1985

A History of the Lutherans in the Orlando Area, 1868-1948

James D. Prahlow

University of Central Florida

Part of the History Commons

Find similar works at: https://stars.library.ucf.edu/rtd

University of Central Florida Libraries http://library.ucf.edu

This Masters Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Retrospective Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

STARS Citation
https://stars.library.ucf.edu/rtd/4734
A HISTORY OF THE LUTHERANS IN THE ORLANDO AREA, 1868-1948

BY

JAMES DONALD PRAHLLOW
B.S., Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, 1976

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in History in the Graduate Studies Program of the College of Arts and Sciences University of Central Florida Orlando, Florida

Fall Term 1985
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people made contributions to the research for this work. I would like to thank those who provided particularly helpful information or services that enabled me to complete the project. Mrs. Emma Moeckel and Reverend Henry Swanson provided information about Zion, Groveland and St. Paul, Orlando. Reverend Donald Burgdorf arranged interviews with some of the founders of Holy Trinity, Masyarakattown, and Reverend James Kunze and Esther Fischer supplied information about the formation of Zion, Gotha and Trinity, Orlando. Southern District archivist Reverend James Ertl researched the files in New Orleans and translated some of the minutes and reports recorded in German. Reverend Kurt Biel reorganized the Florida-Georgia District archives so one can now easily locate pertinent documents. Researchers at the Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis supplied synodical reports and statistics. Dr. Edmund and Carol Kallina of the University of Central Florida read the text and provided helpful comments. I am greatly indebted to my advisor, Dr. Paul Wehr, who guided my research. The only disappointment I experienced occurred when it was impossible to locate thirty-two volumes of the Augustana Synod's Florida District minutes and reports. I alone am responsible for any inaccuracies included in the text. Finally, I thank my wife, Linda, who permitted me to use the kitchen table for the last four years and patiently awaited the completion of my research.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

1

## Chapter

### I. LUTHERANS IN THE ORLANDO AREA BEFORE 1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Immigration</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Protestantism and the South</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lutherans, 1870-1900</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida, 1870-1900</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Upsala Swedes on Henry Sanford’s Plantation</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish Social and Religious Life</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Upsala's Demise</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The German Lutheran Mission to Florida</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gotha Community and Its Lutherans</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fischer Pastorate, 1894-1903</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### II. THE LUTHERAN STRUGGLE WITH AMERICANIZATION, 1900-1920

37

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The United States in the Progressive Era</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Protestantism and the South</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutherans Before World War I</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida, Land of Promise</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gotha Lutherans</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutherans and the Great War</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando's Lutherans After the War</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### III. THE TWENTIES—CHANGE AND CRISIS

63

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>America in the Post-War Era</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Protestants and Religious Change</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutherans and American Religious Issues</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Missouri Synod Faces Americanization</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Florida Boom</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gotha Lutherans</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity’s Boom</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity in Turmoil</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IV. THE DEPRESSION YEARS

97

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Protestantism and the Crisis</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lutheran Churches in America</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Missouri Synod—Alone Against the Depression</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida and the Depression</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando's Lutherans in the Depression</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trapp and Trinity</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity and Recovery</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. THE WAR YEARS, 1939-1945 ........................................... 129
  American Protestantism and the War Years ......................... 131
  American Lutherans and Preparation for War .................... 133
  The Missouri Synod and the War .................................. 136
  World War II and Florida ......................................... 140
  Orlando's Lutherans and the War .................................. 145
  Pastoral Duties During the War ................................. 150
  The Walther League ............................................. 155
  The Trinity Mortgage ........................................... 158
  Orlando Lutherans and Fellowship with Other Lutherans ....... 159

VI. THE LUTHERANS IN CENTRAL FLORIDA--SLOVAKS AND SWEDES .... 163
  The Slovaks--Zellwood, Slavia and Masaryktown ................. 163
  Zellwood ....................................................... 165
  Slavia ......................................................... 166
  The Founding of St. Luke ..................................... 169
  Masaryktown .................................................. 174
  The Augustana Synod in Orlando ................................ 179

VII. THE END OF THE WAR--LUTHERANS ORGANIZE ........................ 187
  Florida in 1945 ................................................ 187
  Orlando's Lutherans Organize .................................. 189
  Trinity in Transition .......................................... 191
  The Formation of the Florida-Georgia District ............... 197

CONCLUSION .................................................................. 212

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................... 218
INTRODUCTION

The great majority of Lutherans who came to the United States during the nineteenth century settled in the upper Mississippi River valley. While the Salzburger Lutherans established a mid-eighteenth century Georgia settlement and Lutherans established a pre-Civil War congregation in Lake City, no synod initiated a concerted effort to serve Florida until a few Lutherans arrived in the state during the last third of the nineteenth century. Intermittent pastoral care, financial difficulties, slow growth and the frustrations caused by apparent synodical neglect created barriers to forming the institutional stability that could attract members. A practice of "gathering in Lutherans" of the same European background also limited membership growth.

Between 1868 and 1948, Orlando-area Lutheran congregations formed the religious institutions to serve their members and developed a permanent structure for serving the needs of the people in the region. Early in this period, Missouri Synod, Augustana Synod and the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELC) mission boards sent pastors to serve Lutherans who moved to central Florida. While mission work did not initially take place in Orlando, the congregations later founded in the city supported the older rural missions and helped start new congregations. The area's Lutheran pastors served mission stations located in towns as far away as Groveland and Masaryktown, making Orlando the hub of central Florida Lutheran activity. The state's rapid population growth required the congregations and pastors to serve larger numbers of prospective members scattered over a greater region. When the Lutherans of Orlando, Gotha, Slavia and Groveland faced mission challenges that could
be solved by establishing regional institutions, they worked for synodical approval of districts headquartered in Florida. Not until the 1946 founding of the Augustana Synod's Florida District and the 1948 founding of the Missouri Synod's Florida-Georgia District did Orlando-area congregations complete the development of regional religious institutions that would serve the unique needs of Florida's population.

During this eighty-year period, Lutherans faced difficult challenges. They had to establish congregations and gain synodical recognition to receive pastoral care. Synodical financial aid might alleviate congregational money problems, permit members to build churches and call pastors. The congregations had to provide for the Christian education of their members. Unlike the larger Midwestern congregations whose members established parochial schools that provided Christian education, the smaller Florida congregations had to utilize the Sunday school and auxiliary organizations to provide Christian education and acceptable recreation. Auxiliary groups also aided pastors in carrying out duties and in most congregations raised money to meet financial needs.

Some religious practices hindered Lutheran ministry in Florida. In most cases, foreign-language worship limited ministry to those already members of Lutheran congregations. Political quietism and a desire for maintaining confessional purity isolated Lutherans from the Protestant mainstream. Synodical restrictions on pulpit and altar fellowship eliminated contacts with Lutherans of other synods. The difficulties created by these traditions reached a climax during World War I and continued to challenge Lutherans until World War II.

Lutheran congregations that served central Florida settlers were started in two different ways. Slovak and Swedish groups established
agricultural colony companies or came to Florida as workers for agricultural colony companies. The Slovaks attempted to start SELC congregations in Slavia, Zellwood and Masaryktown. The Swedes tried to establish Augustana Synod congregations in New Upsala and Groveland. In most cases they utilized the congregation to maintain traditional cultural and religious practices and requested the services of their synod. German Lutheran families who came to Gotha also searched for agricultural prosperity. The Missouri Synod sent traveling missionaries to "gather them in" and form a congregation to preserve confessional beliefs. Missionaries like Reverend Edward Fischer developed additional congregations throughout Florida.

Pastors of the three "mother" congregations of the area (Zion, Gotha, St. Luke, Slavia and Zion, Groveland) started missions as part of their duties. Pastor George Trapp, Sr., of Zion, Gotha formally established Trinity, Orlando and left Zion to continue his successful work in the city. Pastor Stephen Tuhy of St. Luke, Slavia established Holy Trinity, Masaryktown. Pastor O. E. Liden of Zion, Groveland organized St. Paul, Orlando and left Zion when population growth in the city provided an opportunity for mission work. Trapp and Liden also participated in the planning for the formation of new Augustana and Missouri Synod districts that included Florida.
CHAPTER I

LUTHERANS IN THE ORLANDO AREA BEFORE 1900

American Immigration

The nineteenth century can be labeled the "immigrant century." One period of immigration to America ended on the eve of the Civil War. Another era of immigration began during Reconstruction and came to an abrupt halt with World War I. Until the 1880s, most immigrants came from northwestern European countries—Britain, Ireland, Germany, Sweden, Finland and Norway. In 1882, the peak year of the post-Civil War northern European immigration, approximately 255,000 Germans and 100,000 Scandinavians entered the United States. Scandinavian immigration remained at this level until World War I but the German population entering the country declined. After 1890, the number of immigrants from Italy, Austria-Hungary, Russia and southeastern Europe exceeded those arriving from northwestern Europe. Because northern Europe was heavily Lutheran, Lutheran immigration declined during this period.¹

European immigrants came to post-Civil War America for a variety of reasons. Expensive land, inadequate pay and restrictions of individual freedoms drove many from Europe. Traditional social restrictions also encouraged many Europeans to leave for the social mobility that America appeared to offer. Americans could purchase cheap land because of the

Homestead Act and businesses needed railroad workers, lumberjacks, miners and factory laborers. "America letters" (letters from American settlers to European relatives and friends), publicity brochures, books and "birds of passage" encouraged many to go to the land of opportunity. After the Civil War, improvements in travel enabled immigrants to move more quickly and comfortably to their destinations.

Immigrants entered a country undergoing rapid change. Between 1870 and 1900, the United States doubled its population to 80 million and by 1900, almost one-third of the population lived in urban areas. Railroad companies quadrupled their mileage to 200,000 miles. Expositions in Philadelphia (1876) and Chicago (1893) displayed America’s industrial expansion, technological innovation and the accoutrements of a rising standard of living. However, immigrants did not necessarily enjoy the benefits of an expanding economy or the broader cultural, social and educational opportunities they sought. They also found crime, political corruption, disease and a lonely isolation caused by their foreign tongues and customs.

In response to this social isolation, many immigrant groups used religious education and liturgical traditions in their language to maintain contact with their pasts and shelter themselves from corrupting American influences. Because European "god-killers" like Marx, Darwin, Nietzsche and Freud eroded old church loyalties on the Continent and European church

---

2 Ibid.


attendance and participation declined, the immigrants faced much the same crisis as did American denominations. In the United States, Darwinism, higher criticism and the challenge of a growing urban population threatened cultural, social and religious traditions. To face these challenges, Protestant groups, unlike Lutherans, divided into two major groups.

**American Protestantism and the South**

In reaction to the excesses of socialism and science, a group known as Social Christians followed leaders like Washington Gladden and Josiah Strong. They promoted social action to change the world, creating a more Christ-like society. Helping the poor and destitute, supporting oppressed workers and campaigning for social welfare legislation became the major activities for Social Christians. The Panic of 1873, the railroad strike in 1877, the Pullman Strike and the Haymarket Square incident encouraged them to challenge the nation to change the circumstances that brought about labor and social troubles.

Another major group of Protestants can be labeled "private," or evangelical, Christians. Fearful of atheistic socialism and the spread of immorality, they followed leaders like Dwight L. Moody and Billy Sunday. This group promoted revivalism to save the individual from private vices like drinking and dancing and to convert believers to practice a life of personal holiness. The evangelicals rejected Social Christian methods

---


because they believed that denominational commitments on political, economic and social issues meddled in areas that did not concern religious people. These "quietists" generally separated their spiritual and familial life from the political.\(^7\)

In 1870, more than half of the six million southern whites belonged to evangelical Christian denominations. The Southern Baptist (1.8 million), Methodist Episcopal Church, South (1.45 million) and Southern Presbyterian Church in the United States (230,000) faced little competition from other denominations. Catholicism, the only other large Southern denomination, posed no threat to proselytize Protestants in the Old South because ninety percent of the 1.4 million members lived in Texas, Louisiana and Kentucky.

Evangelical Protestantism provided Southerners with a religious refuge to help them deal with the region's problems. After the Civil War, retarded industrial growth and technical backwardness plagued the merchant and shop-keeper. The crop lien system, soil erosion, low prices and the boll weevil forced the farmer to live in constant fear of mortgage foreclosure, the loss of land or permanent indebtedness. Just as immigrants banded together and maintained religious traditions to foster ties with the past, many Southern whites coped with their problems by following the evangelical religious traditions that pre-dated the Civil War.\(^8\)

Southern evangelicals emphasized revivalism, evangelism and literalism. Revivals provided social activities for the rural communities.

\(^7\) Marty, Righteous Empire, pp. 168, 182-85.

Preachers at the week-long events often measured their success by the number of participants. Evangelism elevated the itinerant, little-educated preacher to a respected social position. It also involved laymen in church activities and gave them a powerful voice in its organization. Biblical literalism mirrored the Southern conservative reluctance to re-examine traditional precepts.

Rural whites, suffering economically because of poor crop prices and psychologically because of the new status of black neighbors, were frustrated by the failure of their efforts to improve their social status. Many felt their "anguish of the spirit" could be salved only through prayer, supplication, mutual support and personal piety. Most Southern Protestants believed blasphemy, gambling, drinking, dancing and divorce destroyed spiritual life. However, they saw little relation between Christian morality and economic justice and showed little compassion for the urban poor. They viewed the Pullman Strike participants as wicked troublemakers who had to be stopped by the bayonet and bullet. The Southern Protestant's uncertainty of human existence—threatened by death, disease and poverty—fostered the development of frontier evangelicalism. It provided a means of individual salvation and spiritual hope, reflected regional pride, rejected Social Christianity and gave the people a social outlet.  

Blacks did not take any leadership roles in the major Protestant denominations. By 1880, almost all Southern black and white Protestants worshipped in separate facilities. While segregation offered blacks an

9 Ibid., pp. 16-17, 20, 24, 166-67.
opportunity to develop their own spiritual leadership, liturgical traditions and social activities, it also performed a valuable service for the white community. White patrons of black congregations frequently pressured them to enforce social controls on congregational members. Cursing, rudeness, drunkenness and theft were forbidden. While black church members occasionally protested against social inequalities, they generally accommodated themselves to the expectations of the dominant white community.¹⁰

Nineteenth-century Lutherans—generally politically inactive as a group, fearful of European intellectual developments and primarily a white denomination—bore surface similarities to the Southern evangelical Christians. However, their immigrant heritage, a condemnation of revivalism and strong confessional unity separated them from the evangelicals. On a grassroots level, Darwinism, biblical criticism and social change made no impact on Lutherans. Isolated by language, preoccupied with missions, evangelism and education, American Lutherans were more concerned with their confessional identity and the challenges of "Americanization."

The Lutherans, 1870-1900

After 1870, many immigrant Lutherans came to the United States for political and economic reasons. The Germans, who fled Bismarck's Kulturkampf and military conscription, and the Scandinavians, who generally sought cheap land, brought a new nationalistic spirit that separated them from Americans. They wanted to maintain their traditions in the context

of their native language and utilize Lutheran institutions to perpetuate their European culture. 11

Most Lutherans settled in the Midwest. Lutheran home mission activity took priority over all other forms of church work. Most synods spent enormous sums locating the new immigrants with a specific national background, forming congregations and providing them with pastors and teachers. When an Augustana Synod leader stated that home missions was the ingathering of "our scattered countrymen throughout the land," he meant the synod was responsible for gathering Swedes. The German circuit rider on the frontier exhibited similar sentiments with his standard inquiry upon arrival in a community, "Do any Germans live around here?" 12

Lutheran expansion, rapid in the Dakotas and upper Midwest, slowed as it approached the West Coast and South. Evangelistic methods, political quietism and basic conservatism slowed appeal to English-speaking people. The liturgical system, like the Roman Catholic's, emphasized submission to clerical authority. This led to a particularism that often antagonized English-speaking Lutherans in the East as well as social reformers and labor. German Lutherans believed reform movements and political activism


were unwarranted infringements on individual rights. Many refused to join even the Granges and avidly supported the ideas of laissez faire. 13

Many Scandinavian Lutheran groups bore distinct traits that separated them from German Lutherans. Coming from a tradition of pietism, Scandinavians accented conversion, good works and emotionalism in public worship. These religious practices made them similar to the evangelical Baptists and Methodists. But the immigrant Swedes were not evangelical Christians. Politically active as a church in both Europe and the United States, they viewed politics as an opportunity to battle alcoholism, disease, poverty, crime and the disenfranchisement of women. 14 This tradition was counter to German and Southern Protestant quietism and made the Swedes more similar to the Social Christian denominations.

Lutherans realized their ministers had to recruit the immigrants when they arrived in the United States. A Michigan Methodist conducted communion services for immigrants and boasted about the large amounts of money the dumb Germans contributed just for the little bread and wine he gave them. 15 In New York, Methodist preacher Olof Hedstrom proselytized Lutheran children because of the interesting activities conducted in English. Scandinavian Lutherans successfully adapted the Sunday school for mission outreach but German Lutherans disliked it. They believed the Sunday school


14 Ibid., p. 17.

15 Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 174.
along with the public school system encouraged unionism and revivalism. The non-catechetical teaching techniques did not adequately substitute for daily religious instruction in parochial schools. To combat the successful inroads English-speaking denominations made among immigrants, Lutherans sent missionaries to port cities to provide information about housing, congregations and settlement areas.

Several additional difficulties kept Lutherans from uniting or attempting to broaden their approach to missions. Many rural midwestern Lutherans spoke foreign languages that isolated them even from their English-speaking brethren. Doctrinal disputes about predestination, the acceptance of lodge members and even the use of English for worship fragmented Lutherans into separate synods. Urban concentrations of Catholics, Jews and the poor made cities unenchanting areas for Lutheran mission work. These problems, apparently making most Lutheran bodies feel isolated even from other synods, forced them to restrict their work to gathering the people of similar national and linguistic backgrounds.

Because most immigrant Lutherans settled in the Midwest, few came to the South before 1900. Only the Salzburg, Georgia, colonists (who arrived in 1734) and a few small groups of Lutherans in Texas organized congregations before the Civil War. Most new residents in the region, particularly in Florida, came from adjacent states and continued to practice

---

16 Ibid., p. 165. Nelson, Lutherans in North America, pp. 264-66 describes the Lutheran approach to home missions, while chapters 12 and 14 provide specific details about doctrinal disputes and use of English in Lutheran worship.
their Baptist, Methodist or Presbyterian faiths. The first Lutherans in the Orlando area—the Swedes in New Upsala and the Germans in Gotha—faced problems of speaking a foreign language and living in rural isolation. These early Florida Swedes and Germans provide local examples of the Lutheran challenges in the United States.

**Florida, 1870-1900**

The Lutherans who came to Florida after the Civil War found a state that showed promise. Between 1870 and 1900, Jacksonville and Pensacola were the largest cities, and the state's population doubled to exceed 500,000. Despite peninsular Florida's sparse population, cowboys and cattle inhabited the Kissimmee and Peace River valleys and a fledgling citrus industry brought farmers and an occasional developer to the Ridge, the sandy upland region between Lake City and Lake Okeechobee.

To lure agricultural and industrial developers to the sparsely settled areas, the state government sponsored a post-1868 promotional campaign. Guidebooks, travel accounts and articles in national periodicals promised a fine curative climate for invalids and tourists and promoted

---


hunting activities as well. The promoters extolled the virtues of soil that nourished corn, cotton, sweet potatoes, tobacco and citrus and could provide feed for hogs, poultry, goats, sheep and cattle. When Henry Flagler completed his Florida East Coast Railway in 1896, access to the east coast improved and encouraged tourists, invalids and developers to move to the area.\(^{19}\)

As developers arrived in central Florida, they hoped to establish orange groves and cattle ranches. They immediately discovered the cowboys in the area provided only part-time labor and black laborers were not socially acceptable. To solve this problem, land owners brought in Swedes to do the work. These Swedes, who settled near Sanford, established the first Lutheran church in the Orlando area.

The New Upsala Swedes on Henry Sanford's Plantation

Like most Lutheran groups, the history of Swedish Lutherans is generally an account of the settling of the upper Mississippi River valley. When viewed as a part of the migration of Swedes to America, the Florida Swedes are few in number and little evidence of their culture remains today.\(^{20}\) Between 1870 and 1880, Swedes established a number of settlements at Lake Jessup (1871), Pierson (1876), Piedmont (1877) and Forest City (1880). The largest of these Central Florida settlements, established in 1870, was the New Upsala community located two miles west of Sanford. Unfortunately,


only the Pierson settlement maintained its distinctive Swedish culture after the second generation of settlers.  

New Upsala was closely connected to the history of Sanford, Florida. Henry Shelton Sanford of Connecticut, a wealthy career diplomat, visited the St. Johns River valley and Lake Monroe in 1869 and 1870. He established the Belair orange grove for citrus export and harvested Spanish moss to serve the upholstery and canning business. Sanford hired sixty blacks to clear land, plant and care for the trees. Cracker violence directed against the "colored" labor drove the blacks from the community, forcing Sanford to search for alternative laborers. He turned to Dr. William A. Henschen.

In 1870, Henschen agreed to procure the services of immigrant Swedes recruited by himself and his brother Joseph, who still lived in Sweden. Colonel B. F. Whitner of Mellonville, J. M. Bussall and Captain J. W. Whitner, local landowners, combined their requests for laborers with those of Sanford. Sanford and his partners apparently hoped to entrap the foreigners in the tenant system and replace the socially unacceptable black laborers. In return for a year's labor in the citrus groves, the immigrants


received their passage to Florida, provisions for their families' maintenance and schooling for their children.23

The first group of twenty-six recruits left Goteborg, Sweden, on April 23, 1871 and arrived in Florida on May 30, 1871. This talented group of carpenters, masons, printers and cabinetmakers came to America for social equality, religious freedom and political franchise. They also probably fled compulsory military conscription and starvation.24

Upon arrival, Henschen and overseer Howard Tucker greeted the raggedly dressed Swedes and, without permission from Sanford, promised to provide them shoes, clothing and credit at the local store. Sanford and his business manager, Henry L. DeForest, agreed to these additional terms only after the labor contracts were extended to make certain the debts were repaid. The Swedes lived in a makeshift frame structure in which the men and women slept on the floor. After resting for two days they began work in the groves. Initially their duties started at 5 A. M. and ended at dark, punctuated by an hour for breakfast and two and one-half hours for lunch.

The Swedes soon had little to do because the groves bore no fruit for several years. Sanford hired out some of the Swedes, who built a store, hotel and church. He also hired out others (two more groups arrived in late 1871) to work at a sawmill and in other groves. But the Swedes disliked


Because Florida's population grew so quickly, the pastors frequently discussed public relations and publicity techniques. They compiled lists of successful advertising campaigns that included the posting of roadmarkers, handbills, hotel bulletins and the distribution of pamphlets in libraries. The Miami-area pastors led proposals for financing radio broadcasts. At several other meetings, they discussed the creation of the Florid Lutheran Messenger to aid regional communication, but the Depression apparently made funding impossible.

As the number of Lutheran congregations in Florida increased, the pastors met missionaries from other Lutheran bodies. In several meetings, they discussed how Lutheran synods differed in their interpretations of Biblical inspiration, an important topic because of Missouri Synod fellowship discussions at the time. During the Missouri Synod-American Lutheran Church fellowship discussions, the conference officially encouraged cooperation with other Lutherans in Florida.

The pastors did not limit their work to Lutheran circles. They critiqued several high school texts because they contained "ungodly" approaches to creation and developed a proposal to secure released time for confirmands who attended public schools. Finally, they delegated the responsibilities of serving POWs and Florida military bases to several pastors, including

19 Ibid., October 29, 1932, October 24, 1939.
20 Ibid., October 25, 1938, October 24, 1939, October 26, 1943.
their lack of independence. Several ran off to Jacksonville. At Christmas, 1871, others refused to work claiming the Swedish Christmas was a three-day holiday. To minimize the disruptions, DeForest sent several to the DeBary Plantation on the other side of Lake Monroe.25

Labor difficulties continued. Hoping for better jobs, workers ran away to Apopka and Jacksonville. Nearly all were arrested and returned until it was established that the contracts signed in Europe were probably invalid. To defuse the tensions between employer and employees, DeForest offered to give the Swedes land and lumber.26

Apparently, this measure initiated a period of amiable working relations. In 1873, DeForest informed Sanford the thirteen Swedish families who lived in the Belair colony were grateful for the treatment they had received and had called Sanford a "kind father, ... a great man," at the 1873 Christmas feast. In 1875, possibly as an inducement to remain in the colony, Sanford donated one and one-half acres of land for use as a non-denominational Swedish church and cemetery.27

Swedish Social and Religious Life

The Swedish community continued to grow. The 1880 census lists seventeen heads of households in the Swedish community near Sanford and a


total population of 111. Of the thirty-eight employed, there were fourteen orange growers, three mechanics, ten laborers and five housekeepers.\textsuperscript{28} One hundred forty-five (there were about sixty children) attended an 1881 Christmas dinner. Many socialized at the Harrison and Son General Store, a community meeting place that included a post office, dance and social hall.\textsuperscript{29}

The church was a second community meeting place. Transient preachers and lay readers led New Upsala's nondenominational church services, held in a structure built in 1875. A Baptist minister from New Sweden, Maine, Reverend John Frederick Sundell, was the first clergyman to lead the settlement in regular worship. Sundell led Swedish services from 1884 to 1890 until a local Presbyterian minister (possibly from Sanford) began preaching English afternoon services and organized a children's Sunday school. The trustees and older members, desiring to maintain their Swedish cultural traditions and language, declared themselves a Lutheran organization and deeded the property and their affiliation to the Swedish Augustana Lutheran Synod.\textsuperscript{30}

The division between the Swedish-speaking Lutherans and the English-speaking Presbyterians was evidence of the "Americanization" of part of the

\textsuperscript{28}"United States Census: Population Schedules, 1880," Orange County, Florida, Supervisor District Number not available, Enumeration District Number 126, Herman Potter, June 12, 1880, pp. 21-24.

\textsuperscript{29}Ruffner, "The Swedish Settlement," p. 110 provides a description of the Christmas dinner. Smith, "Florida's Swedish Settlers," p. 6, describes the activities that took place at the Harrison Store.

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., p. 8; Ruffner, "The Swedish Settlement," pp. 110, 126, 140.
community. Because no records mention worship before the community church was built and because there was no crisis between church factions before English was introduced, the members apparently viewed the church not as a depository for Lutheran doctrine but as an institution that preserved cultural traditions and the Swedish language in an unfamiliar land. Had doctrine been a key issue in the development of a Lutheran church, the congregation would have divided when Sundell, a Baptist, held Swedish services.

The "Americanization" of New Upsala generated tension between the older, conservative members and the younger ones who desired to be more American. The older members knew about the Presbyterian reputation for establishing English-language Sunday schools in strong Lutheran centers to attract disgruntled children and youth. The Lutherans probably viewed the afternoon English services as an immediate threat to New Upsala's Swedish heritage.

The steady decline of the Lutheran congregation's membership indicates only the "die-hard" Swedes continued to support the church. In an 1891 report, the Augustana Synod's Florida field missionary, Reverend P. A. Cederstrom estimated 117 lived in the colony. When the Lutherans formally incorporated on January 30, 1892, only thirty members signed its charter. The remainder of the community joined the Presbyterian congrégation that

met in a new building one quarter-mile down the road from the older Lutheran community church.  

