of the governors than the will of the governed.⁴

It is because of this difference in how they started that the two nations have such differing styles of thought in life. When we consider this we should come to the natural conclusion that the ministry that takes place in Canada will be different from that of the United States. And it is with this as our basis that the new ministry plan can now be shaped. This is the fact that is most ignored when talking about ministry in Canada. This spirit can still be seen in the way that Canadians think about their government in general as well. They are much more trusting of their government and those who are in authority over them. It is a way of life for the Canadians. They believe that the government is there to help them and to be in charge and that is what they will do. This is not limited only to the government but also to all leaders. It is ~~a~~ part of how the Canadian mind works. They are lead to believe that those who are in authority over them are there for a reason and will do the job that they are meant to do. This fact poses a problem for ministry in Canada though. “Some look to the pastor almost as a local, spiritual monarch. His will hold^s the most weight, but he is also responsible for carrying out his will.”⁵ The people

³ Lindke, Allen. *Home Mission Work – The Canadian Perspective or A Walkthrough the Wallpaper Circuit*. North Atlantic District Missionary Conference, held at New Windsor, Maryland. June 10, 1985. p. 2

⁴ Lindke. *Home Mission Work* p. 2

⁵ Lindke. *Home Mission Work* p. 2

believe that the pastor is the king of the church and the ultimate authority when it comes to doing the work that is needed. This is not a necessarily a good thing though. It is a benefit because it allows the pastor more free reign and power to shepherd his flock in the right direction but it also allows for spiritual apathy which is so popular with all Christians in the world. This attitude is a direct result of their ties with the British government and how they were formed. Since the Canadians ties to Britain, and Europe as a whole, they have the same problems on religion that plagued the Christian church for over a thousand years, namely the separation of church and state. This can be seen in some of the laws that are still in place.

Added to that is the Roman Catholic school system in Canada. The British North American Act mandates that Roman Catholic school system. It is funded by Romans Catholics who are allowed to designate their school taxes for Roman Catholics schools. Government agencies control, to an extent, the Roman Catholic system. But the Roman Catholics do not have to pay extra for their Christian day schools.⁶

This is one of the reasons why the churches in Canada have a harder time with starting and maintaining not only a school but also a church. The old, European idea of the state-church is still planted in the people and they don't know any different from it. "Throughout Canada, the church did more than just mediate between God and the new settlers. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England received overt government support, and in turn gave strong support to the established political and social order."⁷ This is the thought process of those who live in Canada. This is just one of the cultural differences that has to be taken into consideration when doing mission work in Canada.

When someone from the United States would first hear something like this it would be the complete opposite of how they see the church and state relationship in the United States. In

⁶ Lindke. *Home Mission Work* p. 3

⁷ Knoll, Mark A. *Mainline Protestantism in Canada and the United States of America: an Overview*. Canadian Journal of sociology III, 2, 1978. p. 144

the United States things are run quite a bit differently. There are absolutely no ties between how a church and all of its subsidiaries are run and the government. This is a fact that those from the United States are very proud of. They know that if they are apart of a church that the government has no right to say what they are to teach and will not support them in any way shape or form. This is one of the ~~founding~~^{U. S.} principles that the ~~united~~^S states were founded on. For the ~~first~~^F ~~amendment~~^A to the ~~constitution~~^C states quite clearly, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”⁸ It is because of this that the people in the United States have been so free to practice whatever religion they choose. It is because of this that the people in the United States know what has to be done when it comes to church work and supporting it. This is one of the major differences that ~~have~~^{has} to be taken into consideration when looking at mission work in the two different countries. There is no relationship and therefore there is no baggage to get over when doing the work of the church. I am sure that this one fact is not known to many in the United States about the churches in Canada.