After the division of the congregation, Lutheran membership never totaled more than thirty and by the late twenties had dwindled to five. Reverend O. O. Eckart, minister for the Southeastern Mission District of the Augustana Synod, reported the New Upsala church had the most peculiar history of any congregation in the district. After the schism in 1892, the church had only one pastor. In 1931-32, Dr. A. Norrbom served the congregation but could not meet with it regularly because he was also responsible for the Swedish Lutherans at Groveland and Pierson.  

The Lutheran church, established to preserve the Swedish state church traditions, never regained its status after the majority of the community "Americanized" itself.

The history of New Upsala's elementary school also reflects the community's social and religious change. Like the other local community groups, the students met in the Scandanavian Society Hall. In 1877, the school's first year of operation, male instructors taught reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic and Lutheran theology, all in Swedish. By 1900, female teachers taught the usual subjects in the English language and eliminated theology from the curriculum. The community also lengthened the school  

---


33Smith, "Florida's Swedish Settlers," p. 8, includes a summary of Eckart's report. Carl A. Driscoll, History of the Florida Synod of the Lutheran Church in America (Tampa: Florida Synod of the Lutheran Church in America, 1978), pp. 127, 226. The tables at the end of the text are on un-numbered pages and will be referred to as n. p. See chapter 6 for more information about Groveland and Pierson Augustana congregations.

34This probably was the Harrison Store.
year to conform to Orange County's eight-month term. The school, like the community church, had initially been used as a social and cultural preserve. But as the Swedes adopted their English neighbors' customs, both institutions lost their social and cultural significance. When the school teachers used English instruction, they facilitated the changes that destroyed the Swedish traditions.

Despite religious and language differences, the Swedes continued to socialize. Lutherans and Presbyterians celebrated annual spring festivals at the Scandinavian Society Hall. Dorcas sewing circles included both Presbyterians and Lutherans and some families held dual congregational membership and attended Lutheran and Presbyterian services.

In 1892, the year of the church schism, New Upsala was a bustling community that included the Scandinavian Hall, a railroad station, general store, post office and Lutheran and Presbyterian churches. Twenty-three principal grove owners produced 500 to 1,000 boxes of fruit each year. A winery provided orange and grapefruit wine for local consumption. Located close to Sanford, the community's members occasionally hired themselves out for off-season jobs. This prosperous community had survived initial employment problems, a religious schism and a potentially disruptive cultural change. However, the weather dealt the community a crushing blow.


37 Ibid., pp. 108, 118; Smith, "Florida's Swedish Settlers," pp. 3-5.
New Upsala's Demise

In December, 1894, and February, 1895, the thermometer plunged to the high teens. The cold weather destroyed the citrus industry in central and north Florida. Many families fled the region and only sixteen Swedish families remained at New Upsala. Their citrus groves ruined, they had to work at the Planters Manufacturing Company in Lake Mary.

When many left New Upsala, the community lost its need for services. The post office closed in 1904 and the children attended school in nearby Sanford. Workers tore down the dilapidated train station and the owner relocated the general store. Except for the Augustana Synod's abortive attempt to revive the tiny Lutheran congregation in 1931, any resemblance of Lutheran worship ended. The New Upsala Lutherans would have to travel to Groveland or Pierson for services. Cultural traditions and restricted altar fellowship apparently discouraged them from attending Trinity, Orlando (a Missouri Synod congregation), Zion, Gotha (a Missouri Synod congregation) or St. Luke, Slavia (an SELC congregation).

Because the community's majority adopted the English language and the Lutheran congregation did not have enough members to support a permanent pastor, the Lutheran church could gain no more members. Before 1940, only two Augustana congregations in Florida—Ebenezer in Pierson and Zion in Groveland—received continual synodical support. Only four Augustana pastors served the entire state and three of those served Miami congregations.

38 Ibid., pp. 133, 161.
The Augustana Synod could not afford the expense of assigning a pastor to reestablish a dying congregation in New Upsala. In 1946 the Augustana Synod officially closed the Swedish Lutheran Society of New Upsala.39

The Swedish immigrants had created a prosperous colony. Their successful groves and vibrant community life helped them adapt to the unfamiliar Florida climate and American culture. English language influence on the community forced the older, more conservative members to choose Lutheranism to preserve their Swedish social traditions and religious customs. "[Only] the older people objected to the change to English because . . . they could not feel the same towards it."40 Although the Great Freeze ended the town's existence, it did not obscure the reason conservative parishioners chose Lutheranism. They did not choose a religious institution for doctrinal reasons but an institution that preserved the cultural traditions of their native land.

The German Lutheran Mission to Florida

From 1880 until World War I, the Missouri Synod concentrated its Florida mission work in the tiny community of Gotha. This German settlement received its first Lutheran pastors from the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, a group of midwestern congregations that organized in Chicago in April, 1847. Its members desired to minister to the German immigrant groups in the United States.

The Missouri Synod's missionaries-at-large (Reisepredigeren) received explicit instructions to conduct mission work. They were to locate German and English settlements, visit the Lutheran families and inquire about their origins, worship habits and neighborhood religious gatherings. The synod expected the circuit rider to encourage them to use a good sermon book for family devotions and avoid attending sectarian services or unionist worship. The traveling missionaries kept diaries of their activities and sent bi-monthly statistical reports to the synod's president. 41

The synod's missionaries-at-large initially worked in Missouri, Illinois, Texas and Louisiana. By 1854, they organized enough congregations to form the Western District, one of the first geographical divisions of the synod. This district included most states south of Indiana and west of Missouri and provided missionaries for work along the Gulf Coast.

In 1870, the synod sent Reverend H. G. Sauer to Mobile's Seaman's Bethel congregation when its members requested a pastor. More congregations formed along the Gulf Coast. By 1874 the pastors in Texas, Louisiana and Alabama discussed the possible formation of their own district but decided against this because the Western District had just assumed the

salaries of the missionaries within its own borders. Florida still had not received the services of a Missouri Synod pastor.

The members of the 1877 Synodical Convention in Fort Wayne, Indiana, commissioned Reverend John F. Doescher to work "among the heathen blacks" of the South. Doescher, a veteran missionary from the Dakota Territory who had served twenty-eight preaching stations near Iowa City, traveled through Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida. Preaching in English in homes, halls and churches, this Reiseprediger met blacks in New Orleans, Memphis, Little Rock, Mobile, Pensacola, Milton, Chattahoochee, Quincy and Tallahassee. He started several missions and in 1891 the black members applied for synodical membership as a non-geographical district. However, the synod responded like it had to an earlier request of English-speaking congregations to join the Missouri Synod and encouraged the blacks to form their own organization. Like the Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians, the Missouri Synod maintained a formally segregated church body. Despite this, the panhandle blacks were the first synodical contacts in Florida. Perhaps German Lutherans in Jacksonville and central Florida could hope for pastoral care in the near future.

After the 1879 St. Louis Synodical Convention received requests to serve German immigrants in the South, the delegates resolved to send one

---


missionary-at-large to Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas. With the northern portion of the Western District initiating a strong mission program among English-speaking people in 1879, the twelve pastors in the Gulf states resolved to form the Southern District to more efficiently minister to their German-speaking charges. After receiving synodical approval, these pastors met in New Orleans on February 8, 1882 and formed the Southern District. But Florida mission work among whites was not one of the Southern District's priorities. It was not until an 1884 meeting in Mobile, Alabama, that district executives sent a missionary to Florida.

In Mobile, Reverend Leopold Wahl, a Southern District pastor, requested permission to visit Lutherans in Florida. Earlier that year he had joined in matrimony John Pfeiffer of the synod's Immanuel, Pensacola congregation and Miss Emma L. Bolman of the host Mobile congregation. After the ceremony, Wahl and Pfeiffer discussed the status of the Bavarian and Prussian immigrant congregation in Pensacola. Pfeiffer suggested that Wahl ask the Southern District to send a pastor to the congregation. After receiving the district's permission to visit the members, Wahl and Reverend Paul Rosener of New Orleans went to Pensacola.

Rosener arrived in Pensacola in February, 1885. In three weeks he held three German services in a Presbyterian church, authored a church constitution and had the document ratified by eleven voters. He encouraged

---


the congregation's thirty-one families to build a church. Rosener started an English Sunday school of forty-five pupils to keep the congregation's children from joining the English Presbyterian Sunday school and organized a Lutheran day school which had an enrollment of forty.

Pastor Wahl returned to Pensacola on October 4, 1885, and dedicated the five-month old church building. He preached the morning German service, and ordained and installed Candidate Arthur E. Michel as Immanuel, Pensacola's first permanent pastor. Pastor G. C. Franke of New Orleans assisted Wahl and preached the afternoon English service. Michel then began serving his congregation. 46

In 1886, Candidate W. Thomas aided Michel in the Pensacola area. For six months he worked at a Quincy congregation that had been organized by Michel. He also served one other preaching station that may have been near Tallahassee. At these two stations Thomas had contact with twenty communicants and thirteen children. However, in the fall of 1887, Thomas left for the Eastern District. 47

After Thomas left, the Southern District changed Michel's responsibilities, sent him to "visit a German colony in west Florida (the panhandle?) and . . . explore middle Florida (Tallahassee?) to see if there was an


opportunity for mission work amongst Lutherans." Michel's 1889 report to the Southern District Mission Board encouraged the synod to assign two permanent missionaries to Florida. One would serve the Jacksonville area and northern Florida while the other would serve the rest of the state from a headquarters at Gotha, 48 a central Florida German settlement.

Because the 1889 yellow fever epidemic in Jacksonville delayed the arrival of a northern missionary, only Candidate J. F. W. Reinhardt served Florida. Reinhardt, commissioned in New Orleans as the Reiseprediger for central and south Florida, contacted a total of 165 German Lutherans in six communities. He served Tampa, Gotha, Mannville, Starke and Quincy in German, while his Martin congregation worshiped in English. Gotha's twenty-member German Sunday school was the largest in peninsular Florida. 49

Finally, twelve years after Reverend Doescher visited the black congregations in Florida, the synod stationed a missionary in central Florida. Gotha's stable Lutheran community provided a foundation for future work. For the next thirty years Gotha served as the Missouri Synod's central and south Florida mission headquarters and its circuit riders started congregations in Delray Beach, Tampa, Orlando, Ft. Myers, Starke and Gainesville.


The Gotha Community and Its Lutherans

Gotha, Florida is located ten miles from Orlando. Three families inhabited the "region of almost unbroken woods" when Henry Hempel visited the tiny German community in 1878. Hempel, a German who immigrated to Buffalo, New York, spent a few months in Gotha, purchased the town site and laid out streets. Faulty street surveying forced Hempel to alter the dimensions of the standard housing lots. After he finished the survey, Hempel named it after his birthplace of Gotha, Germany and, like several other local developers, advertised in northern newspapers to attract workers. He promised employment in his citrus groves and sawmill and hired a man to make a weekly four-hour oxcart ride into Orlando for mail. 50

As the population grew, the people established businesses. The sawmill supplied boards for Winter Park and Maitland homes and a log hut Henry Belknap used as a school. In 1886 some residents organized a Turnverein Society and built a meeting hall for dancing, amusements and community activities. Several years later the German social group donated the site and the wood used for the construction of a new school house. 51

Unlike the New Upsala Swedes, the Gotha Lutherans did not hold their church services in the community hall but met in homes. In 1887, the group


51Fischer interview; Blackman, Orange County, p. 218; "Nostalgia Grips Old Timers at Gotha Gathering," The Orlando Sentinel, Sentinel West ed., May 23, 1968.
organized a Lutheran congregation and may have hosted Pastor Michel during his mission trip through Florida. In 1888, the synod assigned Candidate J. F. W. Reinhardt to Gotha and any neighboring Lutheran settlement he could locate. By not meeting in the community hall and by providing a base of operations for a missionary, Gotha's congregation preserved its distinct Lutheran heritage by limiting its formal function to worship and not utilizing religious practices to retain cultural traditions. Those could be preserved by the Turnverein Society, the community's German cultural group.

Reinhardt spent the next three years serving Gotha's Lutherans and the mission congregations at Martin (English), Mannville, Quincy, Starke and Tampa. Because the congregations were as far apart as 200 miles, the pastor served only one on a given Sunday. Arriving at each station on the Monday preceding the Sunday on which he would lead worship, Reinhardt prepared prospective members for worship, examined communicants and canvassed the area. In Tampa, Reinhardt used the Klingelbeutel to encourage stewardship. This collection basket, attached to the end of a six foot pole, had a small bell fastened to its underside that rang as contributions were made. After three successful years of ministry, Reinhardt accepted a call to replace Michel in Pensacola. Central Florida's Lutherans needed a new circuit rider.

52"History of Zion Lutheran Church," Zion, Pine Hills, 1980 and the Fischer interview describe worship in homes and Reinhardt's arrival.

The new pastor assigned to central Florida was Candidate Carl Frederick Brommer. After establishing his residence in Gotha in October, 1891, Brommer preached on alternate Sundays in Gotha, Martin and Tampa. When the Jacksonville-based missionary relieved Brommer of his duties at Manville and Starke, he investigated Lutheran communities at Bartow, Apopka, Arcadia, Punta Gorda, Boca Grande, Port Tampa and Ft. Myers, and spent more time at the successful Gotha and Tampa missions. In 1892 he formally organized Gotha's Zion congregation and the church's membership increased to seventy-three souls. 54

Zion's membership grew as the community prospered. After some changing rooms were built on the beach at Lake Olivia, several families from midwestern states used Gotha as a winter retreat. A few families invested in the local citrus groves and moved to the community. Hempel erected a large two-story home in the center of town and every child hoped to view the countryside from the second-floor porch. 55 However, community growth as well as the Lutheran growth paled beside that of Tampa and its Lutheran congregation.

Tampa, the second-largest peninsular city, became the best site for the installation of a permanent pastor. The rapidly-growing Tampa congregation needed a pastor to lead its organization and building drive. The Southern District loaned the congregation enough money to begin building a church and assigned Brommer to its pastorate. By 1894 he organized a


55 Blackman, Orange County, pp. 218-19; Fischer interview; "Solitude and Citrus Gotha Trademarks."
Ladies Aid Society and initiated English services at Tampa and Punta Gorda. The Tampa congregation grew to ninety-one members and almost freed itself from the building debt.\(^{56}\) Unfortunately, Tampa's successful growth took Brommer away from Gotha. Gotha's Lutherans needed another pastor. He would be the fifth in six years.

**The Fischer Pastorate, 1894-1903**

Gotha's first "permanent" Lutheran pastor, Reverend Edward G. Fischer, arrived in October, 1894. Assigned as the missionary to central Florida, Fischer held services in Gotha, Apopka, Martin and Mannville. He started Gotha's Lutheran school and became the first pastor to receive a portion of his salary from the congregation. Many attended Fischer's services and he became the first to hold regular worship in the church building that had been completed in early 1894.

Fischer's work in Apopka also bore fruit. He prepared fifteen people for membership and led the planning to build a sanctuary. The effects of the Great Freeze in 1894 and early 1895 cut short the plans for the building program but the congregation continued to meet until late 1895.

The freeze that devastated the Apopka and New Upsala citrus groves also destroyed Gotha's. The temperature fell to fourteen degrees and ruined the fruit and trees. Financial disaster threatened and many settlers, 

\(^{56}\) *Proceedings, Southern District Convention, 1895*, p. 83; *1895 Statistical Report, LC-MS*, pp. 139-140.
including Fischer, packed and left. Hempel sold his sawmill to survive the crisis. 57

Fischer moved to Palatka, a Lutheran community that appeared to hold promise and continued to serve Gotha, Mannville and Apopka. The four missions totaled only 135 souls. When Gotha's 1896 offering totaled $200 and the congregation had to request a Southern District subsidy of $700, the Southern District assigned Fischer to Tampa. Brommer had accepted a call to the Midwest and Gotha's financial difficulties prohibited the Southern District from maintaining a pastor in the town. While Fischer continued to work in Gotha and Apopka, Tampa appeared to be the only area capable of supporting a Lutheran pastor.

Fischer's two-year ministry in Tampa was highly successful. The congregation furnished and painted the church, paid all debts, started a Sunday school and purchased a new organ. Twenty-two students attended the day school. The only failure Fischer experienced was the abandonment of the distant Lee County mission field. When he concluded his service at Tampa, the twenty-six year old pastor wed one of his former confirmation students, sixteen-year old Sophie DeVedig. Sophie and her parents accompanied Fischer back to Gotha when he returned in 1898. 58


Fischer, recalled in 1898 to serve those who remained in Apopka and Gotha after the Great Freeze, left the Tampa congregation to Candidate J. Frederic Wenchel. Wenchel was the first graduate placed in a relatively stable congregation in Florida. Seminary graduates Reinhardt, Brommer and Fischer had been "thrown to the wolves" when they received their first assignments to the Lutheran frontier in Florida. Apparently, the Southern District decided the veterans could better withstand the pressures associated with work at the missions in Gotha, Apopka, Palatka and Mannville.

Gotha's small mission slowly recovered from the Great Freeze. By 1900, Zion grew to eighty souls with forty-one communicants and a school of fifteen children. The church recovered sufficiently to withstand Fischer's periodic absences as he explored Florida's east coast searching for Lutheran families.

Fischer served a group of Michigan Lutherans in Delray Beach, discovered groups of Lutherans at Lake Worth and canvassed the Titusville area. The missionary left Gotha by foot, horseback or buggy and found his way to the coast. He located the nearest store, post office or home and inquired if there were any Germans in the area. Upon receiving an affirmative answer, he asked whether they were Lutheran or Catholic and proceeded to the Lutherans' homes. When Fischer reached the Miami area, he traveled by canal boat or mail packet to reach some families. By 1901, these Lutheran

enclaves on Florida's southeastern coast totaled ninety-five souls, including sixty-five communicants.  

Gotha's population grew to fifty-one households in 1900. Two hundred and two residents lived in the town. One general store and Henry Belknap's public school served them. Only two fruit growers remained in Gotha while the other seven families who survived the freeze started farms. This community became the "new Jerusalem" of a Lutheran mission field that stretched north to Palatka and south to Miami.

When Pastor Heckel of Fernandina died in 1903, Fischer added the former Jacksonville circuit rider's preaching stations to his responsibilities. He preached at Fernandina, a lumber town of the mid-nineteenth century that had become a resort, and visited the Swedish Augustana congregation in Pierson. Fischer's boundless energy and willingness to travel great distances helped Gotha regain its importance as the center of Lutheran mission activity in peninsular Florida.


62 Proceedings, Southern District Convention, 1903, n. p.; Beth Dunlop, "Fernandina Beach," The Orlando Sentinel, August 23, 1981. The Fischer interview includes information about his visits to Pierson.
Fischer's acceptance of a call to Beaumont, Texas, in 1903, left the Zion pastorate vacant for six months. Pastor Hugo M. Hennig arrived in Gotha in September, 1903, and continued Fischer's work at Palatka, Apopka and Mannville. He also added temporary preaching stations at Deland and Longwood. Hennig had so many preaching sites that he served Gotha only once every two weeks. Attendance at Zion averaged forty per Sunday. However, membership in 1903 slipped to seventy-two souls and only thirty-five communicants. Ten children remained at the school. Fischer's and Hennig's absences during the mission trips had taken their toll. But when Hennig stopped serving the Norwegians and Swedes in Deland (they had received their own missionary), he spent more of his time in Gotha. By 1905, Gotha's baptized membership increased to eighty-three.63

Hennig left Gotha in 1905 but for four years no synodical appointee replaced him. Apparently, with a shortage of pastoral candidates, the Missouri Synod did not view the Florida mission field as a priority. It appeared Gotha's Lutheran congregation would follow the fate of New Upsala. The Lutheran community, its economy damaged by the Great Freeze, now faced the loss of regular services, a growing minority status as a German-speaking community in an English-speaking region and rural isolation from a major center of population. Zion's members would have to solve these problems if they wanted to maintain their congregation.

63 Proceedings, Southern District Convention, 1904, p. 111.
CHAPTER II

THE LUTHERAN STRUGGLE WITH AMERICANIZATION, 1900-1920

Between 1900 and 1920, the Gotha Lutherans faced several challenges. Zion's members had to maintain their congregation through the times they had no pastor. They confronted the local hostilities towards German-speaking groups generated by World War I. The congregation also lost its prominent position as the primary Lutheran missionary headquarters for central Florida and struggled to justify its continued existence. The new Lutheran congregation, Trinity, Orlando, had to face these challenges and alleviate competitive tension between the two congregations. In an era of rapid social and economic change the Orlando and Gotha Lutherans attempted to maintain their confessional principles and congregational unity.

The United States in the Progressive Era

During the Progressive Era and World War I, the United States experienced accelerated population growth, urbanization and industrialization. The population grew from 80 million in 1900 to 100 million in 1917. While three out of four people lived in rural regions in 1870, by 1920 fifty percent lived in towns and urban areas and more than fifty cities had at least 100,000 residents. Total factory income, $13 billion in 1900, quadrupled the value of farm income.¹

¹Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 155; Groh, Lutheran Church in North American Life, p. 137.
Rapid population increase, urbanization and industrialization appeared to threaten middle-class America. When an agricultural depression forced farmers to form economic cooperatives and political organizations, many conservatives opposed them because they feared the "hay-seed socialists" threatened the country's business activity. Domestically, President Theodore Roosevelt initiated the Progressive Era's reforms to combat the evils of industrialism while limiting the success of apparently more radical proposals.

Internationally, the United States became a world power. The fear of economic hard times, particularly after the Panic of 1893, encouraged industrialists to support American expansion into the Pacific and Caribbean. President William Taft's "Dollar Diplomacy" and President Woodrow Wilson's "Missionary Diplomacy" enabled Americans to invest in foreign markets. Wilson developed his ideas even further. He harnessed the Progressive Era's reformist enthusiasm to change the world to resemble his American model and led the country into war with Germany to "save the world for democracy."

Lutherans and Protestant denominations faced the problems created by imperialism, urban poverty and economic inequality. How would they deal with these challenges?

American Protestantism and the South

Protestant social gospel leaders used Christian teachings to temper the more radical Marxist, utopian and socialist solutions suggested by men like Henry George and Edward Bellamy. Two Christian leaders, Walter Rauschenbusch and Washington Gladden, used these "protests without Protestantism" and tried to create a Christian society by publicly attacking the causes of individual suffering. The Populists, hoping to reform the
country's economic inequalities, made political common cause with William Jennings Bryan, a social gospel Protestant. Progressives attacked the corrupt alliance of wealth and politics and agitated for anti-trust laws, consumer protection and economic reform. While the Progressives attracted many Protestants, some like Jane Addams and Eugene Debs criticized the church as an exploitative, conservative institution.

Supporters of the social gospel fostered the ecumenical movement. They developed international church organizations to unify social action. The Federal Council of Churches (formed in 1908) and the Edinburgh World Conference on Faith and Order (1911) encouraged further interdenominational cooperation.²

Before 1920, evangelical Christians, like the Lutherans, discouraged interdenominational cooperation and political activity. Instead, they sent missionaries to gather the faithful, build churches and organizations and appeal to individuals to lead pious lives. Evangelicals and social gospel Christians approached individual poverty in the same manner. They judged the poverty-stricken as either unrepentant sinners receiving God's wrath, or as ignorant people who needed attention. As in Wilson's "Missionary Diplomacy," the result was the same—the unfortunate received demeaning paternalistic attention.³

²Nelson, Lutherans in North America, p. 354; Marty, Righteous Empire, pp. 200-2, 205, 211, describes the early international ecumenical movement.

³Ibid., pp. 150, 203.
Southern poverty, both educationally and economically, contributed to a general distrust of scholarship and public education. Poor state educational systems made many suspicious of anyone that valued public university study. In 1900, more than fifty percent of the Southern collegians attended church-related institutions. Many feared public education was communist because it took money from some to pay for the education of others. Only Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Lutherans required pastors to have specific educational requirements for clerical ordination. By 1917 the Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians supported the idea that public schools could inculcate religious values by permitting only God-fearing teachers in the classrooms.

Southern poverty also required pastors in many denominations to serve two or more congregations. In 1920, one-third of the Southern Baptist clergy served four or more churches. Some raised cotton, citrus and farm products to supplement salaries. Naturally, poor economic conditions made it difficult to pursue advanced study in any field. As late as 1949, one-third of the Southern Baptist clergy had not received more than a high school diploma. While Lutherans bore similarities to other Protestants, their emphasis on scholarship and foreign-language worship set them apart, particularly in the South.

---

4 Bailey, White Protestantism, pp. 7-9, 26, 29.
Lutheran urbanization followed the same pattern as in the rest of the country. In the East, more Lutherans lived in cities than in rural areas and in the South more lived in rural regions. In 1925, forty-three percent of the one million-member Missouri Synod lived in cities. 5

The distinctive characteristic of most Lutheran synods was their emphasis on foreign-language worship and education. With more than nine million German-speaking people in the United States in 1900 and many foreign-born pastors in all but the United Synod, South and the General Council, Lutheranism appeared to be a foreign denomination. While most synods initiated English-language mission work by 1900, the Missouri Synod and Augustana Synod did not formally sponsor English districts until 1911.

The late nineteenth-century German and Swedish immigration retarded "Americanization" of the two church bodies. These nationalists reinforced the belief that pure doctrine could only be maintained if it was taught in the mother tongue. Lutherans kept their weekday schools on the front lines of resistance to integration into American society and considered religious education as the antidote for marriage to anyone outside the denomination. 6

However, the language question divided Lutherans. At Trinity, Houston, members voted at each meeting to determine whether discussions


would be in English or German. The language problem kept the Augustana Synod from joining the 1918 merger of the three English-language organizations that formed the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA). It also did not permit devout church members to attend Sunday schools because they had been fostered by "Americanized" denominations. Lutherans pointed out this sectarian institution often included football-like cheers to generate enthusiasm and prepare children for worship.

The Missouri Synod, with two-thirds of its million members in the Midwest, had misgivings about using English. Leaders feared the deterioration of correct doctrine if theological instruction and discussion took place in English. Not only had German been the language of the Reformation but the synod patterned its educational system after the German model. The parochial school in each congregation passed Kultur to the children by instructing them in the German catechism, German Bible and German hymnbook.

Before 1917, most Lutherans were hardly an integral part of American society. They anticipated acculturation—in several generations. Lutherans were primarily concerned with the mission of gathering together all groups by language and nationality. Before World War I, the Missouri Synod sent missionaries to India, Brazil, Cuba, Argentina and England to gather

---


German-speaking believers. Eastern Lutheran church members instructed students in English and championed the Sunday school, antagonizing the Norwegian, Danish, Swedish and German Lutherans who prided themselves for their work in their own tongues.9

Lutheran attitudes toward social work were quite similar to the evangelical Christians. They considered charity the responsibility of local congregations. Individual Lutheran communities started a home for the mentally retarded in Bethesda, Wisconsin, a tuberculosis sanitarium in Wheatridge, Colorado, and numerous hospitals, orphanages and old folks' homes in midwestern cities. A traditional respect for authority kept many from politically attacking the root causes of poverty.10

Culturally, Lutherans maintained conservative values. The Missouri Synod condemned life insurance in 1908 because it could turn the wages of sin (death) into profit and speculation. Usury, stock market investing (called "gambling and speculation"), monopolies, boycotts and all "socialist" activities received synodical condemnation at the turn of the century.


10Groh, Lutheran Church in North American Life, pp. 107, 117.
F. Dean Lueking, A Century of Caring: The Welfare Ministry Among Missouri Synod Lutherans, 1868-1968 (St. Louis: Board of Social Ministry, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1968), pp. 35-41, provides information about specific Lutheran social ministry activities in local Lutheran communities.
W. H. T. Dau summarized the synod's opinion about the place for women in the church when he stated,

"Woman is never . . . more honored more affectionately than when she remains in the domain and relationships which the Creator designed for her as wife, mother, daughter and sister."