Not only do the people in the United States have freedom of religion and are spared from all forms of control from the government but they look at their authority figures in a different light. As was stated earlier the people of Canada will look at the pastor as some sort of ultimate authority in the church. This is not the case when it comes to the United States. Yes, the people will see the pastor as someone who will run the church and who will have the knowledge and skill to run the church, but they don't leave it all in his hands. The members of the church realize that they are the ones who are in ultimate control. Just as the government in the United States is there to serve the people and not the people to serve the government, the same thought comes

⁸ <http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am1>

into the church. The people know that the pastor is there to serve them and to help them to do the work that is necessary but they are not to be his subjects. Just that term alone is a loaded term in this country. Since the days of the revolutionary war the people of the United States will not be ruled by anyone or anything. They are their own rulers and their own masters and that is just a fact of life. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."⁹ These are perhaps the most famous words in the ^Ddeclaration of ^Iindependence and they are the creed of the nation. Just like the first amendment, this only pertains to their secular lives, but to their spiritual lives. This is the spirit of the United States of America. How different it is from their neighbor's?

It is ~~with~~ these basic ideals that separate the people of the United States and those of Canada that have to be remembered and taken into consideration when spreading the Gospel to people. And it is with this in mind that we can now consider just what it means to be a missionary in Canada.

To do that we have to not only understand what Canadian culture is, but how the WELS got their start in Canada, but ^{to} ^a talk about that we first have to discuss the LCMS. The oldest WELS congregation in Canada is St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Ottawa. On November 14, 1874 St. Paul's opened its doors for the first time. It is located in the middle of downtown Ottawa, right on the boarder of Ontario and Québec. It was started by a group of confessional Lutherans and strived for many years. In 1878 this church became a member of the LCMS and stayed that way for nearly 100 years. During the 1970s, when it became apparent that the LCMS no longer held true to the doctrines of ^Sscripture, Pastor Thomas Pfothauer realized that they could no longer be associated with the church body. After much teaching and discussion with his

⁹ <http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/index.htm>

congregation he led them to leave the LCMS and join the WELS. (It is an interesting point to note that out of the 500+ members of the congregation, only one family left the congregation at this point.)

This story is the same with all of the WELS congregations in Canada that are older than 40 years, for the WELS didn't start to do work in Canada until after the break with the LCMS. "It wasn't until the split with the Missouri Synod in 1961, that the WELS started looking seriously to outreach in Canada. Before that time, while the WELS and LCMS were in fellowship, it seems it was an unwritten rule, according to WELS history, that Canada was looked after by the LCMS."¹⁰ This was not only the case in Canada but also in many other parts of the country. If we look at the southwest, we can see that the WELS had a strong presence in Arizona but not in New Mexico where the LCMS was. The reasoning behind this was that it seemed to be poor stewardship to double up on mission areas when the two were in fellowship but now that they are separate the WELS realized that they too needed to enter into this and many other mission fields. It is for this reason that the WELS didn't really start to move in on the Canadian mission field until later. With this we can see that the WELS presence in Canada is still fairly young in comparison to many other synods and areas that it has been serving.

This also means that the people of Canada don't really understand what it means to be a Wisconsin Lutheran instead of a Missouri or any other synod. This fact has come into play with many of the missionaries who have been or are currently serving in Canada. The idea of identifying yourself as a Wisconsin Lutheran is so foreign to Canadians that many don't even bother to make that distinction. Pastor Lindke mentions in his paper that he doesn't even try to make this point with prospects. "So, in our advertising we rarely mention the Wisconsin

¹⁰ Hoyer, Philip J. 25 Years of God's Grace, The WELS in Western Canada. October 16, 1990. p. 1