The Missouri Synod's work with blacks continued but like the transition to English and the acceptance of a new role for women in the church, progressed slowly. One missionary to Alabama and St. Louis blacks chastized the synod's membership when he stated in 1899,

"It cannot be denied that love for the Negro mission task has become cold among many of us . . . We think, 'Why bother about the Negro? We can use our money better than to waste it on such people.'"

However, things improved by 1910. Booker T. Washington referred queries for aid to the Board of Colored Missions of the Missouri Synod because it did more for blacks than any other denomination. Concord, North Carolina, New Orleans, Louisiana, Greensboro, North Carolina and, by 1922, Selma, Alabama, had black Lutheran academies. That year 3,700 blacks attended forty-nine congregations and thirty-eight parish schools.

Institutionally, the Missouri Synod led Protestant denominations in starting facilities for higher education. By 1926 the synod and its geographical districts established three seminaries, three teachers' 

\[\text{References:}\]


12 Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 318, lists the black institutions and Stellhorn, Schools, p. 372, provides the membership statistics. The quote is from Lueking, Century of Caring, p. 12.
colleges, eleven junior colleges and Valparaiso University. The synod created youth and adult organizations to match the YMCA, the Methodist Epworth League and the Baptist Young People's Union. Between 1893 and 1918, 310 congregations started Walther Leagues to provide social and fund raising activities for their young adults. The societies supplied pamphlets for Lutheran servicemen and staged a national appeal for Wheatridge Sanitarium. In 1917, male congregational members formed the International Lutheran Laymen's League to retire the synod's $103,000 debt. In 1920, the League started a pension fund for pastors and their families and the Aid Association for Lutherans, a fraternal life insurance corporation, provided acceptable life insurance for church members. 13

The Augustana Synod established the same types of programs. The Luther League promoted Christian social activities, fund raising, pensions and debt retirement and Lutheran Brotherhood sold life insurance. 14 By the beginning of World War I, Lutherans duplicated other denominational institutions' efforts to minister to young adults, the elderly, the unfortunate, servicemen and professional church workers.


Florida, Land of Promise

After 1900, Lutherans witnessed Florida's rapid growth. Between 1900 and 1921, population doubled, surpassing the million mark. Henry Flagler, Connecticut-born partner of John D. Rockefeller of Standard Oil, took advantage of the state's generous land grant of 8,000 acres per mile and built the Florida East Coast Railroad to Miami and the Keys. Henry Plant's Atlantic Coast Line maintained agricultural and immigrant bureaus to develop land along the rail route that extended along a hotel chain linking Jacksonville, Ocala, Winter Park, Kissimmee, Tampa and Ft. Myers.

Tampa, a quiet town of 720 in 1880, became an important military base during the Spanish-American War. Its nearby phosphate mines, rail and port facilities, customs house and cigar-producing Ybor City brought the population over 35,000 by 1920 and made the community the second-largest in Florida. Telephone service, electricity and urban rail facilities modernized the city. In 1914, Captain Tony Jannus provided air mail service between St. Petersburg and Tampa. When they observed this growth, the Missouri Synod Mission Board members agreed to move the Florida mission headquarters from Gotha to Tampa.

The rail boom made Miami the resort capital of the state. Marjory Stoneman Douglas, a former reporter for The Miami Herald and author of The Everglades, River of Grass, wrote this eyewitness account:

In 1915, Miami was a bustling pinelands town, and the region was primitive. There were few roads, duckboard walks led between shanties, and mules had to plow in burlap "muck shoes."

By 1930, Miami replaced Tampa as the second-largest Florida city with
more than 110,000 inhabitants. More than one million tourists visited the city annually. 15

Politically, Florida entered the Progressive Era. Labor received sympathetic attention and socialist A. J. Pettigrew served in the legislature. Child labor laws prohibited the employment of minors in factories, mines and beer gardens. Pure food acts regulated the canning industry. Supporters of a "good roads movement" used a two dollar auto registration fee to finance the study of future roadways. The state increased its appropriations for colleges and the University of Florida developed a credible educational reputation. 16

Florida's voters followed the national trend by becoming intolerant and politically conservative during and after World War I. Governor Sidney J. Catts' administration (1916-1920) best exemplifies this period. Catts, a lawyer and Baptist preacher, gained the statehouse by championing farmers, laborers and nativists. A maverick politician who won the 1916 gubernatorial election, Catts' demagogic leadership style antagonized the Democratic Party's regulars because he appeared to be leading a coalition of "outs" and opportunists.

The patriotic surge of public opinion during World War I helped Catts' program. His legislation modernized state penal institutions,


facilities for the deaf and blind, girls' vocational education and the boys' farm. It also repealed the convict leasing system, reformed taxes, established a farm for the mentally retarded, provided state assistance to women with dependent children, formed a state road department and required compulsory schooling.

Catts' failure to legislate against gambling antagonized his Baptist following and aided the Democratic Party regulars' successful campaign to defeat him in the 1920 Florida senatorial election. His nativism, a position that had appealed to his constituency of frustrated rural white Protestants, made him appear more reactionary as the years passed. Emotional instability further embarrassed his cause, alienated possible middle-class allies and played into the hands of conservative Democrats. A "progressive," Catts capitalized on the rural farmers' fears of being ignored. When reform and nativism were overshadowed by the Democratic Party's need to regain political stability, Catts lost his personal following and like Huey Long a decade later, fell short of his goal. 17

Orlando's population and economy stabilized during the Progressive Era. Initially, the city suffered a "boom-bust" cycle. In 1880, only four years after incorporation, Orlando included 200 inhabitants, three stores, a livery stable and a saloon. Six years later, the county seat of Orange County had almost 3,000 people and included fifty stores, seven

churches, hotels, two newspapers and rail service to Tampa and Sanford. Its location in a fine climate, citrus area and truck farming region encouraged tourists, developers and businessmen to move to the area and initiate its first real estate boom. When the Great Freeze destroyed the area's groves, the city government increased public services to regain the lost population. By 1908, the Orlando area's 4,000 citizens had the services of a tuberculosis sanitarium and RFD routes for Hiawassee, Ocoee and Gotha. Local bus service, rail transportation, a telephone exchange and road paving projects improved access to central Florida.

The stabilization of the citrus industry and the completion of rail routes on Florida's east coast encouraged developers to reenter the Orlando area. Orlandoans experienced a second real estate boom as population growth warranted the first street paving program. Developers replaced old frame buildings with new brick edifices. McCrory's, Yowell-Duckworth's and Dickson-Ives' stores became the center of Orlando's commercial district. By 1920, Orlando's population numbered almost 10,000. Farmers sold garden vegetables to local grocers and the town served as a commercial center for nearby citrus, cattle, turpentine and timber industries.18

In contrast to the general conditions in the South, Orlando did not lack educational opportunities. In 1900, nearby Stetson University in Deland became the first law school in Florida. Rollins College in 18

Winter Park, a school started in 1885 by thirteen Congregational churches, provided private education for the community.\textsuperscript{19}

Despite Florida's and Orlando's economic and population growth, agricultural expansion, educational opportunities and generally favorable conditions, Gotha's Lutherans entered the Progressive Era with several problems. Their limited numbers did not permit them to individually support a pastor. Their rural location left them isolated from other Lutheran communities. Their German-language worship and parochial school did not generate any favorable support or interest among non-Lutherans. The removal of the synod's mission headquarters to Tampa gave them little hope about the congregation's future.

\textbf{The Gotha Lutherans}

In 1905, when Pastor Hugo Hennig left Zion, Gotha for Tampa, the Missouri Synod sent no pastor to maintain the central Florida mission stations. Tampa's growth made it the new headquarters of Lutheran mission work, leaving the Gotha congregation to be served by laymen. Dr. Henry Nehrling of Gotha voluntarily taught Zion's confirmation class and led the congregation as a lay reader except when Hennig returned for his monthly visit. Nehrling used the traditional liturgy and hymns and read the sermon from a synodically-approved text. A Wisconsin native, the botanist had taught in Chicago and Texas. In Gotha, he maintained a ten-acre experimental

flower garden of Amaryllis and Caladium plants. By importing Oriental flowers, shrubs and trees he turned his plot into a local showcase.  

In December, 1909, the synod assigned Pastor John Oetjen of Minnesota to serve Zion. The fifty-eight baptized members and thirty-one communicants thanked Nehrling for his dedicated work and prepared for a more concerted effort. Oetjen, ready to retire, brought his wife and two daughters to the milder climate. Despite failing eyesight and hearing, the pastor conducted services and confirmation classes in German. Confirmation instruction took place during several half-day sessions in June and July so it would not conflict with the seven-month Orange County school term. Oetjen even included instruction in German grammar and, like most synodical pastors, insisted German instruction guaranteed pure doctrine. Unfortunately Gotha and its Lutheran congregation did not grow and by 1910 Oetjen's congregation dwindled to forty-five souls. 

Because Oetjen preached only German, the John Klinect family asked Zion, Tampa's Reverend Louis W. Wambsganss to preach monthly English services in Gotha. The eight-member Klinect family, arriving in 1911, had heard that Wambsganss used synod's new English hymnal in Tampa and asked him to serve them. On one Saturday each month, Wambsganss took a half-day train trip from Tampa to Gotha. He led the English service the next morning.

---


and then gave confirmation instruction to the two Klinect girls. Oetjen continued to lead weekly German services and German confirmation instruction until he died in 1914.

In late fall, 1911, just after Wambsganss initiated English services, H. A. Wilkening and his family arrived in Gotha. The Wilkenings joined the Klinects in encouraging the use of English in the Lutheran community. Wilkening, suffering from rheumatism in his native Moundridge, Kansas, had been ordered by his doctor to move to a milder climate. He auctioned his cattle, horses, mules, hogs and agricultural implements, leased his profitable farm and left for Florida. The journey took two and one-half days to reach Kissimmee's hammock land where the family stayed overnight. The next day they caught a train to Orlando and arrived in Gotha where Oetjen greeted them. After an exploratory trip through the area, Wilkening purchased twenty acres of high timber land for twenty dollars an acre. By December he purchased a two-room cottage a mile from the church and planted a garden. Gotha residents credited Wilkening with introducing them to western farming techniques and starting a business district. In 1923 his business block included a garage, grocery store, drug store and a community water plant.

---

22 Proceedings, Southern District Convention, 1913, p. 48. On December 3, 1911, Wambsganss made the first recorded visit to Orlando to baptize Claus Huppel. A copy of the baptismal certificate is in Pastor Kunze's files in Trinity, Orlando.

When Oetjen died in 1914, the synod assigned Candidate W. G. Ruehle to the Gotha mission. Wambsganss installed him in the fall of 1914. However, Ruehle's home congregation in California had financially supported him through the seminary with the understanding he would return to that vacant parish. According to synodical protocol, a graduate had to serve his first assignment for a minimum of six months before he could accept another call. Gotha dutifully paid Ruehle's moving expenses, helped him and his new wife move into their home in September, worked with him for six months and on April 4, 1915 (Easter Sunday), bid him farewell as he left for California.

Ruehle did not ignore his duties despite the knowledge he would serve only six months. He started a Frauenverein, or Ladies Aid Society. Women and confirmed girls provided clothing for orphanages and sold their sewing work to benefit the Lutheran college in Asheville, North Carolina. He also made several visits to Orlando in order to serve a few Lutherans and transported some members to church services in Gotha and Orlando. Ruehle taught school during the winter term and delighted the children of the congregation by leading singing sessions and organizing baseball games.

When Ruehle left Gotha, Wambsganss occasionally returned to serve Zion's members and permitted readers to lead the services until another pastor arrived. He also led worship for twenty-five souls in Orlando. 24

Concordia, Bronxville graduate and Candidate George Trapp became the new Gotha pastor in August, 1915. He immediately began preaching both

24 Fischer interview. Wegener, "Missouri Synod," SDB, June, 1939, provides the statistical information.
English and German services. Unfortunately, Trapp had not learned German until he attended the seminary and the German sermons did not escape the criticism of some older members who recalled Oetjen's flawless diction and perfect grammar.

Like Ruehle, Trapp worked with the youth. He taught the Lutheran school (held in the church) and provided some of the older teenagers with English-language textbooks so they could continue their education on an informal basis. A new Faithful Workers Society, formed to provide young adults with Christian social opportunities, became part of the Missouri Synod's International Walther League. Trapp also found time to hold services in the Orlando area. After preaching a morning service at Zion, Trapp had members H. A. Wilkening, John Klinect or Ernest Kasper of Winter Garden drive him to Orlando where he led an afternoon English service in the rented Unitarian Church. Several other members of the driver's family went along to help fill the mission with their voices, play the piano and distribute the hymnbooks lent by Gotha's members.

Trapp's primary responsibility was the Gotha congregation. He encouraged the furnishing of the building with chairs and hosted a mission festival with Reverend P. G. Heckel of Tampa. Church picnics, socials and diligent work helped increase the membership to ninety-four baptized and fifty-six communicants. The English-language Sunday school numbered

---

25 Fischer interview; Interview with Elmer Trapp, November 21, 1981; Interview with George Trapp, Jr., October 20, 1981; Roby interview; George Trapp, Sr., "Church Record of Trinity Lutheran Church of Orlando, Florida," paper written to record the history of Trinity Lutheran Church, Fall, 1924. Trinity Records (TR), Minutes, April 13, 1919, describe an early church service.
about thirty. The Lutheran community began to thrive again. But abrupt change struck the community—the United States entered World War I.

Lutherans and the Great War

World War I was a special period of agony for many Lutherans. German services and German parochial schools marked the Missouri Synod as a possible ally with America's enemy. Foreign languages became the object of hatred during the war and many viewed parochial schools as competitors with public schools. Traditional political quietism made many Lutherans maintain silence on political issues and nativist attacks often evoked a resurgent love for the Fatherland's language and culture.27

World War I did not initiate the first anti-Lutheran crusades. In 1889, state legislatures courted nativist support by passing laws to "Americanize" immigrant religious groups. Wisconsin's Bennett Law and Illinois' Edwards Law required compulsory school attendance—and Lutherans supported that. However, these laws and several states' bills required attendance at state-run public schools. Midwestern Lutherans and Catholics united with Democrats to defeat these Republican measures.28

27 Groh, Lutheran Church in North American Life, pp. 109-10, 142, discusses political questions Lutherans faced at this time. Stellhorn, Schools, p. 273, summarizes the attempts others made to eliminate foreign-language instruction and parochial schools. Kohlhoff, "Missouri Synod Lutherans," chapter 1, pp. 21-23, describes the development of the Missouri Synod's fears about persecution during this era.
After this crisis passed, the German and Swedish Lutherans reevaluated their schools. They raised the standards where necessary, improved teacher training and appointed secretaries of education. Despite these measures, seventeen states adopted laws that required English instruction in public schools. By 1920, twenty-one states permitted only English instruction in parochial schools. Attempts to stamp out German and other foreign languages included prohibitions of foreign-language publications, the use of foreign language in religious services and the teaching of foreign language in high schools. America's entry into World War I increased public pressure to force the Lutherans to sever the last social and emotional ties with Old World culture. Fortunately, Florida's Lutherans did not experience any of this pre-war pressure.

The Lutheran Publicity Bureau, established in 1914 by the Missouri Synod, waged a public relations campaign to counter accusations of disloyalty. It loosely coordinated the celebration of the Reformation's Quadricentennial, attacked the Catholics and emphasized the benefits western culture had received from Lutheranism—the separation of church and state, catechetical instruction, the development of Protestantism and the German contribution to theology. After the war began, the bureau shifted the campaign to accentuate the spiritual and not the nationalistic contributions.

29Stellhorn, Schools, pp. 247, 313, describes the attempts to eliminate foreign-language instruction and foreign-language worship. Arthur C. Repp, ed., 100 Years of Christian Education (River Forest, Illinois: Lutheran Education Association, 1947), p. 198, describes the pressures that forced Lutherans to consider severing traditional ties to German culture.
of the Reformation. The Missouri Synod also established a press correspondent in Washington, D. C., in 1920 and made him a lobbyist in 1926.\textsuperscript{30}

Lutherans hoped the publicity campaign, the Reformation commemoration, the unification of the three Eastern English-language Lutheran church bodies in the ULCA, the commissioning of the Lutheran Army and Navy Board to serve Lutheran servicemen and the purchase of $94 million of Liberty Bonds and stamps would quiet their nativist critics. At the 1917 Milwaukee convention, the Missouri Synod deleted the term "German" from its official title and called itself the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States. Bilingual secretaries recorded district and synodical minutes, while discussions took place in English.\textsuperscript{31} Despite these measures, Lutherans suffered because of their language and national heritage.

To many Americans, "Lutheran" was a synonym for "German." They particularly suspected pastors of treason, beating several, tarring and feathering a few and forcing a number to kiss the flag and purchase war bonds with their savings. Churches received yellow paint smears or signs that stated, "God Almighty understands the English language." Parishioners in Steeleville, Illinois, carried shotguns and rifles to church to stop attacks. A Lincoln, Missouri, school burned to the ground and an Ohio school was destroyed by an explosion. Marauding defense councils forced

\textsuperscript{30}Nelson, Lutherans in North America, pp. 391, 394; Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 403.

\textsuperscript{31}Baepler, Century of Grace, p. 276. Ertl, God's Amazing Grace, p. 15, provides a description of Southern District meetings.
a Ft. Wayne, Indiana, farmer to hide in a cornfield. Gun-toting patriots kicked a Lutherville, Arkansas, pastor out of his parsonage. 32

In Florida, the war brought inflation and social change. Clothing, shoes, labor, machinery and seed doubled in price and food prices increased. Teachers left the school systems for better war-time employment opportunities. Many servicemen entered the state's military installations and increased the populations of nearby cities. The fear of espionage and sabotage created an anti-German war fever. In Jacksonville, people discussed rumors of saboteurs on the detained German ship Frieda Leonardt. In Tallahassee, vigilantes uncovered a "plot" to destroy the capitol. Many suspected German sympathizers contaminated the bread supplies with ground glass. 33 Anti-German sentiments reached a fever pitch and accounted for cracker threats against the Germans in Gotha.

Gotha's congregation immediately cancelled German services because some crackers threatened to tar and feather anyone in Gotha who spoke German in public. Even in homes, families spoke no German for fear of continuing conversations as they left their homes. Gas rationing rules forced H. A. Wilkening to leave his family at home when he drove Trapp to Orlando. There he guarded the car during services so vandals would not paint it yellow. Trapp faced the draft and had to choose between enlisting as a chaplain or teaching public school in Gotha. He remained with his members and taught public school from 1917 to 1920 when the Lutheran school renewed


33 Tebeau, History of Florida, pp. 374-75.
operations. After each school day, Trapp kept the Lutheran students in
class and conducted confirmation and religious instruction.  

Fortunately, no Gotha Germans suffered any physical violence because
of the war fever. Florida's Lutherans in general seemed to escape any
attacks by zealous patriots. While Gotha's German cultural background made
it an easy target for anti-German violence, no crackers carried out their
threats. Trapp's after-school instruction also indicates these threats
were probably directed against German, and not Lutheran, traditions.
Trinity's Lutherans suffered no recorded incidents of violence. Their
English-language services probably allayed any fears they were German
sympathizers.

Orlando's Lutherans After the War

The Lutherans in Orlando benefitted from the town's war-boom. Their
membership grew rapidly. On April 1, 1919, the Trinity, Orlando, congre-
gation ratified its constitution. It numbered twenty-eight communicants
and totaled forty souls. The Klinects, Kaspers and several other Gotha mem-
bers moved to Orlando for better jobs or to be closer to their work site.
In July, Trinity's members formed a building committee and initiated a fund
drive. Despite meeting for services only every other week, the congregation
raised more than $1,000. The committee surveyed a lot in September and
raised Trapp's annual salary to $300. By October, 1920, Trinity's 150 souls

---

34"Grove Workers Trace History; Tell Stories of Gotha Families,"
Little [Orlando] Sentinel, July 26, 1978, the Fischer interview and the
Elmer Trapp interview describe the Lutherans' problems during the war.
"Gotha School to Close After 88 Active Years,"[Orlando] Sentinel West, May
16, 1968, provides the information about the school.
exceeded Gotha's total membership by fifty. However, the members still had no permanent worship site. They met in the Christian Science Hall, holding two English and one German service each month. Asked to leave the Christian Science building in May, 1921, the congregation worshiped in a Seventh Day Adventist church. Finally, on July 24, 1921, the members celebrated the cornerstone laying on their site at Hughey Street and Central Avenue.  

In September and October, 1921, Trinity's quickly-growing congregation petitioned Zion for a number of changes in Trapp's duties. The congregation requested that he be released from his school teaching responsibilities to spend more time in Orlando. The parishioners wanted Trapp to replace Trinity's afternoon services with two morning and two afternoon services each month. They stated that Trapp's duties taxed his health and he needed a reduction in his work load.

Zion's voters responded by telling the Orlando group to call another pastor. They could not change any of their services to the afternoon because the heat bothered the older members of the congregation and evening services were impractical because there were no lights in their eight-year-old building. Gotha's congregation felt so strongly about its decision that

---

35 James Kunze, Golden Anniversary Booklet: Trinity Lutheran Church (Waco, Texas: United Church Directories, 1971), n. p. TR, Minutes, July 13, and minutes of special meetings between August and September, 1919, provide information about Trinity's stewardship drives. TR, Minutes, October 10, 1920, May 22, July 10, 1921, TR, Ledger Book, June 12, 1921, list the worship sites. 1920 Statistical Report, LC-MS, p. 100, provides membership statistics.
it returned unopened a second letter containing Trinity's request to adjust Trapp's duties. 36

By the end of November the Trinity voters called Trapp to serve them full time. When Trapp accepted the call on January 8, 1922, Trinity raised his salary to $1,000 per year and completed the parsonage. Again, the Gotha congregation had no pastor. Because few Gotha residents owned cars and many of Zion's members were upset about Trinity taking "their" pastor, most did not go to Trinity to worship. Zion's members had to petition the synod for another pastor. 37

Between 1900 and 1920, the Missouri Synod avoided contacts with evangelical and social gospel Christians, using its educational system to preserve its confessional and social status from the influences of "Americanization" and Progressivism. Trinity's and Zion's members refrained from contacting other religious and political groups, too, and made certain their children could receive Lutheran doctrinal instruction. During the war, the synod's political quietism probably saved it from most nativist persecution. Orlando-area Lutherans never recorded any political involvement and never mentioned Catts or other nativists except in a few isolated cases regarding the use of German in Gotha. Apparently, Lutherans both nationally and locally used their confessional and educational unity to insulate themselves from all religious "Americanization" except in the use of the English language.

36 TR, Minutes, October 9, 31, 1921.
37 Ibid., November 27, December 18, 27, 1921, January 8, March 2, 1922; Fischer interview; Elmer Trapp interview.
The two congregations mirrored the synod's reactions to other problems. English services replaced German worship and the members started English Sunday schools and adult groups. While both congregations grew in membership, Trinity replaced Zion as the largest local Lutheran church, attained stability and brought Trapp to Orlando.

Orlando's Lutherans faced new challenges. The members at Zion and Trinity had to deal with the tensions caused by Trapp's move. They also had to serve an area experiencing the rapid changes initiated by the post-war land boom. Perhaps Zion, Gotha could regain its role as the synod's mission headquarters for central Florida and Trinity could serve the rapidly-growing number of Lutherans in Orlando. The congregations entered a new era after surviving two decades of social, economic and language change.
CHAPTER III

THE TWENTIES--CHANGE AND CRISIS

America in the Post-War Era

After World War I, Americans concentrated their attention on domestic issues. They supported Harding's pledge to return to normalcy and Coolidge's belief in laissez faire. Increased productivity, business consolidation and industrial expansion justified their attitudes as the country became one of the most prosperous in the world.

The nation's industrialization and prosperity helped people initiate social and cultural change. Women appeared to have gained social equality, receiving the right to vote, smoke in railroad parlors and visit speakeasies. The availability of the automobile accelerated a revolution in travel and behavior. People also felt less isolated if they had radio receivers. Spectator sports became popular as heroes such as Babe Ruth, Red Grange and Jack Dempsey captured the hearts of many. By the end of the decade, Walt Disney's Steamboat Willy cartoon and Al Jolson's The Jazz Singer led the fledgling movie industry to replace traditional vaudeville. Unfortunately, there was a darker side to this decade of prosperity and industrial expansion.

Americans experienced a sense of lost opportunity and bitter disappointment. Many did not fulfill their hopes for social justice and democracy. The trauma of technical and social change left many embittered with the results of World War I, international relations and domestic
reform. Disillusioned by international diplomacy, many Americans supported the policy of isolationism. Fearing the impact of unchecked immigration, nativist organizations successfully lobbied to limit the number of south-eastern European immigrants admitted into the country. Concerned with decaying social and cultural values, many Protestants supported Prohibition. The apparent collapse of American traditions generated an embittered group of Americans fearful of the results of technical and social change.¹

**Southern Protestants and Religious Change**

To many Protestants, religious traditions appeared to dissolve before the pressures of industrialization, urbanization and social change. Behavioral standards collapsed. The family's authority over children declined. Worship practices changed. Protestants perceived modern society attacked them.

In the South, additional fears of race riots, strikes and scholarship drove many denominations to reinforce past traditions. Disillusioned with the ineffectiveness of the social gospel, Southern Protestant clergy mobilized public opinion to support personal piety legislation. They hoped blue laws, Prohibition and the removal of secular influences in public schools would save their country and society.²

The clergy's attempt to lead political and scholarly debates dramatized the religious temper of the South. Southern Protestants questioned the value of higher education and criticized German biblical criticism, ³

---

¹Marty, Righteous Empire, pp. 211-15; Nelson, Lutherans in North America, pp. 415-16.

²Ibid.; Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 231.
"high brow" lecturers and the emphasis on intellectual debate of doctrinal differences. To guarantee the purity of doctrine, Southern Protestant church bodies avoided unification with sister northern denominations. They created their own Bible colleges and approved doctrinaire methods of theological education. Believing education could be limited to the Bible (to learn how to act), the hymnbook (for its poetic value) and the almanac (for the weather), Southern Protestants countered critics by calling them agnostics, atheists or communists. Unfortunately, these efforts undermined the clergy's social status and popularized the Bible Belt stereotype of the clergymen as a "Bible-banger."

The Scopes Trial and the Presidential election of 1928 symbolized the Southern reaction to modernism. Both events degraded the clergy, revealing the decline of Protestantism that had been underway for the past half century. William Jennings Bryan's debate with Clarence Darrow convinced many that Southern Protestantism no longer had the right to lead the country's evangelical Christians and social reformers. When Southerners supported Hoover in 1928, they expressed their distrust of urbanization, Catholicism and immigration. However, this break with the Democratic Party appeared to yield the Great Depression. The fundamentalist-modernist religious debate, in addition to the Scopes Trial and the political reaction

---

against urbanization and immigration, left the South denominationally isolated and disheartened. ⁴

**Lutherans and American Religious Issues**

During the twenties, Lutherans externally resembled the mainline Southern Protestant denominations. They sympathized with fundamentalism, maintained primarily a rural membership and required a confessional discipline that expected members to ignore the ecumenical movements that became popular. Like the Southern Protestant fear of immigrants, Lutherans had their own "devils" and attacked those they believed guilty of persecuting them during World War I. By the end of the decade Lutherans no longer externally resembled Southern Protestants. Most continued to reject Prohibition, the restriction of academic freedom and the use of immigration quotas. A growing educational system, a new emphasis on home missions and the development of inter-Lutheran cooperation aided institutional and membership growth.