Synod... What seems to work better is stressing the fact that we are evangelical Lutheran churches. We have seen more response to an emphasis on the message rather than the geographical origin.”¹¹ This is not the case in many of the areas that the WELS resides in the United States. It is not a selling point to be a member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Canada. The people don’t really seem to even understand what that means. I know this fact all too well. I had no idea that I was a member of the WELS or really even what that was until I attended Michigan Lutheran Seminary for high school. It was not like I didn’t understand that there was a difference between the church that I went to and the churches that my friends would occasionally go to and I knew that there were other churches in the area (St. Paul’s and Abiding Word) that taught the same thing that we did. I understood that we preached the true unaltered Word of God, but I didn’t know that I was WELS. It was not something that was in people’s minds and so it was not something that was advertised much. If you were to go to almost any church in the state of Wisconsin or the surrounding states, you would probably know whether that church was WELS or not. This is due to the fact that the WELS has not had a major role in the area and the people don’t see the need for it either. When work is being done in Canada the people are more drawn ^{to} the message that is being preached, rather than the label that the church has. That is not to say that people in the United States only join WELS because of the name, but there is much more of that going on than in Canada. This is important to remember so that the missionaries don’t push others away with unnecessary labels.

It is with this in mind that we can see just how the congregations have gotten their starts in Canada. As I mentioned earlier the oldest WELS church in Canada is St. Paul’s. This church did its part and spawned two more congregations in the suburbs of Ottawa, Divine Word in Nepean and Abiding Word in Orleans. Both of these churches were formed not in the usual way.

¹¹ Lindke. *Home Mission Work* p. 10

The standard method of WELS church founding is to go into an area and find out if there is a strong need for a church but these were just formed from the parent congregation. This is the story of most of the WELS churches in Canada. There has never really been a great push toward exploring an area before starting a church but starting a church and exploring the area is what they ^{are} going to do. With this in mind we can now look at just how the organization of WELS Canada got its start and what it really is.

At the 49th Biennial Convention of the WELS, which was held in Watertown, Wisconsin had this motion brought to the table:

Subject: Incorporation of WELS in Canada

Resolution No. 11

Whereas 1) A corporate WELS presence in Canada would facilitate Canadian investment in the Church Extension Fund; and

Whereas 2) WELS incorporation in Canada would provide the vehicle for other programs such as early land purchase, a Canadian Scholarship Fund for worker-training students, direct contributions and deferred giving to the WELS by Canadians; and

Whereas 3) A recognized group from within Canada must guarantee support for WELS mission developers called to Canadian fields in order for them to immigrate; and

Whereas 4) Canadians, in general, are more receptive to a church name identified with Canada; therefore, be it

Resolved a) That the Board of Trustees be directed to take immediate steps to incorporate the WELS in Canada as a register charity; and be it further

Resolved b) That proposed corporation be called WELS-Canada

Adopted¹²

It is with this resolution that the WELS took the first step in creating what is now called WELS-Canada. Over the next years there was much debate on what exactly WELS-Canada would be and what its role in WELS would also be. This is a strange thing that they were considering. They were forming a national WELS church body under the offices of the Home Mission Board, for that is where Canada at this moment lies. This is completely different from what all of the other sister synods of national church bodies are. Every other mission that takes place across borders is considered to be under the guidance of the World Mission Board, but not Canada. It is this fact that makes the mission work in Canada so confusing. As was mentioned in the opening section of this paper, in the eyes of many people from the United States, Canada is just another part of the United States. This is still seen here in our own classification of them as being apart of the Home Missions. This fact is what makes the definition of what WELS-Canada truly is so hard to nail down. The first president of WELS-Canada, Rev. Allen Lindke, wrote on this exact subject. He was asked to write a paper for the founding meeting of WELS-Canada on just what WELS-Canada is and what its place is. He wrote:

WELS-Canada is a church related organization within the WELS for a specific purpose. It is similar to Lutheran high school associations in the US. In those situations congregations band together, sometimes across district lines, to create, fund and administer a high school. They have meetings for their purpose and elect officers. They work together with the WELS and perhaps even have WELS representatives attend their meets. But they are not part of the synodical structure nor do they depend on the WELS funding.¹³