After World War I, many Lutherans sympathized with fundamentalism but none officially endorsed it. Most felt they had to choose literalism, orthodoxy and confessionalism or abandon historic Lutheranism. But the fundamentalist-modernist controversy did not affect most Lutherans. The language barrier and relative social and intellectual isolation blocked Lutheran discussion of the issues on a local level and restricted it to the college classroom. ⁵

---


Unlike Southern Protestants, American Lutherans were confessionally isolationist. Most synods did not send observers to the first meeting of the World Christian Fundamental Association (1923), the Stockholm World Conference on Life and Work (1925) or the Lausanne World Conference on Faith and Order (1927). Fearing union with European or American Lutherans who rejected literalism, the German-language synods (primarily the Synodical Conference members—the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod) did not send representatives to the Lutheran World conventions in Eisenach (1923) or Copenhagen (1929).

In contrast to Southern Protestantism, Lutherans rejected the pacifist ideas that influenced the clergy during the twenties. Most Lutherans had not shared the crusading spirit of the war years and suffered persecution by members of the major denominations. Like other Protestants, Lutherans who had agonized about the use of English before the war (particularly the Missouri Synod) found enemies to attack during the twenties. They struck at Jews, the movie industry, Freemasonry and Bolshevism. They despised Jews because they appeared to control international finance. The movie industry supported many Jewish moguls and Freemasonry contained pseudo-religious elements that threatened Christian symbolism. Reverend Walter A. Maier in the Walther League Messenger and Theodore Graebner in The Lutheran Witness condemned these groups, echoing the frustrations of the Missouri Synod that had been condemned as an un-American institution during the war.  

---

6 Nelson, Lutherans in North America, pp. 419-20, 435-36, lists the international conferences.

7 Kohlhoff, "Missouri Synod Lutherans," chapter 4, pp. 41-43.
Unlike other Protestants, Lutherans opposed efforts to prohibit brewing. Legislating Prohibition appeared to mix religion and politics and Lutheran quietism did not support religious meddling in government policy. If Lutherans did support Prohibition, it was primarily motivated by a commitment to law and order.  

Educationally, Lutherans developed their own self-contained system. Many churches started schools. Several Lutheran regional and national organizations established superintendents of schools and more than half of the elementary schools taught some classes in German and others in English. Because many Lutheran instructors furthered their education at state universities, businessmen purchased facilities in 1926 in Valparaiso, Indiana, to start a Lutheran university. Lutheran synods, excited by the economic prosperity during the twenties, built new educational facilities, the most spectacular enterprise reaching completion in 1926 when the Missouri Synod dedicated a new $3 million seminary campus in St. Louis, Missouri.

Initially, Lutherans appear to have agreed with the Southern Protestant nativist reaction to immigration. They never expressed their opposition to the severe limitations placed on southeastern European quotas and the exclusion of Asians. But Lutherans opposed the quota system because it restricted German and Scandinavian immigration while favoring the British.

Lutherans also opposed immigration restriction because it eliminated a prime source for future members. With only 30.7 percent of the congregations located in urban areas in 1926, the Lutheran synods did not share in the urban growth that took place during the decade or replace the potential

8 Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 213.
immigrant members kept out of the country. Lutherans often blamed immigra-
tion restriction for slowing their growth because Lutheranism did not grow
as rapidly as its own educational system or the American population.

To counter the membership crisis, Lutherans borrowed other
Protestant techniques to enhance evangelism. They canvassed neighborhoods,
conducted every-member-visitations, organized evangelism committees and
collected funds for distributing religious literature and tracts. The
confinement of social action to congregational locales took most of their
energy and left little interest in contacting outside organizations, cooper-
ating with other programs or developing regional social service ministries.
However, the new evangelism techniques countered the obstacles to growth--
confessional isolation, immigrant restriction, rural background. By 1930,
Lutherans in the United States totaled 4.4 million baptized members.
Twelve thousand pastors served them. One decade after World War I,
Lutherans comprised only four percent of the country's population. How-
ever, because most Lutherans lived in the Midwest, their influence in
worship and education far outweighed their actual numerical strength.9

As the decade ended, Lutherans seemed interested in unification
and, in the case of the ULCA, considered involvement in selected activities
conducted by the various national and international denominational bodies.
Separated from other Protestant denominations because of confessional
discipline, political quietism and educational independence, German and

9 Diefenthaler, "Lutheran Schools," pp. 29-30, outlines the Missouri
Synod's educational system during this era. Arden, Augustana Heritage,
p. 263 and Nelson, Lutherans in North America, pp. 420-21, 431-36, describe
institutional expansion and membership activities.
Scandinavian Lutherans, encouraged by a stable membership, no longer felt persecuted. The persecution during World War I had not destroyed Lutheranism but forced a reevaluation of its traditions. Lutherans no longer resisted "Americanization," but actually accepted its inevitability.

The Missouri Synod Faces Americanization

The Missouri Synod warrants special attention because of its unique position as a German-language synod. Having suffered persecution during World War I because of its German background, the membership faced the trauma caused by "Americanization." The members had to confront the challenges of English-language usage in their institutions and develop new ministries to deal with the country's rapid urbanization and social change.

During the twenties, the 1.25 million-member Missouri Synod slowly adopted the dominant culture. Dedicated to strict confessionalism and loyal to its educational system, the synod appeared to be a separatist organization intent upon preserving German culture and language usage. However, two emphases helped end traditional separation between the synod, other Lutherans and the Protestant community. First, members recognized the importance of using English to develop missions. Secondly, the synod's promotion of national youth groups, women's clubs, laymen's organizations, publication offerings and radio programming, resembling mainline Protestant organizational development, ended institutional isolation and helped "Americanize" the membership.

In the early twenties, few Protestant bodies exhibited more unity than the Missouri Synod. Seminary faculty encouraged future clergy to ignore the main currents of American political, social and economic life.
The pastors were a close-knit fraternity. They trained together at the Springfield or St. Louis seminaries and read the same synodical publications. This "journalistic glue" held the synod together. Unfortunately, the clergy feared the public-educated laymen who occasionally used secular educations to attack doctrinal tenets and ecclesiastical traditions. But the synod's unity defused doctrinal disputes and accelerated the centralization of synodical authority in national and district boards. Like other Protestant bodies after World War I, the synod developed an active bureaucracy of board members, committeemen and secretaries. The centralization of authority unified the membership's response to several challenges.

Urbanization accelerated the synod's adaptation of the English language. Like the rest of the country in 1925, more than half of the synod's members lived in urban areas. The urban congregations adopted the English language to promote mission work and accepted the necessity of using English in Sunday school. By 1926, fifty-four percent of the worship services were held in English. However, this language transition presented an immediate problem.

Congregations, students, pastors and teachers needed approved English texts. Synod's official printing company, Concordia Publishing

---


House in St. Louis, provided the necessary English titles and even reprinted a nineteenth-century English-edition catechism in 1926. The synod’s theologians used the church periodicals, particularly The Lutheran Witness, to instruct members how to avoid the dangers of the liberalizing English influence. Lehre und Wehre, a theological journal renamed Concordia Theological Monthly, provided pastors with guidance in using the English language without destroying doctrinal content.

Like the English-language question, the synod's laymen did not readily approve of the government's intrusion into church life. They opposed the creation of a federal department of education, the addition of a child labor amendment to the Constitution and the formation of the National Education Association. Synodical leaders also opposed union with other Lutheran bodies and vehemently criticized the Southern Protestant proposal to include Bible reading and religious instruction in public schools.12

While the synod's members struggled to adopt a new language and fought to maintain religious freedom, they faced the loss of their educational system. Many teachers and pastors resigned during the decade because their salary increases did not match post-war inflation. State legislatures imposed more stringent educational standards and disqualified synodical pastors from teaching because they did not meet the new requirements. Sometimes schools closed because members no longer understood the need for

12 Nelson, Lutherans in North America, pp. 424, 428; Stellhorn, Schools, pp. 320, 412.
maintaining German traditions as the German language fell into disuse. They sent their children to public school. As teachers resigned and schools closed, the synod's membership had to determine if it should maintain its educational system. Perhaps women, achieving new social status after World War I, could provide their teaching services for reduced pay and help keep the schools open.

The Missouri Synod not only disapproved of the immoral influences of the theater, dancing and automobile, but also refused to acknowledge the change in women's status. When Texas voters elected a female governor in 1925, a Lutheran Witness editor commented, "... the world has completely lost all common sense." In 1923 the synod declined a request to erect a seminary for women and continued to maintain the four-year-old policy of permitting female education only at its Seward, Nebraska, teacher training center. The insistence that men teach theology and the fear that women instructors made parochial schools too similar to public institutions encouraged the restriction of the total number of females to less than twenty percent of Seward's enrollees. Not until 1938 did Concordia, River Forest, accept women and not until 1941 did the synod remove female enrollment caps.


While these measures restricted women to a secondary status, synodical women did gain a few concessions. Despite a policy of male-only suffrage in congregations, women received approval to form Ladies Aid Associations. These organizations provided volunteers for local Lutheran social services. Many sewed, knitted or washed clothing for students or sold home-made clothing to benefit hospitals, academies or colleges. In 1929 several women requested the privilege to form a national organization similar to the Lutheran Layman's League. The synod premitted them to collect money in mite boxes but terminated the organization a year later because of the Depression. 16

While limiting women's role in the church, the synod expanded its social and educational programs among Southern blacks and youth groups. In 1922 the Southern District reopened Luther College in New Orleans and added another ministerial prep school for blacks at Selma, Alabama. By 1927 Southern blacks' synodical membership increased to 5,515 baptized, a 400 percent increase in thirty years. 17

Synodical work among young people met with success. Between 1918 and 1923 the Walther League gained 800 congregational societies and completed fund drives supporting a tract ministry for Lutheran servicemen, the Wheat Ridge Sanitarium and an outdoor retreat center in Arcadia, Michigan. The Executive Secretary of the Walther League, Walter A. Maier, coordinated a League drive to support one-third of the synod's foreign

16 Ibid., pp. 66-72.
17 Ertl, God's Amazing Grace, p. 66; Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 317.
mission budget and edited The Bible Student and The Concordia Messenger. These magazines provided Missouri Synod youth with debate topics ("Should we adopt the metric system?"), a guide for the proper use of leisure time and service project ideas. During the twenties the Walther League also contributed to the Lutheran Hour radio program, a law library at Valparaiso and hospices that provided housing for unemployed. These programs generated a fine response in the synod's congregations and by 1928 more than 1,800 societies declared membership in the Walther League. 18

The new programs also encouraged stewardship. The synod's membership increased per capita giving from $13.32 in 1920 to almost $25 in 1929, a good figure even when one takes into account the inflation of the time. This financial security gave synodical officials the confidence to initiate a mass media program. The Lutheran Publicity Organization, organized in 1925, sent information to newspapers and encouraged churches to sponsor monthly broadcasts of their services. The success of the synod's St. Louis radio station KFUO, the first religious broadcasting station in America, encouraged other Lutheran communities to develop local radio programming. Walter A. Maier solicited pledges to sponsor KFUO broadcasts and generated enthusiasm to match his success. By 1935, Maier succeeded in creating

The Lutheran Hour, a thirty-minute nationally broadcast program. The Missouri Synod had finally utilized the mass media to spread its message.

Culturally, synodical congregations changed several traditions during the decade. Many congregational members rejected the "side street mentality" that limited church designs to simple rectangular structures on inexpensive lots. After 1920, congregations frequently selected prominent locations and built imposing English Gothic structures. Robed choirs performed in choir lofts and individual communion cups replaced the common cup at Eucharistic celebrations. Finally, families sat together during worship, ending the custom of seating women on the left and men on the right side of the church.

The synod's members had changed during the twenties. By 1930, more than half of the synod's laity lived in urban areas, used English in worship, supported women's, youth and men's church clubs and promoted radio mission work. Culturally, the synod still restricted women's rights but changed several other traditions like congregational seating, communion worship and ministry to the blacks. How would Orlando's Lutherans participate in the changes?

The Florida Boom

The Missouri Synod's Southern District concentrated its mission efforts in Florida after 1920. The real estate boom and the large number

---


of retirees that moved to the state encouraged district officials to start St. Matthew, Miami (1924), Trinity, Ft. Lauderdale (1927), Redeemer, West Palm Beach (1925) and Grace, St. Petersburg (1928). Southern District missionaries found Florida in the middle of a highway and railroad building boom. When builders completed the Miami-Jacksonville highway (U. S. Highway 1) in 1911, the state's road engineers estimated the peninsula needed more than 3,000 additional miles to complete a useful system. The Dixie Highway fulfilled much of Florida's road needs and gave Midwestern tourists and developers direct access to the state. County commissioners and land developers added to the state road mileage so they could display their resources. George Gandy, a Philadelphia transportation expert, completed the St. Petersburg-Tampa bridge in 1924 and removed a major barrier to west coast commerce. The Tamiami Trail, completed in 1928, linked east and west coast resort areas. By 1930, the state had a total of 3,254 paved miles. Both the Florida East Coast and Atlantic Coast Line railroads extended main lines to the truck garden regions around Lake Okeechobee.

Roads, railroads and the promise of riches and sunshine brought thousands to Florida. The state's population increased more than fifty percent between 1920 and 1930, reaching a total of almost 1.5 million. With no state income or inheritance taxes, the ease of access and the

21 Ertl, God's Amazing Grace, pp. 86-87.
general economic prosperity throughout the country, many journeyed to the new "garden of Eden."  

Orlandoans anticipated they would participate in the new prosperity, particularly with the new road and transportation improvements. Many hoped the Cheney Highway, a nine-foot wide brick-paved route between Orlando and Cape Canaveral, would bring thousands of businessmen and tourists to the heart of citrus country. The completion of the road was so impressive that Fox Films included its christening (with orange juice) in 1924 newsreels. One reporter speculated the ribbon of pavement would make Orlando the "Los Angeles of the East." Citizens on the coast and in Bithlo prophesied that Cape Canaveral would become a great seaport for new inland citrus and cattle empires.  

Three years later, officials dedicated Narcoossee Road that linked Orlando to St. Cloud and Melbourne. The new airport further improved access to Orlando and by 1929 the city had air mail service. The completion of a new Atlantic Coast Line depot on South Hughey Avenue and the railroad's double-tracking through Orlando contributed to the real estate boom in Orlando.  

Culturally, the Albertson's donated the books and money needed to establish a city library, radio station WDBO began broadcasting and the Orlando Symphony Orchestra and other touring groups performed in the new Municipal Auditorium. The Coliseum provided a place for dancing and lighter entertainment and by 1924 there were several major theaters,  

---


including the Beacham, Dr. Phillips, American and Grand. The theaters, decorated with pillars, chandeliers, stucco and tile, made the downtown complete by supplementing the city's business facilities with evening entertainment sites.

Orlando also had several new organizations. The Knights of Columbus, Rotary Club, Salvation Army, Business and Professional Women's Club and Jaycees increase in membership indicates the area was undergoing tremendous population growth, business expansion and a building and real estate boom. The population tripled to total more than 27,000 by 1929. Many new banks, food stores (including A & P and Piggly Wiggly), hotels, churches and schools changed Orlando's skyline and business district. Orlando's city council hired a city planner. Tourist camps, the new "White Way" between Orlando and Winter Park and the staffing of a tourist booth eighteen hours per day show the growth of tourism in the area.25

Unfortunately, population increase, land development and business speculation did not help the area without abusing the environment. John Kunkel Small, a Pennsylvania photographer and naturalist, visited central and south Florida in 1901. As the curator for New York's Botanical Gardens, he returned to the area in 1922 searching for new plant specimens. In his book, From Eden to Sahara: Florida's Tragedy, Small criticized the

25Bacon, Orlando, 1: 307-354, 2: 1-45, describes Orlando's growth during this time and provides the information for the previous three paragraphs. The material about Orlando's theaters is found in Lisanne Renner, "An Uphill Battle for Old Theaters," The Orlando Sentinel, June 25, 1984.
reckless land use, the poor farming methods and ruinous land development techniques that destroyed the fragile natural system.26

The Labor Day Hurricane in 1926, financial collapse of several banks and disastrous 1928 hurricane that destroyed Moore Haven signaled the end of the land boom. During these hard times, Florida's Protestants lashed at the Catholics and supported Hoover in the 1928 Presidential election. Orlandoans were further hurt by the Mediterranean fruit fly infestation that forced grove owners to burn almost three-fourths of their trees. The shipping quarantine that lasted until the end of November, 1930, depressed the local economy even further. By that time, just after the rest of the country's economy collapsed into the Great Depression, Florida's weakened agricultural industry and deflated land prices disrupted state banking, public bond redemption, the transportation industry and tourism. The declining tax base forced the state to abdicate to the cities the responsibility for its destitute.27 How did the Orlando Lutherans respond to Florida's boom and bust and the cultural, social and language changes initiated by the Missouri Synod?

The Gotha Lutherans

Zion's membership in Gotha did not grow during the early twenties. Florida's boom bypassed both the town and congregation. When Trapp left

26 Howard Means, "1929," The Orlando Sentinel, July 12, 1983.

to serve Trinity, Orlando, he left Zion's 100 members without a pastor. Despite the poor prospects, the Southern District assigned Candidate Carl Kummer to the congregation in the fall of 1922.

Kummer, an organist, had been raised in a large Midwestern city. He disliked what he felt were the primitive living conditions in Gotha and moonlighted, selling cars for a nearby Packard dealer. Kummer developed a romantic interest in the dealer's daughter, who happened to be Presbyterian, and began neglecting his duties. Sometimes he arrived only ten minutes prior to Sunday morning worship. Habitual absences from the town except for Sunday services concerned some of Zion's members. When they expressed mild disapproval about his behavior, Kummer apparently interpreted it as an ultimatum, left the congregation and married the woman.  

Despite the unexpected loss of Kummer, Zion continued to function. H. A. Wilkening, a future leader in the local Lutheran Laymans League, Orange County Chamber of Commerce and Winter Garden Citrus Association, is credited with maintaining Zion's stability during this difficult period. He led reading services and encouraged auxiliary groups to continue meeting until Zion's next pastor arrived. The next pastor was not a candidate just out of a seminary nor a man unfamiliar with the rural community. He had lived there several years, been the last official Reiseprediger and had started many of the congregations in Florida. He was Reverend Ed Fischer.

28 Elmer Trapp interview; Fischer interview.

Fischer spent the past seventeen years in Beaumont, Texas, and Ruma and Millstadt, Illinois. He served in the same capacity as he had in Florida, ministering to the members of several preaching stations and teaching school at each site. Suffering from overwork, Fischer followed a doctor's orders and retired to sunshine and outdoor activities in Florida. His wife's parents, the DeVedigs, still lived in Gotha, so the pastor and his wife, Sophie, returned in 1920. Fischer cleared his own groves and reentered the citrus business.  

While Kummer had been in Gotha, Fischer assisted in services at both Trinity and Zion. He participated in several dedications at Trinity and occasionally helped Trapp serve communion. Fischer also taught Zion’s confirmation class and read sermons but when Kummer left, he did not desire to fill the congregation's vacancy. When a 1927 gas shortage restricted travel to Orlando and a group of Zion’s members still refused to attend Trinity because of the Trapp affair, several women requested that Fischer accept the pastorate. After a brief trial period in early 1928 he accepted the call and Gotha had its first official pastor in five years.  

When Fischer began his term as Zion's pastor the church faced several problems. Only twenty-five members remained in the congregation. A number had moved to Orlando and attended Trinity, while others worshiped at Trinity because it had a pastor during the mid-twenties. Mission work


31 TR, Minutes, January 8, 1922; Trapp, "Church Record," p. 2. A description of Fischer’s duties at Zion during the twenties is found in "History of Zion Lutheran Church," and the Fischer interview.
became difficult when all of Zion's records were destroyed in a fire that engulfed Fischer's home. Ironically, he had stored the records there to protect them in case the church burned. Despite these hardships, Fischer's endeavors increased membership to forty baptized by 1930.\textsuperscript{32}

Even though he continued farming, the pastor found time to preach in Gainesville, Ocala, Titusville, Mims and Cocoa. Some participants drove as far as 100 miles on sandy roads to join in Fischer's services. He, too, traveled quite far to these sites. Esther (Wilkening) Fischer, wife of Pastor Fischer's son George, and several other family members and friends accompanied him on these trips, and, like they had done when Trapp had been in Gotha, served as organists, ushers or as choir members. But Gotha's congregation never became more than a mission outpost quartering a pastor and a handful of dedicated members. Its membership remained at forty until 1952.\textsuperscript{33} The land, transportation and building boom bypassed Gotha's Lutherans. Trinity's congregation would have to lead the Orlando Lutheran response to the central Florida boom.

**Trinity's Boom**

Even before Trapp moved from Gotha, Trinity became the leading Lutheran congregation in central Florida. Incorporated on July 8, 1921, the congregation filled the new concrete block rectangular worship site

\textsuperscript{32} The Fischer interview describes Pastor Fischer's activities while the statistics are found in 1925 Statistical Report, LC-MS, p. 115, 1930, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 1952, p. 43; Fischer interview; Weber, "Lutheran Church in Florida," p. 17; A Decade of Blessings: 10th Anniversary of the Florida-Georgia District, 1958, n. p., p. 15.
at Hughey and West Central each Sunday at 10:30 A. M. The church officers, selected annually in the fall, approved several church organizations and volunteer groups in the quarterly voters' meetings in 1921. The women, unable to vote according to Lutheran tradition, organized a Ladies Aid Society. Several adults formed a choir. A few other members taught 9:30 A. M. Sunday school classes. Trapp supervised the Young People's Association and the congregation purchased fifty German hymnbooks to aid the older members' worship services. 34

Trapp ministered to his older German-speaking and younger English-speaking charges. He led English services almost every Sunday. One Sunday morning and one afternoon each month, Trapp served the older members by leading German worship. Later, Trapp added a brief Sunday evening English service so younger members could worship even when the morning service was German worship. Once each quarter he counseled each prospective communicant at the parsonage. The active pastor also encouraged the choir and Young People's Association to hold mission festivals. In April, 1923, the two groups presented a slide show of South America for the benefit of a mission fund drive. Spring and summer picnics in the Herold's back yard also aided fund raising efforts. 35

Orlando's land boom brought prosperity and Lutherans to the area. Several Lutheran families moved to the region, invested in various enterprises and looked for an English-language Lutheran church. Dedicated

34 TR, Minutes, June 27, 1921, April 4, May 1, 1922.

35 Ibid., January 8, April 4, October 1, 1922, April 8, 1923, describe Trapp's duties and his leadership in forming auxiliary organizations. Kunze, Golden Anniversary Booklet, mentions the Herold's, but provides no location.
Christians, they willingly traveled quite far to attend Sunday morning services.

Each Sunday, Erwin Puch brought his family from Kissimmee. The Kaspers drove twelve miles from Winter Garden and the John Senkarik and Joseph Dinda families traveled eighteen miles from Slavia. Anna Hrvol, a school teacher in St. Cloud, drove to Trinity with her parents each Sunday even during the rainy season. 36 Carl and Martha Klinect drove two and one-half hours to Orlando. They faithfully attended services while he temporarily worked in Ocala. On their way to Trinity the Klinects left their three children at Martha's parents and went to church.

Carl Klinect wanted to maintain his contacts with his friends at the church he helped start. In 1911, as a young teenager, Klinect left northern Ohio by train, riding to Winter Garden in a horse car so he could care for the family's livestock. While living in Winter Garden he worshiped at Zion, worked in the family's 100 acre citrus grove and witnessed his father's sale of twenty acres to H. A. Wilkening. In 1917, Klinect married, moved to Orlando and invested his savings in the Gurnsey Hardware store on Orange Avenue, quite close to a livery stable. In 1923 he sold his portion of the business and worked in an appliance store on Michigan Avenue. His vocational experiences in Orlando and later in Ocala qualified him for the assistant manager's position in the Orlando Sears store that opened in the middle of the Depression. During the twenties and thirties, Klinect served

36 Interview, Erwin Puch and Ella (Puch) Kasper, July 25, 1983; Interview, Anna Hrvol, April 8, 1983.
Trinity as president, secretary and treasurer. As a member of the building committee he helped select the future church site on Livingston Street. 37

Carl Kunze and the George Ellman family moved from Eastern Shore, Maryland to Winter Garden in 1921 and to Orlando in 1922. They, too, looked for financial success in truck farming, citrus and real estate and sought an English-language Lutheran church. When they moved to College Park, it was "in the country," and had no paved streets. Ellman, a land developer, successfully sold lots in Ellman's Heights, Phyllis Grove and several other subdivisions that he named after his wife and children. To generate publicity, he hired bands to entertain clients whenever he offered lots for sale. Carl Kunze, a truck farmer who had married Grace Ellman in Maryland, sold his business in 1923 and worked as a junior partner in Ellman's downtown Orlando real estate firm. The Kunzes and Ellmans helped at church. Carl served several terms as a congregational officer and Grace (Ellman) Kunze worked for the Ladies Aid, the organization that provided the church's janitorial service until 1926. 38

Two active Trinity members moved families to Orlando in the late twenties. Erwin Puch left Kissimmee and invested his savings in an Orlando furniture store in 1927. Fortunately he did not suffer financial disaster when the land boom collapsed and helped lead the congregation through the depths of the Depression. 39

37 Interview, Carl and Martha Klinect, April 8, 1983.
38 Interview, Carl and Grace (Ellman) Kunze, April 8, 1983.
39 Puch interview.
Anna Hrvol's family also came to Orlando in 1927. However, the Hrvol family's odyssey was not as simple as the Puch family's journey. Just after World War I, Anna's father developed a car customizing shop in Buffalo, New York. His second wife, unhappy with Buffalo's severe winter weather, heard about a Slovak group searching for available land. When she heard the group was financially supported by New York and New Jersey investors, she joined several members who traveled to Florida and purchased land thirty miles north of Tampa. They named the small community Masaryktown.

While Anna's step-mother was near Tampa, she heard about the Lutheran community in Slavia. In 1927, when Anna's father moved his business to St. Cloud, the family assumed they could worship with the Slovak Lutherans. However, they lived much closer to Trinity and worshiped there each week. A year later, when Anna accepted a teaching position in Webster, a small community west of Orlando, Hrvol moved his customizing shop to Orange Blossom Trail and purchased land located in Orlando's Clear Lake area. This five-acre tract on Rio Grande Avenue included a citrus grove and the Hrvol home. When the Depression disrupted the business, Anna's father accepted a job with a glider company near the airport on East Colonial Drive. Anna solicited a job at the Winter Garden elementary school so she would not have to drive so far to work and continued to teach Sunday school, play organ and sing in the choir at Trinity.  

The Florida boom also brought needed aid to Trapp's family. Texan Catherine Campbell arrived in Orlando in 1923 when her parents purchased a

---

40 Hrvol interview. See chapter 6, below, for more information about Masaryktown's Lutherans.
grove near Orange Blossom Trail. Unfortunately, family financial difficulties and health problems forced her to look for a place to live. When Marian Trapp, Pastor Trapp's wife, contracted tuberculosis in 1925, Catherine accepted a job as housekeeper. After taking two years of Saturday morning confirmation classes from her employer, Catherine was confirmed on Palm Sunday, 1925. Like the other confirmands, she received her first communion on Easter Sunday. Catherine recalled passing the T. G. Lee dairy farm near Colonial and Bumby when she went for daily walks and also enjoyed watching the tourists drive their beautiful cars through town. On one such excursion she met her future husband, a barber at the San Juan Hotel. 41

Organist Dan Toennies, originally a Philadelphia carpenter and cabinetmaker, joined Trinity during the twenties. In Orlando he transported fruit during the week and directed the choir on weekends. Later he started the fund drive to purchase a new reed organ. 42

The Florida boom brought new members and prosperity to Trinity. The congregation hoped it could end dependence upon a Southern District subsidy and maintain a large budget. The era also included the resolution of the Zion-Trinity tensions caused by Trapp's move to Orlando.

Zion-Trinity relations were not good during Trapp's first years in Orlando. In October, 1922, a committee representing Gotha met with Trinity's voters and expressed displeasure about Trapp's move. Trapp chaired a committee that met a second time with the representatives and defused the tension. Trinity continued to show concern about inter-church

41 Interview, Catherine Campbell, April 8, 1983.

42 Carl and Grace Kunze interview.
relations and requested Gotha's permission to let Reverend Carl Kummer help
with home visits, communion services and substitute for Trapp when he
attended synodical conventions. Gotha approved and the two congregations
settled their differences. 43

By early 1923, 103 families actively supported Trinity. Several
times the congregation discussed the possibility of starting a parochial
school, but inflating land prices discouraged the effort. However, the
congregation continued to minister to its many younger members. When
Walther League membership increased to fifty, Trapp separated the organi-
zation into two groups--the Junior Walther league for those not confirmed
and the Senior Walther League for confirmands. The congregation believed
Junior Walther League activities, Saturday school and Sunday Bible class
sufficiently substituted for parochial school instruction. 44 Like many
other groups outside the Midwest, Trinity's congregation readily accepted
the traditionally non-Lutheran Sunday school because it could not support
its own parochial school.

The youth activities and religious instruction of the younger mem-
ers bore success. The Leaguers sponsored a fund drive for poor students
and raised $43.40. They also hosted the three-day Florida Walther League
circuit rally that began October 24, 1924. 45 The congregation prospered,
established peaceful relations with Zion and developed a thriving youth
ministry. But suddenly it faced a crisis.

43 TR, Minutes, April 4, October 1, December 3, 1922, July 15, 1923.
44 Ibid., January 7, 1923.
45 Ibid., July 15, 1923, includes the collection total.
The congregation's property began to show signs of wear. The organ ceased to operate and could not be replaced. The members started an organ fund but by mid-1924 they had not collected the $375 to pay for a new one. The church held almost $1,500 worth of overdue notes and owed many creditors. The parsonage roof suffered storm damage and needed repair.46

To meet operating expenses, replace the organ, repair the roof, redeem the notes and raise Trapp's salary to $1,500, the congregation sold a small parcel of parish property. When they received $1,200, the voters decided to launch an aggressive expansion program and purchased a $12,000 tract of land on the northeast corner of Ruth and Livingston. They also commissioned a Cleveland architectural firm to design a Gothic worship center and financed the project by selling the old church property. On August 25, 1925, Trinity's board sold the church worship site at West Central and Hughey, originally purchased for $7,500, for an incredible profit of $72,500 after a four-year investment. The building committee purchased additional property on East Livingston between Summerlin and Hyer and made the necessary plans to build a new parsonage at 718 East Livingston.47 The congregation had turned potential financial disaster into incredible success.

By the end of 1925, only six years after Trinity formally organized, it had 450 baptized and 290 confirmed. Forty-six school-age children

46 Ibid., April 6, July 6, 1924.

47 Kunze, Golden Anniversary Booklet, n. p. TR, Minutes, October 5, 1924, January 4, March 28, April 26, August 8, 1925, summarize the financial transactions of the church property.
attended religious instruction on Saturdays and fifteen Sunday school teachers taught 140 students each week. Trapp increased the average number of monthly services to sixteen English and six German. The treasurer estimated the church owned $175,000 worth of property and maintained an annual budget of $5,000. Almost fifty Walther Leaguers participated in monthly socials. Later Trapp increased the number of communion services to six per year and accepted a salary raise so he earned $1,800 annually.48

The congregation's success encouraged the officers to investigate the financing of a new church. Trapp, chairman of the congregation, Carl Klinect, the treasurer, church president M. A. Hecht (one of the more vocal spiritual leaders of the congregation) and organist Dan Toennies petitioned the Appleton (Wisconsin) Aid Association for a $60,000 loan.49 Swept up in the excitement of rising land prices and general prosperity, the members enthusiastically endorsed the ambitious building program.

One hundred and twenty-three members pledged a total of $40,862 for the building fund. Daugherty-Young Construction Company of Orlando began construction and on Sunday, October 10, 1926, the congregation laid the cornerstone. Reverend Rudolph Keyl of Trinity, Delray Beach, based his sermon on Psalm 84, preaching on the topic, "The Church's One Foundation." The congregation's members decided to place a stone pediment above the door. Stonemasons inscribed it, "First English Lutheran Church."

49 TR, Minutes, January 3, 1926; Fischer interview.
50 TR, Minutes, October 10, 1926; Church bulletins, October 10, 1926, March 27, 1927. According to Reverend Kunze, not until 1948, when Reverend A. H. D. Besalski arrived, did the congregation change it to read, "Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church." In 1926 they did not want a "German" title.
In November, before the new church had been completed, the new owner of the congregation's original Hughey Street property asked the congregation to move to another worship site. For three months, Trapp led services in the downtown Christian and Missionary Alliance Church and then moved worship into the basement of the new church. Finally, construction of the building was completed. Almost 800 worshipers attended the May 27, 1927 10:30 A. M. dedication service, led by Pastor C. J. Brodus, missionary-at-large for the Atlanta area. Another 400 people attended an afternoon service led by guest Pastor W. H. Hofner of Mobile, the Southern District's representative. Because the church had no organ, Toennies led both services by employing a violin, trombone and drum trio.51

To save money, members helped furnish the interior of the church. The Ladies Aid sewed together two halves of a 150' by 27" aisle runner. Members helped plaster the interior, businessmen solicited monetary pledges and many joined the "Penny-A-Day" crusade to pay the seven percent mortgage. With these committed efforts the congregation appeared to be in a good financial position. Trapp received an annual salary of $2,400, the congregation hired a part-time custodian to maintain the sanctuary and the members pledged an additional monthly thank-offering of $62.50 for synodical missions.52 Unfortunately, new financial difficulties and internal problems threatened the congregation's stability.

Trinity in Turmoil

The congregation's ambitious financial plans received a severe blow in the spring of 1927. Trinity's members lost their large profit from the sale of the Hughey Street property. The purchaser did not pay several installments and forced the congregation to settle for a lower price. 53

The congregation also suffered internal dissension. Several times the German constituency complained to Trapp about the congregation's apparent disinterest in serving those who desired to continue German worship traditions. They finally accepted Trapp's promise the number of German services would be increased and held "somewhere and somehow." 54

Two other issues threatened to divide the congregation. Many questioned the benefits of printing a new liturgy and opposed additional Sunday evening services. The services kept members at church all day without the benefit of rest during the hot afternoon. Trapp suspended evening services during the summer months and elected to keep the traditional liturgy.

Perhaps the 1926 and 1928 hurricanes and the collapse of the land boom discouraged members and helped cause the disputes. In his report at the April 4, 1928, voters' meeting, Trapp complimented the members for their fine participation in the Sunday school and church activities but chided them for their pessimism. He suggested the choir present a musical to lift the people's spirits. 55

53 Ibid., February 6, 1927; Klinect interview.
54 Ibid., Minutes, April 5, 1926, May 29, 1927. The quote is from October 2, 1927.
55 Ibid., April 4, 1928, January 9, April 10, 1929.
Trinity faced trouble again when the Church Street Bank closed in late spring, 1928. The congregation had no cash on hand and could not pay salaries or fix leaking water faucets. Desperately, the members filed for a partial refund of their assets. They permitted the Walther League to raise money by holding church picnics (meals cost fifty cents) and solicited almost $500 from the Sunday school and Ladies Aid. Finally, they scraped up enough money to meet the semi-annual $1,575 mortgage payment to the Aid Association.  

In October, 1929, Trinity's members defeated a motion that pared Trapp's salary to $100 per month. Unfortunately, the congregation lost almost $700 when another bank closed its doors and they had to solicit donations in an every-member-visitation canvass to meet the mortgage payment. Naturally the congregation fell in arrears with Trapp's, the janitor's and the organist's salaries. Trinity temporarily survived the crisis only because the Walther League and Ladies Aid donated $345. Additional aid came from the two neighboring Lutheran congregations in Slavia and Gotha. They donated funds for sacramental wine.

Financial difficulties continued. The collapse of the Orlando Bank and Trust Company in mid-1930 cost the congregation another $218.76. Trinity owed Trapp almost $500 in back pay, regular pledges totaled about $1,500 per year and a special April mission festival collection raised


57 TR, Minutes, October 9, 1929, January 8, March 16, April 10, 1930. The last citation lists the contributions from Slavia and Gotha.
only an additional $400. The congregation also owed Aid Association more than $3,000.\textsuperscript{58} The church appeared close to financial collapse.

Despite these disasters, Trapp continued to lead the congregation and Florida's Lutherans. He hosted a mission festival on June 26, 1930 and led the District Walther League Convention in Miami that same year. The dedicated pastor organized the first Orlando circuit meeting, hosting the pastors in the church basement. Trapp suggested the congregation request financial assistance from synod's mission board and encouraged the members to sell the old parsonage. Trinity's members responded to his special appeals and even during the financial disaster managed to raise money for hurricane flood victims, locally unemployed Lutherans and a new piano.\textsuperscript{59} Facing probable disaster, the church members forgot their differences of opinion and supported each other.

During the twenties, Orlando's Lutherans saw many changes. Zion, Gotha's members faced several years with no pastor but continued their status as the central Florida mission headquarters. They managed to keep their congregation alive when they convinced Fischer to take the pastoral vacancy. Trapp moved to Trinity and made it the largest Lutheran congregation in peninsular Florida. Both congregations moved into new facilities and Trinity advantageously used the prosperity of the Florida boom years to undertake an ambitious building program. Both congregations lost members

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., January 8, April 10, July 9, October 15, 1930.

\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., October 2, 1927, January 8, April 10, July 13, October 15, 1930.
when the boom collapsed. Trinity totaled only 280 baptized while Zion had only forty. 60 Trapp and Fischer still preached an occasional German service and Walther League activities, Ladies Aid dinners and fund raisers provided social outlets.

Compared to many other Lutheran congregations in the Missouri Synod, Zion and Trinity did not appear to be changing some of their traditions. Lutheran radio programming in Orlando was probably impossible because of the relatively few Lutherans in the area, Zion's small membership, both congregations' financial difficulties and Trinity's building program. Neither congregation robed their choir and neither church supported a parochial school because of their pressing financial responsibilities. German worship continued because of a vocal German minority.

Upon closer examination, Trinity and Zion did help "Americanize" the image of the Missouri Synod. Both congregations utilized English-language Sunday schools, adopted English-language worship during World War I (Trinity had always had one English service each month) and formed youth groups and auxiliary organizations early in the decade. Women still could not vote in congregational meetings but they could teach Sunday school. Males and females also had never been separated during worship. The region's economic collapse severely tested the Orlando Lutherans. Like the United States, the congregations faced one of the biggest crises in American history—the Great Depression.

60 1930 Statistical Report, LC-MS, 1930, p. 121.
CHAPTER IV

THE DEPRESSION YEARS

During the thirties Americans confronted the country's greatest economic depression. Farmers had already suffered through ten years of depressed crop prices. Drought and dust storms drove many out of business. Others lost their property when they could not pay mortgages. People in cities and towns also suffered. Decreased sales of manufactured products forced many to close businesses or release employees. The unemployment rate exceeded twenty-five percent. While President Hoover promised that prosperity was just around the corner, beggars, tramps and Okies wandered across the country searching for jobs, food and security.

Despite the Depression, Americans did have opportunities to forget their problems. The Chicago and New York world fairs displayed visions of the future. Movie characters like Buck Rogers and Shirley Temple provided theater patrons with stories that ended with the virtuous overcoming tragedy. Margaret Mitchell and others wrote novels that led readers to a happier, simpler age. FDR's New Deal provided many with hope. However, it appeared no one could solve the economic crisis without threatening individual liberties.

The world's economic system had collapsed. Fascists and communists threatened to end democratic traditions when they promised to solve economic and social problems by resorting to anti-capitalistic methods. Germany and Russia fought to control Spain. Italy conquered Ethiopia.
Japan initiated an aggressive expansion policy. Many wondered if there was any hope for the future.

**American Protestantism and the Crisis**

The Protestant churches suffered with the rest of the world. Church membership decreased. Pledges were not fulfilled. Debts and salaries went unpaid and missionary and benevolent enterprises collapsed. Some Protestant denominations, resolving that man's sin caused the Depression, tried to solve the crisis by renewing efforts to legislate individual morality.

The collapse of the mining, farming, textile and banking services forced many Protestant denominations to reevaluate traditional reform programs. They had to minister to millions of unemployed and destitute. Devout Christians who had done nothing to "deserve" poverty joined bread lines and longed for the minister's advice. Ironically, many fundamentalist preachers prided themselves for their ability to avoid comment on current affairs and failed to provide practical guidance for their parishioners. ¹

Critics of religion like H. L. Mencken, Clarence Darrow and Sinclair Lewis attacked the ineffective fundamentalist reform efforts. University intellectuals sympathized with Marxist and socialist views, satirically rejecting the "kneeology" practiced by conservative denominations. Supporters of the social gospel also condemned conservatives. They believed the churches had to initiate social reforms, dispense with doctrine and approve FDR's measures. Methodists and Presbyterians, initially suspicious of the social gospel and the New Deal, broke precedent and approved

resolutions supporting minimum wage laws, old-age pensions and measures
that provided for the collective welfare of all Americans, including even
minority groups. The economic collapse, outside criticism and destruction
of social conventions forced conservative denominations to reevaluate re-
sponses to hardship and poverty.

The Southern Methodists (2.8 million) and Southern Presbyterians
(500,000), suffering from declining church attendance and stewardship,
implemented local and national social programs. Locally, congregations
held ladies' circle meetings, men's suppers, family-night gatherings and
fund drives to support hospitals, orphanages, congregations and the desti-
tute. Northern and southern Methodists created a national church in 1939
and completed a new hymnal that promoted further intersectional cooperation.
The Presbyterians discussed uniting their separate organizations and
initiated cooperative social welfare efforts to combat the problems created
by the Depression. The Southern Baptists (2.7 million) also met with their
northern counterparts and discussed a possible union.

This period of American ecumenical cooperation and social action
reflected an international trend. The World Conference on Life and Work
met in Denmark (1934) and England (1937). The World Conference on Faith
and Order met in Yugoslavia (1933) and Scotland (1937). Both constituencies
welcomed many representatives of the American church community. Many
American Protestants helped to create an international Christian social order.

3Ibid., pp. 117-28, 151-52; Marty, Righteous Empire, p. 236.
Two Lutheran pastors, Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr, attacked the social idealism espoused by many Protestant groups. The Niebuhr brothers both came to the same conclusions despite their different ministerial experiences. Reinhold Niebuhr, a pastor in Detroit's inner-city during the twenties and early thirties, viewed poverty as a social problem that could be solved by the church leaders critiquing society. H. Richard Niebuhr, a professor of theology at Columbia University, criticized the Church's inability to change its institutional structure to minister to the needy. As journalists for Lutheran and religious periodicals, the two condemned social idealism because they believed the actions yielded few practical social reforms. They believed that man's sinful nature revealed itself by causing the Depression and the international tensions that pushed the world closer to war and criticized the Protestant denominations that provided aid for the poor but refused to deal with poverty's root causes. The denominations feared such action might antagonize their middle- and upper-class constituencies.  

Because they emphasized the Reformation's doctrines of original sin and justification, theologians labeled the Niebuhrs as neoorthodox. Like early Protestant reformers, the Niebuhrs believed the Church had to prophesy against the evils of society and lead Christians to see God's judgment in the world's crisis. The neoorthodox supported the oppressed—the laborer, black and the poor. They actively promoted unions, integration and

legislation they felt could rescue many from the Depression and reform American economic practices.  

Most mainline denominations attacked the Niebuhrs. Conservative Protestants criticized their use of scientific methods in Biblical research. Liberals condemned the neoorthodox because they disagreed with sixteenth-century Reformation theology. The social elite attacked the Niebuhrs' political activism because it appeared to undermine society. Southern Protestants, still segregating ninety-nine percent of black members in separate congregations, despised the Niebuhrs and the other neoorthodox because of their efforts to eliminate segregation.

The Depression split Protestantism into three groups. The liberal social gospel faction rejected traditional church institutions and doctrine in favor of radical socialist-type solutions. Conservatives like the Methodists and Presbyterians attempted to solve their members' personal problems with individualized aid and approval of FDR's social legislation. The neoorthodox used ideas from both groups. They used church institutions to combat poverty and committed themselves to reforms that promoted unions, integration and social activism. The Lutherans would have to choose one of the three approaches developed to deal with the Depression crisis or create a different response to solve the era's problems.

---


7 Ibid., pp. 235-39; 241-43; Groh, Lutheran Church in North American Life, p. 80.
Like other denominations in the United States, Lutherans suffered many of the same Depression problems. Decreased attendance and a decline in contributions forced synodical budget reductions, a curtailment of mission work and the closing of numerous academies and junior colleges. Congregations were unable to meet monetary commitments and withheld funds earmarked for district or synodical treasuries. Many districts could not employ missionaries or maintain subsidies for smaller congregations. Reduced salaries and fewer positions for teachers and pastors forced many synodical graduates to leave church work and look for other vocations. 8

While many Lutherans hesitated to support the ecumenical and social gospel movements, the three largest synods—the ULCA, American Lutheran Conference (ALC) and Synodical Conference—cooperated to combat poverty, minister to students at state schools and develop a radio ministry. In 1935, the ALC initiated fellowship discussions and social welfare planning with the ULCA and Synodical Conference. Laymen from the three synods, encouraged by this dialogue, met in Chicago in 1936 and formed the Lutheran Church Charities Commission. This commission helped the synod start college campus ministries. It also coordinated inter-synodical use of National Broadcasting Company's National Radio Pulpit and Columbia Broadcasting System's Church of the Air. These developments encouraged the synods to consider inter-denominational cooperation. The ALC and

8 Nelson, Lutherans in North America, pp. 453-55; Behnken, This I Recall, p. 79.
ULCA sent representatives to meetings of the Federal Council of Churches and other international conferences.  

Several actions indicate the Missouri Synod led Lutherans in solving some of the Depression's problems. One program, the "Mission Forward Movement," provided lecturers who reminded all members they were responsible for the church's growth and economic welfare. In another program, the synod, unable to secure a loan, sold four percent notes. It also completed its evolution from German to English, publishing only English minutes of conventions after 1937. In another action, the delegates at the Cleveland Synodical Convention in 1934 elected Reverend Dr. John W. Behnken president of the Missouri Synod. A Texan educated at the English District's St. John, Winfield, Kansas, prep school, Behnken was the first American-born synodical president.  

It appeared the synod was leading the Lutheran response to the crisis, accepting "Americanization" and considering inter-Lutheran dialogue. Unfortunately, three issues separated the synod from other Lutheran bodies.

The synod condemned the ULCA policy of admitting lodge members to church membership because lodge ceremonies resembled religious worship. The synod also subscribed to the literal interpretation of the Bible, rejecting the ULCA's belief it received authority because of its message and not because it was inerrant. Finally, the synod's members did not approve

---

9 Lueking, Century of Caring, p. 60, describes the Lutheran Church Charities Commission (LCCC) and Nelson, Lutherans in North America, pp. 456-57, describes the first meetings of the Federal Council of Churches.

10 Kohlhoff, "Missouri Synod Lutherans," chapter 6, p. 4; Meyer, Women on a Mission, pp. 94-95.
altar and pulpit fellowship with those who did not practice the same theology and forbade its members from even praying with other Lutherans. At meetings of the LCCC, Missouri Synod members entered the conferences only after opening prayers had been completed. These objections to ALC and ULCA policies forced the synod to withdraw from pan-Lutheran fellowship discussions.

The Missouri Synod—Alone Against the Depression

The Missouri Synod isolated itself from almost all other church groups. To protect its pure doctrine, the synod withdrew from inter-synodical discussions considering a pan-Lutheran organization. Fearing increased government control of society, apparent social panaceas, Jews and anti-German sentiments, the synod rejected overtures to cooperate with other denominations that planned social welfare programs. The synod leadership decided to "go it alone" during the thirties.

Like other conservative Protestant denominations, the synod viewed the Depression not as a national failure but as a divine judgment on the country for past sins. Walter A. Maier, dynamic radio speaker on The Lutheran Hour, echoed official synodical sentiments about the Depression. He stated,

The corruption that has made America a scandal among the nations, the bribery and dishonesty in American courts that have sometimes reduced justice to a mockery; the greed that has brought politicians and criminals together as partners in plunder . . . all these appalling sins help to bring the nation to the throes of the present crisis, and even now rise heavenward, crying for divine punishment and intervention.

Maier, the synod's most visible spokesman, also criticized theologians who tried to reform society or the individual. He condemned those who regarded the church's first duty not to bring men into the presence of a merciful God, but to solve race relations, fight against capitalist industrialism, investigate coal mines, picket steel strikes and in general present a panacea for the evils of the day by social reform in its varied ramifications by working for the body instead of for the soul.

Synodical political quietism eliminated opportunities for social welfare activities with conservative Protestants and other Lutherans. While even the Augustana synod established a commission on social problems and cooperated with the ALC, the synod did not initiate a long-term commitment to curing social ills. The synod also condemned the neoorthodox movement and avoided discussions about segregation because it was a social problem outside the church's realm.\(^{12}\) The shortage of funds prohibited women from developing synodical organizations, revealing a reticence to enlarge their responsibilities.

These actions show the synod did not adopt neoorthodoxy, condemned the social gospel and avoided contacts with fundamentalists, isolating itself from the Protestant mainstream. Growing tensions in Germany provided further barriers to inter-synodical and inter-denominational cooperation. Anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism and conservative stances on moral issues made the synod appear to be politically and theologically reactionary.

---

The synod's leaders continued their criticism of liberal groups and social activism. Maier, Martin Sommer and Theodore Graebner, regular contributors to synodical journals (The Lutheran Witness, The Walther League Messenger and Concordia Theological Monthly), warned Americans about the un-Christian activities of the Masons. Graebner condemned a birth control bill before Congress because he felt it encouraged immorality. The three opposed a child labor amendment because they feared it extended federal police power into the home and family businesses.13

These men also led the synod's attacks against Catholics and Jews. One editor pleaded with readers to recall the "... purpose of the Spanish Armada, St. Bartholomew's Massacre in 1572, the cruelties of the Duke of Alba of the Netherlands and the Spanish Inquisition ..." so they would oppose Father Coughlan's campaign to induce American aid for persecuted Mexican Catholics.14 Maier, Sommer and Graebner opposed America's possible exchange of diplomatic envoys with the Vatican because the action mixed church and state interests and officially recognized Catholicism as a political force. Graebner criticized an unnamed Jewish rabbi for encouraging immorality by supporting birth control and for his statement, "All morality is subject to change."15 Editorial assaults against communists,
the Federal Council of Churches and testimony before the Dies Commission on Un-American Activities categorized the Jews as unbelievers who clung to wicked deeds, lodge membership and socialist ideas.  

Synodical anti-Semitism grew not only because of the lodge and moral questions but because of the synod’s fraternal ties with the German Evangelical Freikirche. When American Jews criticized Hitler, Lutherans reacted defensively. They defended what they felt was a progressive reaction to the Depression. Their support of Hitler’s measures in the early thirties was neither un-American nor un-Lutheran. While they opposed his attempt to build a national church similar to those in Roman Catholic countries, many Lutherans favorably compared Hitler’s and FDR’s reforms. They cited the Autobahnen, a low unemployment rate and the burning of pornographic literature as examples of German Christian action. Synodical spokesmen like Maier, Graebner and Sommer admired Hitler as a national leader and valiant opponent of communism, atheism and the anti-German Jews. As Luther’s 450th anniversary approached, the Walther League sponsored German tours. Travelers reported Germans were remarkably quiet, peaceful and courteous.  

As censorship restricted American knowledge of German domestic policies, Maier and Graebner expressed reservations about Nazi activities. They condemned Nazi attacks against the validity of the Old Testament, criticized the Nazi marriage policies and youth program and opposed the

---


17 Ibid., pp. 2, 7-9, chapter 5, pp. 37-41.
forced unification of all German churches. Maier suggested Americans should withhold judgment on the German situation because of unreliable reports, insisted they should await more information and be thankful "... our brethren in the Free Church of Germany have not been molested." Not until 1937 did Maier condemn Fascism in general and not until 1941 did he attack the Nazis for their inhumane treatment of Jews, the restriction of free speech and the regulation of worship.18

While Lutherans were slow to condemn Fascism and Nazism, synodical opinions of FDR changed more rapidly as he implemented the New Deal. At first, many supported the "wet" FDR in the 1932 election and favorably compared him to Hitler as leaders who knew what to do in times of crisis. One writer found FDR had English, Dutch and German Lutheran ancestry in his family. Another declared, "The President is not a Socialist, but an intelligent capitalist."19 The "honeymoon" did not last long.

In 1933, the synod's commentators expressed fear about the extra leisure time created by the NRA. By encouraging workers to travel during extended weekend vacation periods, they felt the government actually


discouraged church attendance and the constructive use of time. Another editor approved Will Rogers' comment that preachers neglected their spiritual duties when they spoke too much about the NRA and other political ideas. Martin Sommer criticized the dole because it destroyed individual incentive and encouraged political corruption. J. Frederic Wenchel, the synod's Washington correspondent, labeled the New Deal a modern-day Santa Claus and criticized two New Dealers who had completed divorce proceedings.20

By the middle of FDR's first term, Graebner led a synodical assault against the President by questioning his personal morality. Maier condemned pro-labor legislation, sit-down strikes and economic measures because the actions neglected spiritual values. The synod's clergy also feared collusion between church and state. When FDR asked Nebraska's Lutheran pastors for advice about the Social Security legislation pending before Congress, the ministers replied, "... as spiritual advisors we must not bring our high calling into disrepute by mixing into politics."21

By 1937, Lutheran spokesmen were completely disillusioned with FDR. Graebner attacked Roosevelt's court-packing plan as a menace to freedom. Maier condemned the loose moral standards that permitted double entendres, the ridicule of marriage and religion and false advertising on the radio. Maier's colleague, Julius C. Kretzmann, bound together Judaism, communism, FDR and the New Deal by referring to it as the "Jew Deal." Graebner

20 Walter A. Maier, "Redeem the NRA Leisure Time!" WLM, October, 1933; Sommer, TLW, November 20, 1934; J. Frederic Wenchel, "The Washington Show," WLM, November, 1934.

completed his assaults on those who supported the social gospel, the neo-
orthodox and communists when he testified against the New Deal at the
1938 Dies Commission hearings. 22

New Deal critics like Maier did not stay cloistered in seminary
classrooms while railing against FDR. Maier visited the homeless in
St. Louis YMCAs, comforted those in Hoovervilles and encouraged the Walther
League to provide recreation for the church's impressionable youth. The
Old Testament professor and magazine editor also preached his message of
hope on the weekly Lutheran Hour radio program. In 1934, three years after
the first Lutheran Hour effort collapsed because of its debts, the Lutheran
Laymans League and Walther League pledged to financially support the
national broadcasts. By the start of World War II, 171 stations carried
the Lutheran message in North and Central America. During the Depression,
Maier's popularity among Lutherans matched Father Coughlan's success among
Catholics. 23

Maier also led the Walther League. The synod's members feared the
simplest activities of the youth with those of other denominations meant
their children would leave the church. Maier and others promoted church
social activities, study groups and projects to guide the synod's young
people away from the temptations of the era. The Bible Student provided
study guides for weekly Walther League meetings. The Concordia Messenger

22 Kohlhoff, "The New Deal," pp. 9-10, outlines Graebner's attacks
against FDR's court-packing plan and his testimony at the Dies Commission
hearings, and includes Kretzmann's analysis of the New Deal. Walter A.
Maier, WLM, April, 1937, discusses Maier's criticisms of the loose moral
standards permitted on the radio.