¹² *Proceedings of the Forty-Ninth biennial Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Luther Synod*, held at Watertown, Wisconsin. August 3-7, 1987, p. 189

¹³ Lindke, Allen. *WELS-Canada and the WELS: Past, Present and Future*. Founding Assembly of WELS-Canada Ev. Lutheran Church of St. Paul, held at Ottawa, Ontario. May 6, 1995. p. 6

^{believe}
I ~~feel as if~~ this explains just what the organization of WELS-Canada really is. It is a group of like-minded Christians whose sole purpose is to better serve the people who live in the country of Canada. It is not a synod. Rev. Thomas Pfothauer was asked this exact question at the 1987 WELS convention in Watertown and he said with great certainty, "No." This is just what the people of the churches in Canada felt would be the best way to serve the people of Canada. It would be a mistake to think of it as a separate entity from the WELS itself. This is where much of the confusion is laid. It would be a mistake to think that this was the purpose of the founding of this organization, and that is just what it is, an organization. Just as the members of the WELS of the Nebraska ^District take pride in the fact that they have their own school, which they govern and run, the members of Canada will use this ruling body to better serve those who live in Canada. The purpose is to work within the WELS as it is to be there for the people that they serve. Doing it this way certainly does have its advantages but it also brings up some disadvantages too.

It is because the people have done it this way that they can maintain close and personal ties with the WELS in the United States. That allows the people to enjoy the blessing of a larger church body with their own seminary and worker training program for the supply of fresh and able bodied workers for their field. This also allows them access to the WELS periodicals and devotional materials that they produce to help not only bring more souls to know the truth of God's Word, but to keep those who know the truth strong in their faith and zeal to do God's work. It also connects them in an intimate manner to the main body of believers in the WELS and their doctrinal practices and beliefs, that is to say, that there is fellowship of doctrine and faith with this other national church body and all of their churches in the United States. By not forming a new synod right off the bat, the people in the United States will not feel as if they have

been abandoned by their brothers and sisters in Canada and there is still a strong tie that binds them together. Finally it allows the people of Canada to know that they are apart of a larger group of believers that is international and they are not left all alone in their own country. They don't have to feel like Ezekiel who thought that he was the only one who still believed.

Even though there are some great benefits in remaining an organization instead of a synod, there are some downfalls too. I ^{drawbacks} feel ^{believe} it is here where many of the misconceptions that were mentioned earlier lie. The fact that WELS-Canada is not a separate synod and remains a part of the Home Mission Board that leads people to think that this is the same type of place that the might find in the United States; this could not be further from the truth.

Yes, Canada, like the United States, was once a part of the British rule. And yes, just like the United States they have gained their freedom from that mother country. The people of Canada still hold a deep love and respect for Britain and their government and monarch, and patiently waited for the government to grant them their freedom. Now, I know that this has all been covered earlier in this paper but it needs to be remembered when talking about why Canada is a different place. The nation of Canada is a different country and it is because of this fact that they should be treated as such.

The United States, likes to think that they are a Christian nation. (This fact can be widely disputed, and it is more accurate to say that the United States is a pious nation at its founding rather than Christian.) The people of Canada are not this way. The people of Canada are not focused on being seen at a church but go to church for an entirely different reason. In the United States it can be said that people go church in order to belong. They believe that they are seen here. They are defined by their membership. They pick and chose their churches with the thought that they will be joining that church and become a member there. This is not the Canadian

paradigm. “Canadians are into religion a la carte. They are involved for the rites of passage, baptism, weddings and funerals. Otherwise, they are very secular. Secularism proposes a view that sees no need for God in every day living. They are also pluralistic as stated earlier. Pluralism means that they only view that is unacceptable is the view that there is only one way.”¹⁴ This view of the world has now become more familiar in the United States since the cultural revolution of the 1960s but has been a mainstay of the Canadian culture since the early days. Another way of describing this point of view is to call it the Post-Modern view. A post-modernist would say that the only real truth that exists is the truth that is true for me. If that means that it is not true for you that doesn’t matter because it is true for me. This philosophy is the exact opposite of what God in his Word teaches. For God tells us, “Your Word is truth.”¹⁵ This spits in the face of what Canadians on the whole think about life.