23 Maier, A Man Spoke, pp. 103-114, 176, 188.
and The Walther League Manual suggested themes for discussion, socials, fund raising, talent quests, choral fests and camping retreats. The Cresset, a theological journal for young adults, commented on contemporary ethical problems and social programs.24

The synod became an interesting paradox during the Depression. To preserve confessional purity, synodical leaders avoided ecumenical contact with other denominations. Yet they borrowed promotional techniques from other Protestant churches and developed an innovative radio mission. While condemning any church contacts with state-run programs and political issues, the synod's editorial staffs vehemently attacked the New Deal and liberal leaders. The troubled Missouri Synod leadership also lashed at real and imaginary foes, fastened blame to convenient scapegoats and struggled to maintain an identity as the German Fatherland succumbed to the Nazi terror. They supported anti-Semitism and condoned anti-Catholicism. Would Orlando's Lutherans, financially overburdened by a building program, plagued by falling membership and isolated from the synod's Midwestern stronghold, survive the Great Depression and avoid adopting the synod's extremest positions?

**Florida and the Depression**

Many of Florida's 1.5 million citizens suffered during the Depression. Poor prices hurt farmers and citrus growers struggled to recover from the Mediterranean fruitfly infestation. The terrible economic conditions, loss of tourism and collapse of the land boom increased the number of bank failures, business bankruptcies and unemployed. By 1933, twenty-six percent

24 Witt, "Youthful Years," pp. 12, 15; Repp, 100 Years, pp. 204-7.
of Florida's population (almost one of every five families) depended upon public assistance. Because only one-fifth of the unemployed came to the state during the boom years, most of those losing jobs were the Florida natives. State legislators initially let the local communities provide relief but none had sufficient funds to fill the needs.25

Other problems plagued the state. Some communities suffered from the bank panics and developers used scrip when currency was unavailable.26 State and national legislators solved the banking problems but citrus growers and turpentine operators resisted minimum wage laws because the legislation raised the cost of labor. Some groups blamed minorities for the problems. Many communities did not allow blacks in their environs after dark and lynchings were not uncommon. The 1935 Labor Day hurricane severely damaged communities in south Florida and discouraged future development.

Minor inconveniences became even more frustrating because of the Depression. Mosquito infestation forced residents to pass smudge pots through their homes, smoke out insects and hope to avoid disease. Long-horns roamed highways, obstructing traffic. Wellwater smelled like rotten eggs and people still used palmetto leaf mats to fill potholes in the dirt roads.27


In 1935, as care for the destitute emptied city and county welfare coffers, the state legislature passed a comprehensive welfare program. It earmarked $2 million for relief, established a welfare board and state employment service and approved workman's compensation and disability pensions. To revive tourism, the legislature used the citrus tax to fund an ad campaign and legalized parimutuel wagering at horse and dog tracks.

Many Floridians worked for the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps. These employees built forty-two schools, twenty-seven water plants and six sewer systems. They also repaired bridges and public buildings and surfaced more than 6,000 highway miles.

Emergency bank legislation and the jobs provided by federal programs encouraged industry to move to Florida. The International Paper Company opened new pulp mills in north Florida. Financier Alfred I. Dupont purchased several financially-troubled banks and created the state-wide Florida National Bank, providing sound financing for developers.28

By 1930, Orlandoans had been struggling for four years with the troubles that followed the 1926 collapse of the Florida boom. Several local banks closed including branches of the First National Bank of Sanford and the City National Bank of Miami. The Depression slowed growth, Orlando's population increasing only about twelve percent (to 35,000) during the thirties, compared to a 200 percent increase during the twenties.29

28Tebeau, History of Florida, chapter 25, provides the information for the previous three paragraphs.

In 1931, as businesses closed and the city's tax and license income decreased, the city council cut expenses. It reduced the number of policemen, park maintenance and library services and eliminated the recreation department and bus service. A year later, the council reduced salaries twenty percent.

Additional problems hampered Orlandoans. Several theaters closed. Robberies and thefts increased. The new zoo located on West Livingston Avenue closed because it was too expensive to operate. The city's most ambitious attempt to bring in tourists and businessmen, "Florida on Parade," an exposition that would display Florida's educational, agricultural, industrial and climatic advantages, failed when its federal grant did not arrive and its investors could not finance the fair.30

Builders, subdivision developers and even congregations had over-extended financial commitments during the twenties. Two downtown congregations, St. James Catholic Parish and Trinity Lutheran, faced heavy indebtedness because of ambitious building programs. The members held street bazaars and dinners and the Catholics raffled a car to meet mortgage payments. St. James parishioners sold their academy building to the federal government to meet a 1939 financial crisis. The government later built Orlando's main post office on these grounds.

Catholics and Lutherans faced another problem—intolerance. Many blamed immigrant groups and Catholics for causing the Depression. Father Michael J. Fox, priest at St. James from 1892-1933, stated, "As I walk on Orange Avenue, I feel there is a dagger in my back!" A Methodist

30 Bacon, Orlando, 2: 47-88.
candidate for the local school board claimed he lost an election because he had married a member of Trinity. Many Methodists classified Lutherans as Catholics and withheld their political support. 31

By the mid-thirties, the local economy began to improve. The number of Orlando building permits returned to pre-1930 levels and the state ranked the city's "commerce rating" second only to Miami. WPA grants helped the city enlarge the airport, develop a solarium and beach on Lake Estelle, repave major roads, rebuild the Armory and move the blacks from Jonestown to Griffin Park's new federal housing project. New retail businesses entered the area. Sears-Roebuck, Kress and Famous department stores, George Stuart's office supply store, Walgreen's and Liggett's drug stores and Publix opened local outlets.

The citrus industry recovered from insect problems. Truck farms produced peppers, cabbage, eggplants, cucumbers and string beans. Local businesses regained financial stability. Two new tourist attractions—Cypress Gardens and Bok Tower—enticed visitors to the area. The city initiated an advertising campaign in twenty states. John Tiedtke, a financial wizard who made a fortune by investing in depreciated municipal bonds, started the Winter Park Bach Music Festival. 32 Orlando recovered from the economic disasters caused by the fruitfly infestation, bank failures and depressed economy. The local Lutherans, burdened by building


debts, declining membership and the synod's isolationism, would be hard pressed to share in the area's new prosperity.

Orlando's Lutherans in the Depression

Trinity's congregation entered the decade with several problems. The members had few assets because they lost their accounts when three local banks closed. Membership fell as several families, strapped with financial problems, moved north to live with relatives. But the congregation's primary problem was its inability to pay the building mortgage. This difficulty threatened to divide the congregation or force it to suspend operations.33

As the Depression began, Trinity's members owed the pastor, janitor and organist a total of $800 in back salaries. The congregation could collect only that amount in the first quarter of 1931 and fell even farther behind in its commitments. In April, the workers donated their back pay to Trinity, hoping this measure would help the congregation raise enough money for the $900 semi-annual mortgage payment to the Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL). Unfortunately, their attempt failed.34

On June 21, 1931, Trinity's members met in the church and heatedly discussed several proposed solutions for the mortgage problem. One member suggested Trinity offer AAL the options of lowering the seven percent interest rate to three and one-half percent or give them the building. When many labeled the plan an un-Christian scheme because it attempted to

33 Because of its importance in maintaining central Florida missions and promoting the development of a new Florida District, Fischer's Depression-era ministry at Zion, Gotha will be described in chapters 5 and 7.

34 TR, Minutes, January 7, April 8, 1931.
force AAL to lower the interest rate, organist Dan Toennies suggested the
congregation lease the church building from AAL and reduce financial com-
mitments. By an overwhelming majority of twenty-six to two, the voters
supported the finance committee’s recommendation that Trinity petition AAL
to reduce interest to three percent and require only interest payments
until the crisis passed. AAL’s officers refused to lower the rate more
than one point and requested immediate payment of all past due notes.35

In a final effort to secure refinancing, the congregation’s
officers sent a request to AAL in January, 1932. Claiming membership de-
clined because heated discussions disrupted families and friendships, they
begged for a reduced interest rate. AAL complied and on February 21, 1932,
the congregation accepted a four percent rate for ten years.36

The 240-member congregation had to discover new sources of revenue
because contributions did not pay operating expenses. When the board
requested a subsidy from the 8,000 member Southern District, they discovered
fewer contributions to the district forced the officers to reduce salaries
and mission aid ten percent. In 1929, Zion had been eliminated from the
district’s membership because the financial problems forced the executives
to close small preaching stations. Fischer served without a district
supplement until 1931.37

District President Martin W. H. Holls visited many congregations
in Florida, Alabama and Louisiana during the last two months of 1931;

35 Ibid., June 21, October 7, 1931.
36 Ibid., January 6, February 21, 1932.
37 SDB, June, 1932. Proceedings, Southern District Convention, 1929, pp. 13, 16-19, summarize Zion’s elimination from district subsidy.
urging them to fulfill district and synodical pledges. He also encouraged the people to use new weekly duplex envelopes, one set for the synod and district and the other for the local congregation. This system later helped meet reduced budgetary needs because congregations were responsible for forwarding to the district the money collected in the designated envelopes. 38

Trinity's Ladies Aid members realized they could raise money to help pay the mortgage. They held monthly Wednesday and Thursday evening meals in the Trinity basement, serving cooked potatoes, boiled vegetables, ham, spaghetti and fried chicken to the tourists. Several families unable to contribute money because of financial problems, donated chickens, eggs and ham to the pastor or the monthly meals. Patrons finished the $1.50 meal with fresh-brewed coffee and home-made pastries. So many attended the meals that servers had to place boards across sawhorses to provide enough table space. The ladies also sold quilts they had sewn at Thursday morning socials and supplied hand-made household products and decorative items for the church's Christmas and Easter bazaars.

The thirty-member Senior Walther League sponsored occasional singing festivals and operettas to generate donations. Anna Hrvol played the piano for several performances. The Leaguers presented their own play, "Aaron Slick from Punkin' Crick," on a stage in the church basement. They successfully sold all seats for fifty cents each. 39

38 Ibid., 1931, pp. 16-19; SDB, June, 1932.

39 Campbell interview; Klinect interview; Puch interview; Pfantz interview; Hrvol interview; Kunze, Golden Anniversary Booklet, n. p.
These ambitious congregational enterprises generated as much as $1,500 each year. The Duda family, members at St. Luke, Slavia, donated $1,000 to help Trinity. Unfortunately, these contributions did not solve the congregation's financial dilemma. At the January 7, 1933, congregational meeting, the voters held a special vote to support the pastor, thanking him for his patience while not receiving his full salary.40

As economic conditions forced families to leave the area, Sunday church attendance fell, donations dropped and by mid-1933, the congregation fell behind again in meeting the mortgage. When six of Trinity's first leaders died in 1933, many feared the congregation would actually disband. The voters ordered financial secretary F. H. Rodenbrock to write to the AAL, thanking them for treating Trinity so well and informing them Trinity could not meet payments because many members depended upon charity and made no church donations. He requested a cancellation of all past debts. AAL refused. Two years later, Trinity had paid only some of the mortgage interest and collected only an annual average of $2,000 for all expenses. The AAL, realizing Trinity's congregation had been truthful in describing its difficulties, accepted Rodenbrock's request and cancelled all past due payments on October 4, 1936.41 Trinity had survived one more financial trial.


41 TR, Minutes, April 24, July 9, 1933, January 13, 1935, October 4, 1936.
The Southern District, too, almost succumbed to the money shortage. Even after Holls visited the congregations, the Southern District circuit counsellors had to beg church members to stop withholding designated funds for home use. The 1933 district convention did not meet because of the financial hardships and in 1934 the district reduced salaries again.42

**Trapp and Trinity**

Despite the problems, Trapp loyally carried out his duties. His cheerful disposition defused many vehement arguments at voters' meetings. As the Sunday school superintendent he maintained the teachers' enthusiasm that helped stabilize weekly attendance at 100. Trapp continued to serve the older members, preaching a monthly German service. To provide a more informal setting for teenage instruction, the pastor hosted Saturday morning confirmation classes in his home. The enjoyable atmosphere helped increase Junior Walther League membership to twenty. Sunday evening Bible classes provided social opportunities for Senior Walther Leaguers and generated interest in fund raising activities.43

Trapp led district activities, too. He flew on the Pan Am Airways flight from Tampa to the district headquarters in New Orleans, representing Trinity as a delegate to the regional conventions. He helped organize the Florida pastoral conference and on October 23, 1932, chaired the first circuit meeting held in the area. Later this organization provided the key leaders who formed the Florida-Georgia District in 1948. Trapp also

---

42 Proceedings, Southern District Convention, 1934, pp. 8-9.

43 Kunze, Golden Anniversary Booklet, n. p.; Hrvol interview; Campbell interview.
continued the publication of the parish paper, The Orlando Lutheran, and promoted its use as a communication and public relations tool for sister congregations. 44

Trapp's youth work yielded impressive results in Florida. He promoted Walther League activities at the circuit meetings, led weekend camping trips and hosted the September 1 and 2, 1935, organizing convention of the Florida Walther League. The International Walther League's Executive Secretary, Professor O. P. Kretzmann, attended the convention held in Trinity's basement and personally led the incorporation procedures for the 148 member district. Trapp, secretary of the League's Department of Christian Knowledge, spoke about Bible studies and their benefits for youth. He also promoted the League's four-year topical discussion program, the talent quest and the League's annual choral convention. 45

Trapp's local and regional leadership bore results. In 1935, Trinity's membership grew to 350 baptized and 220 communicants. For the first time in seven years the congregation managed to meet its $3,200 budget, paying all expenses except the mortgage. 46

As in most Lutheran churches, many new members joined Trinity because they were Lutherans who had moved into the area and desired to worship as they had in the past. Several others joined because they married congregational members or because they were welcomed to church social

44 TR, Minutes, October 9, 1932, July 8, 1934. George Trapp, Jr., interview describes the flights.


activities. Catherine Campbell, the Trapp's maid until 1934, married a former Baptist preacher who worked as a barber at the San Juan Hotel. Before he joined the church, the members asked him to take the role of a preacher in a Walther League play.

Not all new members joined with such fanfare. Many antagonized the Orlando natives when they attempted to change liturgical traditions, move the organ to another location or introduce new choral music. However, Trapp managed to calm the tensions that developed between the old and new members.

Trinity and Recovery

In 1937, Trinity's members successfully met their budget for the second consecutive year. The voters rejoiced and thanked the Lord for providing better economic conditions. The congregation's recording secretary specifically noted the members cooperated much better with each other because of the area's return to prosperity. Volunteers patched the parsonage roof, painted its interior and reshingled the porch to reduce congregational expenses. The voters renewed the practice of promoting special blue envelopes for tourist contributions, indicating tourists returned when the economy recovered. The organist and janitor received full pay. The congregation voted Trapp a $2.50 per week raise, increasing his annual salary to $1,400. However, the synod still suffered from reduced church contributions.

47 Campbell interview; Puch interview; TR, Minutes, October 6, 1935.

48 Ibid., January 10, 1937, includes the secretary's comment. The rest of the information comes from ibid., April 11, October 1, 1937 and April 10, 1938.
Synodical President John Behnken visited Trinity on February 23, 1938, while taking a national tour of Lutheran congregations. He presented the synod's membership and stewardship program, "Call of the Cross." Behnken encouraged the congregations to eradicate the synod's $500,000 debt to commemorate the centennial of the Saxon Lutheran migration to Missouri.49

Behnken had a difficult challenge. Few congregations had ever conducted stewardship drives to fulfill synodical or district budgets and many still suffered from the effects of the Depression. Many church members did not join congregational voters' meetings because they could not afford the membership dues. Local stewardship efforts were amateurish. Hoping to generate funds for a building project, one pastor printed the following plea in his weekly newsletter, "Some pay their dues when due, some when overdue, and some never do. How do you do?"50

One of the few planned financial appeals had been Southern District President Holls' 1931 visit to district congregations. While his visit yielded meager monetary results, it initiated an envelope system that later retired the district debt. Holls' 1931 campaign apparently laid the groundwork and methodology for the "Call of the Cross" synodical drive. Behnken carried out the objectives, eradicated the debt and encouraged congregations to raise worker salaries.51

49 Ibid., July 10, 1938.
50 Interview, Reverend Lloyd H. Goetz, February 16, 1984.
51 Ibid.; SDB, June, 1932; Proceedings, Southern District Convention, 1931, pp. 16-17, 19.
The Southern District also implemented some unique innovations. Duplicating the synod's radio programming, the District Publicity Organization purchased thirty-five fifteen minute radio spots for Lutheran pastoral messages. To reduce expenses, delegates to the 1939 New Orleans District Convention boarded in homes of nearby congregational members. The district officers also encouraged congregations to form Lutheran Laymans League branches to provide leadership in Lutheran community radio broadcasting, local fund raising efforts and coordinate inter-congregational cooperation. While local Lutheran radio efforts failed, by 1941 Orlando's Lutherans could listen to Sunday evening vespers broadcast on Gainesville's station WRUE.52

However, the creative programs still did not include leadership for women or develop inter-synodical cooperation. Women were not granted suffrage at voters' meetings and could not serve as lay readers in most congregations. Lutheran inter-synodical communion ended as the synod condemned the proposed merger between the ULCA and ALC. In the Midwest, neighboring Lutheran pastors could not interfere in any other pastor's congregation without facing possible district censure. Seminary professors still conducted classes in the traditional lecture style, severely limiting discussions of contemporary theological problems.53

Trinity followed the synod's guidelines. Women could not vote or lead adult Bible class. Trapp did not work in the west Orlando area,

---

52 SDB, October, 1938, describes Lutheran Laymans League activities. TR, Minutes, August 24, 1941, describes the failure of local Lutheran radio efforts, while the vespers broadcast is mentioned in a letter from Reverend Edgar Brammer to George Kline, August 5, 1941.

53 Goetz interview.
leaving that responsibility to Zion's Fischer. Parents discouraged their children from having contact with members of other denominations. Members and their families spent free time with their congregational friends and during the Depression provided assistance primarily for congregational families in need. Few Trinity members had contact with fellow Lutherans who belonged to Zion or St. Luke. The Walther League did provide some opportunities for inter-congregational cooperation. Trinity's officers organized outings to Daytona Beach, providing transportation, food and drink for the three hour trip. Few non-Lutherans joined the outings. Like other Protestant denominations in the South, Trinity did not integrate its congregation. Only two blacks attended services and they returned to their neighborhood worship site in southwest Orlando after a couple months. 54

Trinity's members did participate in creative new endeavors. In 1938 the Young Matrons Society (later renamed the Cotta Circle) provided weekly social service activities for unmarried women below the age of forty-five. A year later the congregation formed a men's club to replaster the church's interior, repair the eaves, conduct every-member-visitations to supplement the church income and locate prospective members. Trinity's members approved Trapp's addition of Sunday evening worship during Advent, 1939. Many also endorsed inter-congregational activities and attended circuit representative I. W. Fritz's color slide presentation of the New Orleans Southern District Convention in October that same year. 55

---

54 Campbell interview; Hrvol interview; Puch interview.

55 TR, Minutes, October 8, 1939, January 7, 1940. The report was at the October 8 meeting.
Despite occasional budget shortages, the failure to sustain a choir (it was reorganized six times between 1929 and 1940) and the inability to attain quorums at many congregational meetings, Trinity appeared to have recovered from the Depression. In 1940, when baptized membership totaled 396 and the confirmed numbered 278, Trinity ranked fifth of forty congregations in the district and first of the twenty-six in peninsular Florida. Its annual budget exceeded $4,000 and, most importantly, was current in its mortgage payments to AAL. An emergency collection during the 1940 Christmas season raised $258.42 to keep the AAL account in good standing. In October, 1941, the church officers agreed to provide a complete annual financial statement for all voters so all could know the congregation's monetary needs. Trinity's second near-bankruptcy forced it to organize a more comprehensive stewardship program. The voters hoped that by providing everyone with the church's financial information, all would feel an integral part of the decision-making process.

On September 5, 1941, the Senior Walther League organized a surprise celebration of Trapp's twenty-fifth ordination anniversary. The festive occasion, complete with singing and a reception, also marked the twenty-second anniversary of the congregation's organization in 1919 and the twentieth anniversary of its incorporation under Florida statute. Several servicemen from Orlando Air Base attended the event. The congregation had invited all the boys at the base to attend future services and eat a meal

56 Ibid., January 7, December 9, 1940, October 5, 1941; 1940 Parochial Report, Southern District, pp. 142-43.
with a member family, not knowing that numerous enlisted men and draftees would take advantage of the invitation for four long years.

Trinity changed considerably during the thirties. It survived the terrible financial crisis because of the generosity of the AAL, its members, outsiders and Trapp's dependable leadership. While limiting the role of women in church activities, Trinity's voters supported the organization of female service clubs, helped develop a state-wide Walther League district, contributed to Lutheran radio programming and encouraged members to take an active role in solving the synod's financial crisis. It also established one of the first Lutheran weeklys in Florida when it printed The Orlando Lutheran.

Trinity was no different from most Lutheran or Protestant congregations when it included no blacks in its membership. However, Trinity did avoid the midwestern Lutheran tendency to attack FDR, praise and defend Germany and criticize Catholics and Jews. Trinity's members, realizing they were isolated from most other Lutherans, did not want to antagonize Orlandoans who might threaten them as they had threatened Zion's members during World War I.

The Depression forced Trinity's members to create solutions to difficult problems. Most members finished the era with a renewed sense of confidence in their religious institution. They committed themselves to maintain and improve the church's services and leadership for the local Lutheran community. They also could take pride in their role as the leading congregation in peninsular Florida. Zion's stable but small

57 TR, Minutes, October 5, 1941; Hrvol interview.
membership could also be thankful for surviving the Depression as well as its continued status as Fischer's mission headquarters.

The World War II era provided new challenges for the congregations. Trapp and Fischer would have to minister to the many servicemen who moved into the area, sustain auxiliary organizations as they lost members to the armed services and consider fellowship with other local Lutheran congregations. The members would have to accept new responsibilities as their pastors required more time away from the community to serve POWs and the district. The Orlando Lutherans would be challenged to sustain their mission during the war years.
CHAPTER V

THE WAR YEARS, 1939–1945

On September 1, 1939, Europe went to war. The Russo-German non-aggression pact gave Hitler a free hand in Poland and the Nazi Blitzkrieg quickly crushed Polish resistance. When Britain and France entered the war, many Americans debated what their role should be in the struggle. President Roosevelt moved to repeal the neutrality acts legislated during the late thirties.

When France fell and the Nazis turned against Britain, many Americans believed only the United States would remain to resist Hitler. Congress reacted by funding rearmament, establishing defense agreements with Canada and Latin American countries and initiating peacetime conscription. Congress also approved FDR's "destroyers for bases" exchange with the British and passed lend-lease acts to provide supplies for Britain and its allies.

FDR and Congress worked to aid the British and created New Deal-like bureaus to concentrate American industry. The War Production Board, the Office of Price Administration and other agencies mobilized Americans to meet the war's demands. Labor, management and government cooperated and provided an industrial efficiency that shattered previous production
records. The employment rate rose to an all-time high. Three million women joined the work force.¹

This massive effort caused hardships for Americans. Industry produced twenty-nine percent fewer consumer goods. Many families migrated to large coastal cities, industrial regions and urban areas to work in defense plants. They faced housing shortages, the rationing of gasoline, sugar, shoes, coffee and canned goods and tax increases. The divorce rate increased as spouses worked longer hours and women gained economic independence. Fortunately, Americans attained a higher standard of living and viewed most of these hardships as temporary inconveniences.

The war altered the economic and social status of two groups. After twenty years of depressed prices and dependence upon New Deal policies, the farmer reaped the benefits of rising crop prices and larger markets. However, many took profitable industrial jobs and farming began to shift from a family business to corporate enterprise. Blacks shared the war-time prosperity. While whites moved into the defense industries, blacks replaced them in agricultural employment, domestic services and unskilled industrial labor. The American Federation of Labor organized blacks into separate, non-voting labor organizations.² The war brought prosperity to the nation and initiated economic and social change.


² Richard Polenberg, War and Society: The United States, 1941-45 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980). Chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5 describe the major social and economic changes caused by the war.
American Protestantism and the War Years

As Americans experienced changes in society and the economy, Protestant groups faced new problems. Industrial conversion enticed church members to migrate to production centers. Denominations reassigned pastors and mission workers to serve those communities. The churches also had to organize chaplaincies to serve the increasing number of military personnel.

Several other problems discouraged liberal and conservative Protestants alike. Membership stagnated at approximately fifty percent of the population during the Depression, adversely affecting the available funds and personnel to conduct programs. Liberal reformers could no longer speak of Christianizing the world social order. Their vigorous attempts to do so had been destroyed by the Depression and the beginning of World War II. The outbreak of the war also ended the world ecumenical movement. Conservatives, too, felt threatened by social and economic changes. The formation of black and female labor groups undermined traditions of white supremacy, male dominance and the social status of the clergy. However, American Protestants did help maintain interdenominational contacts during the war years.

In 1947, several American Protestant denominations rekindled interest in international cooperation. Presbyterians and Methodists formed the International Youth Conference in Oslo, Norway, and the World Sunday School Association in Birmingham, England. A year later in Amsterdam, led by the world’s Protestant denominations, the World Council of Churches

---

formed an international missionary council, a Life and Work social ministry organization and a Faith and Order program to promote international stability. America's Southern Protestant bodies helped keep this ecumenical spirit alive during the war.

The Southern Methodists merged with the northern Methodists in 1939. While they maintained a separate non-geographical Central Jurisdiction for blacks, the Methodists abandoned their all-white denominational standing. The Southern Methodists were no longer as concerned with personal morality as in dancing or liquor consumption but with the needs of orphans, the aged and displaced families. After a lack of social concern for decades, the 3 million member denomination shifted its ministry to collective security for themselves and the nation and the social interests of all.

The Southern Baptists, almost as large a group as the United Methodist Church, supported social justice for unfortunate whites. They extended their Depression era approval of minimum wage laws, old age security, planned industry and the regulation of laissez faire capitalism to include the government's war-time measure of collective security. They also believed that winning the war would preserve their past traditions and simple truths. While the Southern Baptists did not join their northern counterparts because of racial, doctrinal and social issues, they appeared more cooperative with others during the years of war.

When World War II began, 500,000 Southern Presbyterians considered unification with their northern partners. After several decades, they

---

4 These two paragraphs are from Bailey, White Protestantism, pp. 112-158.
finally embraced social legislation and collective interests. However, the Southern Presbyterians hesitated in uniting with their northern counterparts because of the race question. The changing society and economy and the threat to democracy and capitalism encouraged main-line Southern Protestant denominations to participate in the ecumenical movement and patriotic activities that might preserve their institutions. In their zeal, would these denominations accuse Lutherans of complicity with the Nazis?

Neoorthodox pastors feared the outbreak of the war because it "... aggravates, rather than solves issues and it destroys the innocent." They feared the Depression era isolationists (the Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists) would turn World War II into a "holy war." If they repeated their World War I actions, the churches would not critique society but persecute denominations like the Lutherans that had German traditions.

The neoorthodox believed the church should support the war against Hitler and Fascism but utilize the energies released by the war as an opportunity to help all Christians understand the perils of sin. They hoped no Christian denomination would ignore man's sinful nature while trying to Christianize the social order. Would the Lutherans again become convenient scapegoats during the second war with Germany?

American Lutherans and Preparation for War

When America entered World War II in December, 1941, there were 3,635,588 confirmed Lutherans in the United States. Despite the Depression,

5 These issues are discussed in ibid., pp. 119-136.

6 Marty, Righteous Empire, pp. 242-43. The quote is from p. 242.
Lutheran bodies continued a slow but steady increase in membership and even a proportionately larger increase in church contributions. Their 1942 total of $64 million was more than a twenty-five percent increase over the prosperous twenties. Lutherans were grouped into three church bodies—the ULCA, the Synodical Conference (of which almost eighty percent of the membership belonged to the Missouri Synod) and the ALC (primarily the American Lutheran Church and the Augustana Synod). As in most Protestant denominations, membership included few blacks. Only 6,495 blacks were confirmed Lutherans in 1942.  

The decades after World War I placed tremendous demands on Lutheran churches. To aid European refugees, serve urban and orphaned missions and provide domestic social welfare agencies, the ULCA and Augustana Synod led the formation of the National Lutheran Council (NLC) in 1918. This agency coordinated aid to the destitute, mission work and chaplaincy programs but only during emergencies. Lutheran synods feared unionism even when working with each other. However, the Depression and international tensions provided the impetus for coordinating ministry. In 1932 the NLC assumed the responsibility for recruiting Lutheran chaplains for the armed services. The Missouri Synod, uneasy about cooperating with other Lutheran church bodies because of doctrinal disputes about lodges, individual morality and Scriptural inspiration, agreed to cooperate only in physical relief to orphaned missions and work among soldiers and sailors. The collapse of Asian missions during the late thirties forced the Missouri Synod to reevaluate its restrictions on participating in pan-Lutheran agencies.

7TLM, February 29, 1944.
The disruption of homes, congregations, communities and mission fields, a decrease in the number of seminary graduates and increased demands upon pastors and church executives encouraged Lutherans to share duties. The ALC and Missouri Synod initiated fellowship discussions with the ULCA in 1936. A dispute about Scriptural inspiration ended ULCA-Missouri Synod discussions in 1938 and ULCA-ALC conferences jeopardized ALC-Missouri Synod meetings. Despite these difficulties, the Missouri Synod agreed in 1941 to coordinate its chaplaincy service (Army and Navy Commission) with the NLC program. The Missouri Synod also contributed to the NLC's Lutheran World Action, a relief agency for war refugees and displaced people. At the 1941 meeting in Columbus, Ohio, Missouri Synod representatives even prayed publicly with NLC representatives.  

The Missouri Synod limited its cooperation with the NLC. Fearing the NLC was a liberal body, the synod refused to cooperate with the NLC's Commission on American Missions, an organization that coordinated Lutheran ministry services to those located in new industrial communities. Apparently many Lutherans that had relocated to industrial areas or military installations cared only that their new congregation was Lutheran. It did not matter whether it was ULCA, ALC or Missouri Synod. Tensions rose as most Missouri Synod pastors refused to approve transfers to these other congregations. Like most American Protestant bodies during the war, tensions between similar church groups preoccupied the members and interfered with attempts to cooperate with other denominations.

---

8 Keinath, Documents, p. 73; Nelson, Lutherans in North America, pp. 474-81.
Prior to America's entry in the war, some Lutheran groups appeared to be either neutral or even sympathetic to the Axis. The ULCA and ALC, eastern-based English-language bodies, appeared to be "Americanized" and faced little risk of persecution. But as late as 1941, the Augustana Synod vehemently condemned American and European militarism and supported all members who claimed to be conscientious objectors. Official spokesmen for the Norwegian Lutheran Church said nothing about Fascism until Hitler invaded Norway and then dedicated themselves to "... give full support to the war efforts of their country with their substance and if necessary, with their lives." The Missouri Synod hesitated to address the European conflict because of the bitter memories of World War I and the labeling of German Lutherans as un-American. If Missouri Synod leaders said anything about hostilities, would the membership again face persecution?

The Missouri Synod and the War

Many members of the synod feared persecution because of their German background. The synod's bilingual constituency and editorial commentary made it a probable target for anti-German zealots. As late as 1937, the synod's triennial conventions included opening sermons in German and English and the secretary recorded resolutions in both languages. While 123 of 11,994 congregations used only German (and more than fifty percent of the German congregations were in Canada), between 1937 and 1941 sixty-three percent of the congregations heard German preached sometime during the

---

9 Ibid., pp. 473-97, provides the information about the NLC. The quote is from p. 473.

10 Behnken, This I Recall, p. 52.
year. The three-to-one subscription ratio of the synod's English publication, *The Lutheran Witness*, to the German publication, *Der Lutheraner*, made it obvious the synod was primarily an English-language church body but bilingual, too.\(^\text{11}\)

*Lutheran Witness* commentary about the European situation and the Nazi state revealed the synod sympathized with the Germans. Religious fellowship with the German *Freikirche* and the common language encouraged synodical leaders to defend some Nazi measures. Walter A. Maier and Concordia Seminary professors Martin Sommer and Theodore Graebner attacked Americans who condemned the Germans and accused Jews of causing the troubles that led to the Nazi rise to power. In February, 1939, Maier declared,

> that certain Jews have lent fuel to . . . European flames. Many of them shrewdly profited by the losses of the German people. In the United States, those who have a "commendable love for the Jew" . . . [often] are motivated by hatred for the German people, the heritage of 1917 and 1918. Moreover, no one raised protests about the Russian persecution of Christians that completely overshadows the German Anti-Semitic pogrom.

Graebner approved of the Nazi fight against communism. Perhaps the membership condemned communism because eighty-nine percent of the synod's communicants were middle or lower-middle class. Generous contributions to the German Lutheran *Freikirche* continued until the government forbade this activity in 1941.\(^\text{12}\) To patriotic zealots it might appear the synod enthusiastically and financially supported Nazi Germany.

---

\(^{11}\) Kohlhoff, "Missouri Synod Lutherans," chapter 7, p. 2.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., pp. 3, 20, discusses the synod's opinion about Nazi Germany. The quote is from p. 10. The statistics for middle and lower-middle class totals are found in Groh, *Lutheran Church in North American Life*, p. 138.
Political activity hampered the synod's credibility. During the 1940 Presidential campaign, Graebner editorially attacked FDR. He condemned the President for appointing Myron Taylor as a personal representative to the Vatican. He accused FDR of pushing America towards entering the war on the British side. Graebner also attempted to show that FDR's promise to keep America out of war—a promise similar to the one Woodrow Wilson made in 1916—was an election-year ploy to gain votes. 13

Before the synod could repair the damage to its reputation, anti-German sentiments became violent action. In Canada, several German-speaking Lutherans had their windows broken. In the United States, one pastor was refused the use of a community building because his sign of benediction looked like a Nazi sign. Two cars in the front of a Lutheran church were painted red with the inscription, "Heil Hitler" 14—and all this took place before December 7, 1941. What would happen to American Lutherans, particularly Missouri Synod Lutherans, if the United States went to war?

Fortunately for the Missouri Synod, Pearl Harbor focused American attention on the Far East and created a companion enemy, Japan, to go with Germany. That apparently removed the danger of vicious anti-German activity. When Hitler conquered central Europe and Scandanavia, it antagonized synod's members because of synod's minority membership of Slavs and Norwegians. It became impossible for the synod to remain sympathetic to any German cause or remain isolated from the war.


14 Ibid., pp. 19, 34.
In a demonstration of loyalty, The Lutheran Witness published an interview of Lutheran William S. Knudsen, the chairman of General Motors who had been appointed by FDR to head the National Defense Advisory Commission. The Executive Committee of the Board for Higher Education sent a letter to its educational institutions requesting teachers to remain loyal to the country to preserve the synod's welfare. The synod was obviously patriotic.

In 1942, synodical president John Behnken appointed a subcommittee of a Synodical National Advisory Emergency Planning Council to plan post-war recovery of Germany's Lutheran church. In the fall of 1943, Graebner suggested government officials use anti-Nazi Cresset articles to improve civilian morale and at Concordia Seminary delivered a conference paper criticizing Nazi treatment of religion. At the 1944 Saginaw, Michigan Synodical Convention, the synod established a $5 million Thank Offering to finance synodical business and the recovery of the German Freikirche. Other plans included rebuilding the Freikirche seminary, reestablishing churches and schools, distributing Christian literature to counteract communism and providing clothing and food for the destitute.

15 Ibid., pp. 16, 27-33, describes the Missouri Synod's "change of heart" about the Nazis.

16 Ibid., p. 42. According to ibid., pp. 13-16, in December, 1941, Graebner had doubted whether it was possible for the synod to regain the confidence of the American community. He feared too many Lutherans had been duped by Nazi propaganda and synodical spokesmen had too vigorously supported pro-Nazi groups or attacked FDR. Graebner appeared to be worried that his readers believed his previous presentations!

17 Ibid., p. 46.
Synodical membership was neither apathetic nor hostile towards Germans. Congregations collected German theological literature for use in converting German prisoners in detention camps and 105 pastors and twenty-three chaplains ministered to the POWs. Walter A. Maier also participated in this ministry, transcribing services for prisoners and broadcasting services to the Reich. By 1943, Maier's Lutheran Hour program was in its tenth season and 450 stations carried the weekly broadcasts. Besides ministering to POWs and broadcasting sermons, Maier supported the synod's attempt to remain a credible American institution unhindered by anti-German sentiment. In his sermons, he continually repeated the theme that "World War II was not a holy Crusade, nor a just war, but just war ... [and] was an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel." When he preached in military installations, he accentuated the synod's position that Americans should support the war against the Axis and help restructure Europe and its church at the conclusion of hostilities. 18

World War II and Florida

By 1941, most of Florida's 1,897,414 citizens no longer suffered from the Depression and fewer than 75,000 people were on welfare roles. The war boom guaranteed financial stability for the state and the major cities. Spessard L. Holland of Bartow, Florida's governor during the war, successfully retired the state's Depression debts. By using an RFC loan to refinance the Everglades Drainage District, a gasoline tax to repair and construct roads and other taxes to finance state agencies,

18 This description of Maier's ministry is found in Maier, A Man Spoke, pp. 223-25, 232, 271. The quote is from Groh, Lutheran Church in North American Life, p. 112.
Holland accumulated a surplus of $22 million in Florida's general operating fund and road department. Large naval facilities at Jacksonville and Key West, an army depot in Starke and air bases in Tampa, Valparaiso, Pensacola and Orlando gave the townspeople lucrative substitutes for the loss of tourism. War-time conversion was most evident in Miami where, by April, 1942, the Army converted 70,000 hotel rooms to furlough stations, training quarters and hospital facilities. Fashionable restaurants served as mess halls.

Military installations brought Florida two long-term benefits. Families of servicemen traveled to Florida to visit their loved ones. After the war, many of these families returned to live, providing the state with new talents and markets. The second benefit was the improvement in air travel. Pan Am, Eastern, National, Delta and United airlines increased flights to the installations and metropolitan areas. This helped tourism recover after the war.

While Florida's share of military contracts was small, shipbuilding, airport and camp servicing and citrus and vegetable farming placed a terrible strain on the state's labor supply. With more than 250,000 Floridians in the armed services, there never seemed to be enough laborers in the state. The federal government used POWs in Clewiston, Winter Haven, Leesburg and Marianna to harvest sugar cane, peanuts, corn and citrus when local labor could not meet the demand.

Communities provided volunteers to protect their areas. Many individuals served as air raid wardens, aircraft spotters, auxiliary firemen or nursing aids. Others participated in the Civil Air Patrol and Coastal Picket Patrol. These activities gave non-military personnel a
chance to "take part" in the war and helped maintain morale at the home front. Except for isolated incidents, these responsibilities apparently absorbed people's excess zeal for fighting the war and there were virtually no anti-German attacks on German-Americans. 19

In Orlando, only two incidents tarnished the calm. In 1942, the American Legion protested a Jehovah's Witness meeting in which the flag salute was prohibited and successfully lobbied for a city council resolution that required the uniform flag salute at all public gatherings. United States Intelligence officers rounded up suspected aliens and potential saboteurs. They arrested or placed under surveillance almost twenty individuals and the Orange County sheriff arrested a "rabid pro-Nazi" and placed him in jail—but no names were released. There are no records of other local incidents. No one attacked Orlando's German-Americans or Japanese-Americans when the United States entered World War II.

Perhaps the war boom absorbed people's sometimes vengeful energies. Despite a 1940 freeze that damaged the citrus industry, Orlando's economy prospered as the city's pursuit of an air base encouraged business investment. J. C. Penney's opened a department store on West Church Street, Howard Johnson's established a restaurant on North Orange Avenue and McCrory's Dime Store opened its quarters in the downtown area.

Orlando's population exceeded 36,000 and encouraged investors to improve the area's transportation and communication services. In spring, 1941, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad added a New York-Orlando-Tampa route to its Florida service. The Tamiami Champion's streamlined, air conditioned

19 This material is a summary of Tebeau, History of Florida, pp. 406-435.
cars, reading chairs, porters and Pullman service provided luxurious travel between central Florida and the Northeast. National and Eastern airlines served Orlando with eight stops each day. Radio station WLOF began broadcasting from the Angebilt Hotel in 1940, adding to the county's growing number of radio stations.

When America entered World War II, the city and county governments coordinated the local people's efforts for the Allied cause. The city chlorinated its water as a protective measure. When sugar and gas rationing went into effect in May, 1942, the city sponsored rubber drives, collected miscellaneous junk and metal and redeemed fats at three cents a pound to aid the war effort. To maintain order and save power, Orlandoans established a 10:00 P. M. curfew for those under twenty-one, extinguished street lights at the same time and closed bars at midnight. The city council also established a canning kitchen and blood bank. The county built a tuberculosis hospital and USO centers, providing separate facilities for blacks and whites. Stores cut home deliveries to save tires and the American Legion and other groups sponsored parades to raise money for sending soldiers care packages or purchasing war bonds. One bicycle parade in October, 1942, included all Orlando's ministers. With local labor at a premium, the county fined Otis G. Nation, a business agent of the Florida Citrus and Allied Workers Union, for breaking emigrant labor laws. It also brought charges against the Campbell Soup Company for pirating labor as it transported 438 blacks from Orlando to its main facility in New Jersey. The real impetus for Orlando's success during the war—in war bond drives, patriotic
parades, metal collections and economic development and population growth—was the formation of the Orlando Air Base.20

In 1940, the twelve-year old airport had three 2,500 foot runways. After losing a bidding war to Tampa's MacDill Field for possession of an Army Air Corps base, the city purchased an additional 100 acre tract of land south of Cheney Highway and east of T. G. Lee's pasture land on Bermby Avenue. The extra land made the site more accessible and the Army Air Corps awarded the city a base in mid-1940. The first contingent of 350 officers and 2,250 enlisted men arrived in September. While erecting the more than fifty buildings necessary to establish the base, the troops tented in T. G. Lee's pasture.

As the camp's population grew to total more than 10,000, many moved to "Signal Hill," a second, larger tent city north of the air base. To provide entertainment centers for the servicemen, the city permitted the base to use the auditorium for twice-a-month dances. An expansion of the air base provided room for a nine hole golf course.

By October, 1941, the Army Air Corps realized the Cheney Highway facility was not large enough for necessary operations and purchased 1,280 acres between Narcoosee Road and the Dixie Highway, seven miles south of the city. WPA funds provided the financing for the construction of two 4,000 foot runways. The new Pine Castle Army Air Field served as a bomber-training base and was in continuous use until 1946. Three decades later it became part of Orlando's international airport.

20 The general material about Orlando's war-time economic and population growth is from Bacon, Orlando, 2: 97-132 and Kendrick, Orlando, pp. 67, 103-110, 150. The population statistics are from Kendrick's work.
The air base provided Orlando with prosperity and publicity. As servicemen who had been stationed in Orlando returned to live in the mild climate, population growth and economic prosperity continued. By 1950, Orange County's population doubled to total more than 114,000 and Orlando's exceeded 51,000. Lutheran pastors and congregations faced new challenges as they served the air base, hospitals and POW centers. The congregations and their auxiliary organizations had to survive the loss of leaders who went to war and Trinity's members had to finance the church mortgage. Perhaps it was time for local Lutheran congregations to establish separate organizations to serve the peninsular population's peculiar needs.

Orlando's Lutherans and the War

When America entered World War II, Trinity's membership totaled 328 baptized and 256 communicants. Zion's congregation totaled fifty-two baptized and thirty-nine communicants. Both congregations immediately felt the effects of the conflict. Thirty-four members from Trinity and two from Zion served in the armed forces. At Trinity, more than a dozen served in the army, including John Senkarik of Sanford and Pastor Trapp's sons Elmer and Louis. Trapp's third son, Robert, and Herb and Rudy Schnell of Union Park led Trinity's naval contingent. Marie Lamos of Trinity also entered the Women's Army Corps. In Gotha, Esther Fischer's

---

21 The information for the description of the air base can be found in Bacon, Orlando, 2: 100-9, and Kendrick, Orlando, pp. 105-110. Population statistics can be found in ibid., p. 150.
son, Robert, enlisted in the Army Air Corps. He was the only Orlando-area Lutheran who died in the service during the war. 22

The stories of Rudy and Herb Schnell of Trinity and Paul Mikler of St. Luke, Slavia, provide several insights about Lutherans' contacts with chaplains and pastors outside Orlando. Rudy, born in 1915 in a German community in Giddings, Texas, moved to Florida in 1918 when his father tired of farming cotton. The Church Street Bank and Orange County Bank closed at the beginning of the Depression, destroying the family's savings and forcing the Schnells to live off their farm produce. After Rudy served for a year in the Civilian Conservation Corps, he returned to Orlando and married Canadian-born Dorothy Holmes. He enlisted in the navy in November, 1942, and because he was older than most of the enlistees and had machinist experience at the Orlando Firestone garage, taught mechanical repairing at Camp Blanding. The Schnells worshiped at Grace Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, a congregation that Trapp had suggested as a possible place of worship. Trapp also sent a good recommendation to Grace's Pastor Fred Lorberg so Rudy could commune. After a year in Jacksonville, Schnell served in Millington, Tennessee and Oakland, California. While they lived in off-base trailer housing, the Schnells worshiped in Lutheran churches and received the services of a Missouri Synod chaplain when Rudy was in the hospital. 23

Herb Schnell, Rudy's younger brother, had a very different experience during the war. Born in 1922 in Orlando, Herb moved with the family to

221942 Statistical Report, LC-MS, p. 131; TR, Minutes, April 11, 1943; Fischer interview.

23Interview, Rudy and Dorothy (Holmes) Schnell, July 11, 1985.
Union Park. In 1940, after working as a carpenter with his father, Herb enlisted in the navy. For two years he served on the USS Vincennes, a destroyer escort, first in the Atlantic and then in the Pacific as part of the Doolittle raid and the battles of Coral Sea, Midway and Guadalcanal. When his ship went down at Guadalcanal on August 9, 1942, he sustained a shrapnel wound and spent six months recovering in New Caledonia. When he returned to active duty, Herb served on a repair ship in the Atlantic and as part of the American occupation forces in Japan.

When Herb returned to Union Park, he resumed his carpentry trade and courted Dorothy Trevarthen. When they married in 1949, they moved to the South Conway area. Between 1940 and 1949, Herb had seen no Lutheran pastor or chaplain except Trapp and had access only to non-Lutheran chaplains while in service. Apparently, there were not too many Lutheran chaplains near front-line military action. They seemed to be stationed at hospitals and military bases on the mainland.

Paul Mikler, a member of St. Luke, Slavia, had a war experience similar to Rudy Schnell's. Born and raised in Slavia, Mikler went to the University of Florida in 1935 where he studied to be a teacher. While there he attended weekly Lutheran reading services held in local homes and took communion once a month when Fischer drove north from Gotha. To pay some of his tuition, Mikler worked at an excelsior mill (shredding wood for watermelon packing), served in a cafeteria, managed intramural teams and coordinated the city recreation program. To save expenses his senior year,

24 Interview, Herb and Dorothy (Trevarthen) Schnell, July 9, 1985.
Mikler roomed with Candidate Edgar Brammer, the new pastor at St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Gainesville. Because there were only eight Lutheran students at the Gainesville campus, Brammer worked to establish contacts with non-campus prospects and could not spend much time with Mikler.

After he graduated, Mikler taught for a year in Ocala (where he again received communion from Fischer and Brammer) and a year in a panhandle Florida Farm Education project. After a year at Oviedo High School, Mikler joined the army and was stationed at Camp Blanding to teach remedial reading. At Camp Jackson, South Carolina and Ft. Bragg, North Carolina (where he also played baseball with Pittsburgh's Smokey Burgess, St. Louis' Max Lanier and Cincinatti's Vann Herrington) Mikler taught and counseled returning veterans as they left active duty. In 1945, Mikler returned to his position at Oviedo High School and married Virginia Balkcom, a home economics teacher who had been confirmed by Lorberg in 1945 when Mikler returned to Camp Blanding. Like Rudy Schnell, Mikler had worshiped in Missouri Synod churches during his time in service. He even joined a ULCA congregation at Ft. Bragg. 25

From the Schnells' and Mikler's experiences, one may conclude that many of those on active duty outside the continental United States had little chance of meeting a Lutheran chaplain. Those stationed at bases had opportunities to maintain contact with Lutherans if they so desired. However, the war helped change the traditional limitation of altar fellowship espoused by the Missouri Synod when servicemen like Mikler worshiped with other Protestants or even joined other Lutheran synods. They

discovered other Protestants and Lutherans were not as different from Missouri Synod Lutherans as many had feared.

Several non-servicemen at Trinity also worked for the war effort. Eunice Lineberger, born in 1899 in North Carolina, moved to Lakeland with her parents in 1911 when they tried to alleviate their symptoms of arthritis. Lineberger took care of her parents and a crippled sister and occasionally drove them to Zion, Gotha, for Sunday worship until St. Paul, Lakeland became a mission. When the family needed money, Lineberger took a job as an accountant and assistant to the station master with the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. The company assigned her to Orlando.

Reverend Walther Wesche of St. Paul, Lakeland, asked Trapp to include Lineberger in church functions. She attended Walther League meetings, taught Sunday school classes, sang in the choir and played the organ. Despite her father's debilitating stroke, Lineberger remained in Orlando to handle extra war-time duties. She spent long hours at the Church Street depot, checking train manifests, assigning seats to servicemen and routing trains through Orlando.26

Otis and Eleanor Lundquist also aided the community war effort. Born in Chicago in 1910, Otis moved to Eustis with his family in the early twenties. His father, a grove owner, insisted the family attend weekly services at Trinity. In 1941, Otis, an insurance agent, married Eleanor Johannson, a member of a ULCA congregation in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

The Lundquists worked diligently in the service of the church. Otis served as local and state Walther League president and Eleanor as a

26 Interview, Eunice Lineberger, July 12, 1985.
member of the Cotta Circle. Otis went to New Orleans several times as the congregation's representative to the Southern District convention, and helped build a radio at church that could receive the Gainesville broadcasts of The Lutheran Hour. He also made speeches and radio broadcasts to encourage people to join the army and Orlando's patriotic activities.  

The war changed several other members' lives. Phyllis Kunze, Carl Kunze's daughter, married Harvey Rohlwing, a serviceman stationed in Orlando. Jim Kunze and other Junior Walther Leaguers served as ushers and filled positions vacated by the servicemen and those who left the area. Louisa Lau sent a monthly letter to each of the congregation's servicemen. Because of the war-time premium on labor, Sears transferred Carl Klinect to Charleston, South Carolina, to reorganize a store that served the local naval base.  

Pastoral Duties During the War

Trapp and Fischer were deeply affected by the war. Besides losing relatives to the service, they suddenly had the duties of ministering to local servicemen and German POWs interned in central Florida. Trapp contacted all known Lutherans stationed at the Orlando Air Base and invited them to services, socials and Sunday family meals. By July, 1942, an average of forty soldiers per week attended services. Their contributions and participation in congregational activities replaced the sixty-three

27 Interview, Otis and Eleanor (Johannson) Lundquist, July 15, 1985.

28 Interview, Reverend James Kunze, July 15, 1985; Klinect interview.
communicant members that moved to new industrial communities or served in the armed forces. 29

Trapp also led vespers at the Walther League socials held for the soldiers during Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving. After leading worship, Trapp met with the Leaguers and servicemen while all ate at the covered dish meal and then watched skits, performances and song festivals that concluded the evenings. 30 Trapp and Fischer, who also served the Lutherans encamped near Gainesville, presented each of their congregation's servicemen with a 192 page service prayer book made available through the synod's Army and Navy Fund. Both Trinity and Zion joined the synod in designating the Mother's Day collection for the fund and provided the book, a communion registration card and a dog tag to identify the recipient as a Lutheran in good standing. 31

During the last two years of the war, Trapp, Fischer and Wesche ministered to German POWs. The synod had agreed to cooperate with other Lutheran synods and formed the Lutheran Commission for Prisoners-of-War in 1943. Plans to serve the German Lutherans included counseling German pastors and encouraging others to enroll in a Concordia Seminary theological correspondence course. 32 Trapp, Fischer and Wesche were responsible for the POWs in the branch camps in central Florida.

29 TR, Minutes, April 12, 1942, describes the invitation to military personnel at the air base. The Orlando Lutheran, July 5, 1942, describes how the soldiers helped maintain congregational morale during the war.

30 TR, Minutes, November 30, 1942, October 10, 1943, October 8, 1944, January 12, 1946.

31 Ibid., July 2, 1944; Fischer interview.

32 Groh, Lutherans in North American Life, p. 112.
The pastors found interesting sights when they served the prisoners. The camps, surrounded by a 100 by 150 foot barbed wire fence, interned approximately 300 men. The men slept in pyramidal tents that housed four each. Their clothing consisted of military-like fatigues stenciled with a large "EA" to identify them as "enemy aliens." Because the first POWs were extremely pro-Nazi in character, the pastors did not receive many opportunities to establish worship centers. In one case, a group antagonized an army chaplain. After he admonished them about becoming a pro-democratic society, they indignantly asked him about American racist policies towards blacks. The chaplain angrily left the meeting.

By late 1943, as the Florida labor shortage hampered agriculture, lumbering and the canning industry, the government moved more prisoners into the area. These POWs were more anti-Nazi in character and frequently refused to participate in some of the food strikes or violence that characterized the earlier detainees. By 1944, most prisoners realized their part in the war had ended and requested the services of Lutheran pastors. Several Floridians protested when it was reported that German prisoners worked with women in an Orlando laundry or ate fine delicacies, but most people had little contact with them and the three pastors could assure their members and the curious the prisoners were treated fairly but sternly.  