It is not only this idea of what truth is that we have to pay special attention to when considering mission work in Canada but also the idea of belonging that the Canadians have. In the United States, churches have become more and more a social club; a place that you can say that you belong to and that defines who you are. It has become a practice in the United States to see what a person really believes by looking at what church they belong to. If a person is a Catholic then they might be more steeped in tradition and family. If a person is Mormon then they have a strong tie with the family and keep them close. If a person is a Scientologist then they will be looking toward themselves for strength and reassurance. In Canada, where you worship does not define who you are and what you believe. It is because of this mind set that it takes much longer for a person to become a member of a WELS church in Canada than it does in

¹⁴ Myers, Dan. *Gospel Ministry in the Canadian Context*. Founding Assembly of WELS-Canada Ev. Lutheran Church of St. Paul, held at Ottawa, Ontario. May 6, 1995.

¹⁵ John 17:17

the United States. A Canadian will have to worship at a church for a long time before they consider becoming a member. They will have to gain a sense of belonging and fellowship with the people that are there. They will have to gain a feeling^{of} family and trust. It is with this in mind that I quote from Rev. Allen Lindke's paper on what it means to do outreach in Canada. He has just started to explain that the door to door invitations that are so popular and somewhat effective in the United States have been almost a complete failure in the Canadian fields. This is not due to the lack of dedicated called workers but due to the fact that Canadians need to belong before they do just that.

Our greatest numerical growth, other than transfers (thanks, Tom), has been in two areas, both of which are really loosely organized programs. The first is with people who have a Lutheran back-ground. We advertise, they find us, they come to church or phone me up and we go from there. The second is referrals. We constantly remind our members to talk up their Savior and His church to people they know. Two families joined last year, including an adult baptism. Both~~er~~ were referrals. I have a couple in adult class and another on the verge of starts. Both are referrals.¹⁶

I realize that this is not a unique situation to just Canada but it must be taken into consideration. It is not your typical mission field. Because of this there are^a few things to consider. The first is that those who are there have to take into consideration that the methods that they have been taught to use are not going to be the best ones to use in Canada. The current WELS method of breaking into an area is to canvas and canvas and canvas. I saw this first hand when I went to Flagler Beach, Florida, for a mission trip for a Winterim course. While there, I and 5 other seminary students spent the majority of our time going door to door inviting people to church and telling them about the new congregation that was getting their start there. The Lord has blessed that ministry through those efforts, but this should not be the main source of outreach that should be done in Canada. It seems that the best way to do outreach in Canada is to first and

¹⁶ Lindke, *Home Mission Work* p.9

foremost do a strong in-reach to the congregational members. Through patient and diligent teaching and study of God's Word we need to show the people how to spread the message to those that they know. This seems to be the best way to reach out to others in Canada. That is not to say that there is no merit in doing the door to door canvassing but that should not be the main focus of ministry.

When we look at the ministry that is done in Canada and the different challenges that take place there, there are two things that need to be remembered. The first is the command that Jesus gave to his disciples and to all Christians just before he ascended into heaven. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching to obey everything that I have commanded you."¹⁷ This is the last command that we were given by our God and it is the mission of the church to fulfill this to the best of our abilities. The second is just this, "What remains essential is the recognition that Canada is a foreign country."¹⁸ It is not Wisconsin. It is not Minnesota. It is not even Arizona. Canada is a nation all to itself and should be considered as such. It comes with its own culture and history. It comes with its own unique problems and concerns. Canada is a village of its own.

¹⁷ Matthew 28:19, 20

¹⁸ Lindke. *WELS-Canada and the WELS: Past, Present and Future* p. 10

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