In general, the prisoners' executive officer, established by his rank among fellow POWs, worked with the camp chaplain. Because most chaplains were not Lutheran, they brought local Lutheran pastors to preach in German and offer communion. Trapp served German POWs in 1944. Fischer took Zion's German hymnals to the Leesburg, Starke and Lakeland camps to aid worship. No civilians could accompany the pastors inside the camp but had to wait outside the compound until he returned. Occasionally, a few Germans were bussed under heavy guard to Zion, Gotha, for services. Once they participated in a communion service and another time they took part in a Christmas Eve celebration. During the Christmas service, the parishioners stopped singing their English-language carols and listened in awe as the Germans sang the same carols in their native tongue.\(^{34}\)

In Winter Haven, many of the Germans, devout Lutherans and quite homesick, appreciated Wesche's services. They expressed their gratitude for his bi-weekly visits by sending their Red Cross candy, chocolate and cigarettes to the pastor's children and parishioners. Even though Wesche could do no individual counseling, he did receive a letter several years later thanking him for having provided the soldiers with hope for the future of the German church.\(^{35}\)

Trapp and Fischer attempted to keep their ministry to the POWs and local servicemen from disrupting their normal duties. Trapp even

\(^{34}\)TR, Minutes, November 27, 1944, describes Trapp's POW ministry. The Fischer interview and an interview with Thomas Greenhaw, October 30, 1985, describe the church services at Zion.

\(^{35}\)Interview, Paul Wesche, December 18, 1983.
accepted more responsibility as he became a leader of the Florida Pastoral Conference, a division of the Southern District. Having been the first Florida representative to a synodical convention in 1929 (Fischer was the second in 1932), he became the Florida circuit counselor. As the district representative, Trapp installed new pastors and supervised the district's mission projects, sometimes leaving Trinity for several consecutive Sundays. He continued to fly to the district conventions in New Orleans, and led Walther League conferences and retreats.

In 1945, Trapp attended synodical meetings in Indiana to discuss post-war Lutheran evangelism, European relief and the reconstruction of the Freikirche. He also designed a local program to contact returning soldiers and other military personnel. Both Fischer and Trapp led panel discussions, promoted mission projects and presented theological addresses at the pastoral conferences. With these activities, the congregation considered calling a vicar or assistant pastor to help Trapp. Fischer also felt the strain of his extra duties and supported the Florida Pastoral Conference's request for permanent pastors at Gainesville and Ocala, two congregations he served.

Both Trinity's and Zion's members followed Trapp and Fischer's examples, wholeheartedly supporting America's war effort. Each July 4, the congregations celebrated patriotic festival services, praying for the safe return of their loved ones and victory for the Allies. They also

36 TR, Minutes, January 18, August 23, 1942; TR, Officers Minutes, February 7, 1944.

37 Ibid., January 12, 1946; TR, Minutes, January 14, October 14, 1945.
included local servicemen in special processions. Each Mother's Day, the congregations collected donations for the synod's Army and Navy Fund.\textsuperscript{38}

Despite the loss of members, Trinity still maintained its Men's Club, Junior and Senior Walther League chapters, Ladies' Society and the Cotta Circle. Zion maintained its Senior Walther League and women's group. When collections at Trinity failed to provide enough funds for the publishing of \textit{The Orlando Lutheran}, Trinity's auxiliary organizations agreed to pay the expenses so the congregation could continue to publish the newspaper.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{The Walther League}

Trinity's and Zion's young adult members were instrumental in maintaining the Florida chapter of the Walther League during the war. Trinity's Walther League, established in 1924, was the second oldest in the state, while the Junior organization, initiated five years later, was the oldest Lutheran high school group in the state. Zion's Senior chapter, founded in 1928, was the third oldest. By 1934, there were fourteen societies in peninsular Florida and the International Walther League permitted these chapters to separate from the Dixie District and form the thirty-ninth Walther League District. At the district's first convention in Miami in November, 1934, delegates selected Trapp as Chairman for the Department of Christian Knowledge. Anna Hrvol served as Transportation Secretary and worked with Eunice Lineberger, Transportation Manager. By the time

\textsuperscript{38}TR, Minutes, April 20, 1941; Fischer interview.

\textsuperscript{39}TR, Minutes, October 5, 1941. According to TR, Officers Minutes, May 31, 1943, of synod's Florida congregations, only Grace, Jacksonville, near Camp Blanding, did not show a net loss of members during the war.
America entered World War II, Anna Hrvol, John Senkarik and Otis Lundquist served as district board members and in 1940, Lundquist was elected as district president.

Trinity's Walther League members led the state in supporting the International Walther League's program. Elmer Trapp, chairman of the Florida Walther League District Golden Anniversary Fund drive, motivated Florida's Leaguers to become the first district to meet the quota of $570.27, helping the International Walther League raise $100,000 to erect a new headquarters building in Chicago. In 1942, the district tripled its quota by collecting $121.61 for the Army and Navy Fund. It met its quota through 1945, helping the League collect $120,000.  

The Florida District also raised its funds for conventions and rallies, quite an accomplishment for the ninety-eight Senior and ninety-six Junior members, a small fraction of the League's 56,000 members.

Just as they had done before the war, the Orlando group led the Florida District's Choral Unions that highlighted the services at the annual League rallies. They also initiated the first of many Talent Quest contests, providing each chapter with a chance to compete in the reading of religious poems, artwork, sewing projects or group performances. In 1943, after nine years, the Orlandoans won the contest. Unfortunately, the war took its toll. Many members entered the service (eleven from Trinity and two from Gotha) and others left their congregations because of job transfers.

40 Information about the local and state chapters is found in Dorothy M. Roth, ed., Ten Years: The Walther League in Florida (Florida District Walther League, [1944]). Material about the International is found in Witt, "Youthful Years," pp. 11-12.

Wesche's St. Paul, Lakeland group started a pre-Junior High chapter because the congregation's Senior and high school-aged members left the area. His wife, Lucille, and children Paul and Audrey, formed the nucleus. The League approved of this unique attempt to cope with the hardships caused by the war.

Despite losing members to the war, Trapp and the congregation actively supported the Walther League's work and kept the program functioning with thirty-two active members. The Trinity Leaguers, realizing war-time travel restrictions limited summer vacations and inter-congregational fellowship, organized the district camping trips that coincided with state conventions. These camps paralleled the national Walther League camp movement and included Bible study, devotions, song fests, croquet and baseball. Wesche led this last activity because of his expertise. As a young man, Wesche had chosen the ministry even though the St. Louis Browns had offered him a contract.

At a local level, Trinity's Walther League led socials for Orlando Air Base servicemen, sponsored a movie night to show the synod's Board for Missions' production Power of God, collected groceries for the poor and donations for Trinity, Ft. Lauderdale's, Lutheran elementary and high school. These activities were instrumental in maintaining the morale among members as the war continued. The Leaguers also made a generous contribution in helping fund the congregation's biggest debt--the mortgage.

---

42 Roth, Ten Years, n. p. TR, Minutes, April 12, 1942, describes the camping preparations. Baepler, Century of Grace, p. 317, describes the trends of the International. The Wesche interview includes the baseball story.

43 TR, Officers Minutes, October 11, February 5, 1942, December 3, February 24, 1941.
The Trinity Mortgage

The war did not just take members from the congregation. It also gave Trinity more prosperous times. Already in January, 1942, the voters included a special prayer of thanks because the secretary reported the congregation's financial picture was the best it had been in some time. A complete year's installment for the building mortgage had been paid for the first time since 1937. The congregation raised Trapp's salary $480 to total $1,430 annually and fell only $83 short of its 1942 budget. The voters also financed the purchase of the Missouri Synod's new service book, The Lutheran Hymnal. Congregational leaders requested pledges from members to donate the 210 hymnals necessary to serve the congregation. By April, 1943, members donated enough money to purchase 300 hymnals. 44

Unfortunately, the congregation could not reduce the mortgage interest owed to AAL. Unless the congregation could renegotiate a settlement, they would have to pay $3,047 annually in perpetuity. To demonstrate good stewardship and financial expertise, the members resolved to make all church repairs themselves. Erwin Puch fixed the roof and repainted the rails. Karl Kasper repaired the Ruth Street door, the church gutters and the parsonage plumbing. Volunteers replaced the window lead. 45

After two years of negotiations with AAL, congregational president Otis Lundquist signed a new mortgage agreement. He had pointed out that fund drives in 1943 and 1944, an every-member-visitation that included a solicitation for building fund pledges and the repair program provided

44 TR, Minutes, January 11, 1942, January 10, April 11, 1943.
45 Ibid., January 10, 1943, October 14, 1945, January 12, 1946; TR, Officers Minutes, September 27, November 15, October 3, 1943.
evidence that Trinity deserved a new contract. For the first five years, the new interest charge would be 3.5 percent and 4.0 percent for the following five years. Besides the annual interest, $5,000 of the principle of $31,000 was payable during the next ten years. 46

The congregation participated in local patriotic organizations and activities. As president of the Orlando Professional and Business Women's Organization, Anna Hrvol led several special meetings to serve local servicemen. The church membership purchased war bonds and passed a congregational resolution to voluntarily restrict driving even more than was permitted with the rationing coupons. Trinity's members also unanimously supported the cancellation of the 1943 Southern District convention and "... permitted the present boards and officers to handle the business in the interest of National Defense." 47 Unfortunately, there were some local events that reflected national synodical hesitancy to promote inter-Lutheran cooperation except in emergency situations.

Orlando Lutherans and Fellowship with Other Lutherans

Many hesitated to support the Missouri Synod, ULCA and ALC efforts to investigate fellowship. While 1938 and 1941 Missouri Synod conventions resolved to remove differences of doctrine and practice that existed between them and the other Lutheran synods and Lutheran Witness editors stated, "Such meetings are well-pleasing to God," most congregations had little

46 TR, Minutes, July 11, 1943, January 9, 1944, October 14, 1945.

47 Ibid., October 8, 1944, January 10, 1943; The Orlando Lutheran, May 7, 1944; Proceedings, Southern District Convention, 1945, n. p. The quote is from TR, Officers Minutes, June 29, 1942.
contact with each other. While a few initiated inter-synodical cluster meetings and Miami pastors conducted social ministry activities together, distance and traditional fellowship restrictions created formidable barriers for local ecumenical activities.\(^{48}\) The Miklers of St. Luke never met any other Lutherans except when they attended Walther League conventions. Trinity's and Zion's members met each other only at Walther League rallies or the state camps and conventions. Several local Swedish Lutherans, including Eleanor Lundquist's mother, considered joining Trinity but never felt welcome. Traditional closed communion at Trinity did not permit relatives to participate in the sacrament because their synods were not in fellowship. These non-Missouri Synod Lutherans joined a local Presbyterian congregation and remained loyal members until St. Paul, Orlando of the Augustana Synod began services in 1940. Lutherans in distant Masaryktown had contact with only Tuhy of St. Luke when he filled their vacancy. Contacts were so limited that even when Trinity's and Zion's Walther League members went to the Augustana Synod's Camp Emanuel in nearby Groveland, no Leaguers ever remembered meeting with Zion, Groveland, members.\(^{49}\) As late as 1945, most contacts between different congregations were still limited to the Walther League, but even these experiences were infrequent.

\(^{48}\) Florida Pastoral Conference (FPC), Minutes, describe a number of these local cluster meetings in Jacksonville, Tampa and Miami. Miami social ministries were organized by the Miami Lutheran cluster group. The quote is from TLW, February 29, 1944.

\(^{49}\) Mikler interview; Fischer interview; Lundquist interview; Interview, Reverend Henry Swanson, July 8, 1985.
There was one new organization that did promote inter-congregational cooperation—the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML). In 1942, three years before the Augustana Synod or any other synod officially recognized its women's auxiliary organization, the Missouri Synod approved the formation of a women's organization to aid the church in distributing "...mission aid, mission inspiration and mission service,"\(^{50}\) to needy people and college students. The women raised funds by using mite boxes, tiny cardboard cubes in which they collected spare change. The women received permission to elect national and district officers and meet annually to select appropriate mission projects. Like the Florida Walther League, the LWML separated from Southern District supervision well before the Florida pastors succeeded in forming their own district. In November, 1945, eleven church bodies, including Trinity (Zion joined in 1947) sent representatives to Trinity, Ft. Lauderdale and organized the Florida Branch of the Southern District Lutheran Women's Missionary League. They elected Mrs. Virginia Bellhorn of Trinity, Ft. Lauderdale (and later St. Luke, Slavia) as president of their chapter, designated fifty percent of their $1,001.03 mite box proceeds to European relief and gathered clothing and religious literature to send to war refugees.\(^{51}\)

As the war ended, Lutherans in Florida appeared ready to create their own regional organizations. The LWML and the Walther League were independent of their parent Southern District organizations. If the

\(^{50}\)Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 309.

peninsular synodical congregations followed this lead, it might change their relationships with other central Florida Lutheran congregations that belonged to the SELC and Augustana Synod. Perhaps this action would help the pastors plan for the ministry challenges unique to Florida at the close of the war—urbanization, rapid population growth and ministry to the blacks.

Trinity's and Zion's congregations had survived the rigors of the war. Trinity's members had solved their mortgage problem and both congregations maintained their auxiliary organizations. Trapp and Fischer managed to lead the congregations despite the loss of many members to the service and to other industrial areas. They had even accepted more responsibility at the district, and, in Trapp's case, the synodical level. Despite the war-time problems, congregational growth continued and auxiliary organizations like the Walther League and LWML firmly established their institutional stability. The difficult times also made Orlando's Missouri Synod Lutherans aware of their other Lutheran neighbors. Orlando's urbanization and population increase required Trinity's and Zion's members to confront the traditional limitation of altar fellowship to a select few that shared membership in the Synodical Conference. It was time for a unified approach to ministry in the Orlando area. Would Orlando's Lutherans create a stable institutional structure that could serve the people of peninsular Florida or would they continue to depend upon distant headquarters for absentee leadership?
CHAPTER VI

THE LUTHERANS IN CENTRAL FLORIDA--SLOVAKS AND SWEDES

The Trinity, Zion and New Upsala Lutherans were not the only Lutherans to establish congregations in the Orlando area. Between 1910 and 1940, three groups of Slovak settlers and one group of Illinois Swedes came to Florida to start farming communities and form Lutheran congregations. They experienced many of the difficulties that confronted the other Lutherans. A shortage of pastors hindered the development of Lutheran communities. The distances from Orlando limited contacts with the urban population and not until the Depression did they develop tentative associations with Lutherans in the city. Another reason for their "provincialism" was their status as colony settlements. Much like the New Upsala Swedes, these groups established commitments to fellow settlers and companies when they arrived in Florida. Initially, the stories of these four satellite Lutheran communities are independent of Trinity, Orlando and Zion, Gotha's development. Not until the war years and the post-war formation of Augustana and Missouri Synod districts that included Florida do these outlying congregations exert any influence on the Missouri Synod Lutherans in Orlando.

The Slovaks--Zellwood, Slavia and Masaryktown

Lutherans in Zellwood, the first Slovak community in central Florida, failed to establish a community congregation. The second settlement, Slavia, became the Slovak headquarters for the region but only after two decades of
severe trials. The third community, Masaryktown, was large enough to merit occasional missionary visits but not large enough to support a full-time pastor. The story of these Lutherans in the three communities provides a representative description of Slovak experiences in the United States.

The mass migration of Slovak immigrants to America began about 1880. By 1899, there were between 160,000 and 200,000 Slovaks in the United States and their numbers continued to increase until World War I. Most left Austria-Hungary in order to improve their depressed economic, social and legal status in a country whose monarchy favored the Catholic Magyar population. Settling primarily in the eastern seaboard states, many Lutheran Slovaks joined non-Lutheran denominations while a few formed joint congregations with the Reformed. Between 1883 and 1900, Slovaks organized twenty-two Lutheran congregations but formed no synodical organization.

In 1902, in Connellsville, Pennsylvania, ten pastors and four laymen representing fifteen congregations established the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church. While a minority desired membership in the more orthodox Missouri Synod as a non-geographical district, the majority formed their own synod, uniting with congregations that shared a common Slovak language. They also considered membership in the General Council, an eastern Lutheran synod.

In 1908, the SELC joined the Missouri Synod-led Synodical Conference. Its leadership sent its theological students to Missouri Synod colleges and seminaries. The remainder of the Slovaks who preferred the eastern General Council, less conservative theology and "American" brand of Lutheranism, formed the Slovak Zion Synod (SZS) in 1919. In 1920, the SZS joined the
ULCA as a separate bilingual non-geographical district, gaining a status similar to that of the English District in the Missouri Synod. Both the SELC and SZS attempted to establish congregations in Slovak settlements in Florida.

**Zellwood**

In 1911, a group of Chicago Slovaks moved to Zellwood to establish a farming community. They were probably led by SELC Pastor John Pelikan. To enhance community pride and maintain Slovak cultural traditions, the Zellwood Slovaks formed the Bethel Branch Number 12 of the Evangelical Slovak Union in America. By 1912, they greatly outnumbered the eight Slovaks who established Slavia.

Only a handful of the Zellwood settlers were interested in Lutheran worship. If they desired pastoral services, they had to wait for mission pastors who were infrequently sent to visit Zellwood, Slavia or other small communities. Reverend John Kolarik of St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tarentum, Pennsylvania, visited Zellwood and Slavia in 1915 and 1918. During brief stays, Kolarik baptized children and confirmed two girls who had been catechized by their mother. Reverend Joseph Dinda of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Johnston, Pennsylvania and the son of Slavia's Michael Dinda, Sr., baptized several children when he visited Zellwood in the spring of 1920. Not until early 1924 did someone other than a layman serve the group. Vicar John Bajus, who had served part of his 1923-24 term in Ohio, was reassigned by the SELC Mission Board to serve Zellwood and Slavia.

---

Bajus began work in the two communities in February, 1924. Because the Lutheran population in Zellwood included only three families (the Ondics, Svrlangas and Slochars), he convinced them to attend Sunday worship at St. Luke, Slavia. In return, each Thursday Bajus traveled to Zellwood to teach the children Slovak, Bible lessons and confirmation instruction. This arrangement established a precedent, because after Bajus' term, the members at St. Luke requested the services of a full-time pastor and encouraged the missionaries to stay in Slavia. St. Luke's membership also reimbursed them for travel expenses and other services. These arrangements guaranteed the importance of St. Luke, relegating Zellwood to an infrequent mission stop for Slovak pastors serving central Florida.²

The Zellwood Lutherans never formed a congregation. They had to join other denominations or travel great distances to worship with Lutherans. The Slovak cultural practices that were perpetuated by the Bethel folk organization made it possible to preserve Slovak heritage without maintaining religious practices. Other Slovaks in central Florida had to establish congregations to preserve Slovak Lutheran practices.

**Slavia**

The Slavia colony, established in 1912, surmounted many difficulties to become the "Trinity" of the Florida Slovaks. In April, 1911, a handful of rural central European emigrants moved to Florida to establish a farming community. Reverend Leopold Alexander Jarosi of Holy Trinity Slovak

Lutheran Church in Cleveland had investigated sites near Taft, Oviedo and Bartow. Martin Stanko, a former member of the Zellwood community, accompanied him to Florida. After hearing their enthusiastic report, the Slovaks incorporated themselves as the Slavia Colony Company and capitalized their operation by selling 500 shares of stock for $50 each. They sent two more groups to reexamine the sites and selected Slavia, an area three miles southwest of Oviedo.

Several stockholders moved their families to Slavia and started farming and timbering. After 1915, stockholders exchanged stock for land. When only a few stockholders remained, they divided the unsold land among themselves, allotting it according to how much stock each still possessed. By 1928, the Slavia Colony Company had purchased 1,200 acres of land paid for its surveying and platting, leased timber and turpentine rights for the owners and bore the expense of the litigation to secure the title to the property. By creating a company, the Slovak families had pooled their resources, guaranteed themselves stability and attracted additional colonists.  

The first settlers, the Joseph Mikler family, George Jakubcin, Stephen Johman and Andrew Duda, Sr., left Cleveland in February, 1912. When the families arrived in Slavia, they lived in a few dilapidated shacks, drained wooded muckland and cleared gardens. Some sold surplus vegetables to Orlando storeowners. By 1913, the population of the Slavia Colony numbered three families, two married couples and nine other adults.

3 Ibid., pp. 1, 4-10, 37.
The settlers, needing money for well-drilling, housing planks and farm implements, tried to obtain work locally. Several members of the community purchased a sawmill but poor management and an early exhaustion of timber forced them to close the mill. Michael Dinda, Sr., was discharged from his job at an Oviedo shingle mill after he refused to purchase goods at the company store. Andy Duda and Joe Mikler cut cypress logs in the swamps but had to pack citrus when the land was timbered out. George Jakubcin lost his citrus grove to canker. The Dudas, Joe Mikler and George Jakubcin left Slavia for several years to earn enough money to guarantee their financial stability. The Slovaks also faced loneliness because the community was quite far from other settlements. One resident who lived between Goldenrod and Union Park commented, "At that time, Slavia was light-years away!"

As citrus improved during the early twenties, many of the settlers accepted jobs in the Oviedo packing plant. Stanko opened a local general store and gas station near the rail siding. When Mikler proved that celery farming could be profitable, families helped each other harvest their crops and shipped the celery to Atlanta and Savannah. To increase celery production and combat flooding, the community leaders formed the Slavia Drainage District. A $31,000 Reconstruction Finance Corporation loan helped complete the project.

During the thirties, the Slovaks no longer faced isolation and a frontier life-style. Several purchased tractors and trucks and enlarged

4 Ibid., pp. 15-24. The quote is by Herb Schnell.
their farms. Others bought automobiles and visited Slovaks in Masaryktown and Zellwood or shopped in Orlando and Winter Park. Mail was delivered to new boxes in Gabriella, located on Dean Road two miles west of Slavia. Power lines supplied electricity for the community. During this period of prosperity, the colony's members called Reverend Stephen Tuhy to serve their congregation as their first full-time minister.

The Founding of St. Luke

Despite the terrible living conditions in early Slavia, the Slovaks always met in homes or shacks for Sunday worship. Like the Trinity and Zion members had done, laymen read from the Slovak Bible and a book of sermons. On Sunday, March 17, 1912, after Reverend John Pankuch of Cleveland suggested the men form a voters' assembly and congregation, eight men established the congregation of St. Luke the Evangelizer. Aware of the spiritual welfare and religious education the congregation could provide, the members soon discovered its possibilities for providing financial aid.

In 1913, the members feared they could not continue the Slovak Christmas tradition of distributing oplatkey, large wafers of unleavened bread on which honey was spread. The colonists requested wafers from Holy Trinity, Cleveland but could not reimburse the congregation. They asked other SELC congregation to send contributions. When they received donations, the congregation loaned funds to those who needed money. This self-help aided many members through difficult economic times.6

5 Ibid., pp. 26-35. For more information about the early celery business, see A. Duda and Sons publication Growing, Summer, 1985.

6 The self-help is described in ibid., pp. 39-41.
Early worship was conducted in quite primitive surroundings. The first church building, a shack, had no organ and contained backless, homemade wooden benches. In 1922, the congregation moved the shack to a permanent site and furnished the sanctuary. They established a building fund in 1928 and in four years the collection totaled $1,034.31. The members purchased a lectern, communion flagon, candleholders, candlesticks, crucifix and reed organ.

While the settlers' interdependence and congregational life helped them survive difficult economic times, frontier isolation and financial problems. The SELC's inability to supply a pastor made members feel the synod "... ignored the settlers as if they were a bunch of cattle with no religion." Between 1913 and 1924 there were only three recorded pastoral visits. Desiring regular services, some members transferred. Heated discussions about church finances resulted in the excommunication of a member.

Other tensions in the congregation were similar to those at Trinity and Zion. When lay readers chanted the antiphon and benediction, the voters requested the cantors refrain from changing the way things had been. Well-intentioned voters also directed pastors to call on delinquent members, making them feel persecuted or singled out for embarrassment. Perhaps the congregation could solve some of its problems if it obtained the services of a permanent pastor.

7Ibid., pp. 41-47. The quote is from Michael Dinda, Sr.
As early as 1915, calling a full-time pastor was one of the primary
goals of the tiny congregation. Pastors Joseph Kolarik and Joseph Dinda
served Slavia when they visited Zellwood. When Vicar John Bajus served them
the first half of 1924, he obtained released time for religious instruction
for the Slovak children who attended Oviedo’s public school, convinced three
Zellwood families to join the congregation, catechized thirteen youths and
led the congregation’s attempt to secure a constitution, a seal and mem-
bership in the SELC. During this successful period, the voters set a one
dollar minimum as the individual monthly contribution.

When Bajus left, the SELC sent several pastors to serve the congre-
gation. Six pastors, including Dinda and Kolarik, visited the congregation
between 1925 and 1928. Professor Joseph Vojtko arrived in mid-1928 and
conducted a marriage ceremony and baptism. He also represented St. Luke
at the 1928 SELC convention and encouraged the mission board to send visiting
pastors to serve the members.

During Pastor Andrew Hvizdak’s term in 1929, the voters organized
a Sunday school, formed a choir and implemented an envelope system to
systematize congregational contributions for designated projects. Gustav
Lamos, a Slavia student at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, con-
ducted confirmation classes. Former members returned to the prosperous
colony.8

In 1931, the voters requested the SELC Mission Board send a permanent
pastor. The SELC partially fulfilled the request, sending Vicar Joseph Fabry

8Ibid., pp. 60-64. The 1928 membership totals of fifty baptized and
thirty-two communicants are similar to those of Zion, Gotha, during this
time.
in May, 1931 and arranging for Trapp to distribute communion. While Fabry's
presence did not placate the congregation, he instructed the confirmands
and organized a Luther League, the SEIC's counterpart to the Missouri
Synod's Walther League.

In April, 1934, Reverend Stephen Tuhy began a six-month term in
Slavia. When Tuhy received a call to another congregation, individual
voters volunteered to pay portions of the salary so they could offer Tuhy
$65 per month. The congregation was determined not to rely upon the mis-
sion board for assistance because it could reassign Tuhy to another congre-
gation like the Missouri Synod had done with those who served in Gotha.
When Tuhy accepted the call, the Slavia Colony settlers had fulfilled a
twenty-two year dream. They created a stable rural community, educated
their children and acquired a full-time pastor.

Between 1912 and 1935 the congregation had grown from eight to
eighty-three members. There were fifty-six communicants, nineteen voters,
eighteen attended released-time classes, twenty-seven attended Sunday
school and eighteen were members of the youth league. A Women's League,
similar to Trinity's Cotta Circle, and a Literary League provided activities
for those interested in community projects or church service. The first
generation had completed its task of establishing a permanent settlement
and congregation.

Tuhy held regular services in a frame church and encouraged the
members to continue their building drive. The congregation purchased

---

9 Ibid., pp. 62-68.
thirteen acres of land in 1934 and financed the construction of the $2,700 parsonage that was completed in the fall of 1935. Four years later, the congregation finished construction of a $7,421 brick church. This success provided the members with renewed confidence in their future.

The pastor encouraged them to consider other types of ministry. In 1939, to serve the youths who attended Oviedo's schools, the congregation initiated monthly English vespers. The voters permitted Tuhy to conduct Sunday morning English services at 8:30 A. M. and he also held English-language adult classes to encourage nearby people to join. In 1941 the congregation printed a weekly church bulletin entitled Svetlo (The Light). This publicized congregational activities and community news. In 1944, Tuhy initiated a nursery school. Interest grew in education and by the end of World War II, the congregation considered starting a Christian day school. The members planned to develop a Home for Children and Old Folks. In 1937, the congregation offered the SELC five acres for this project but because of the Depression it was forced to proceed on its own. This project became reality just after World War II.11

One possible reason for this activity and success during the war years was the agricultural nature of the community. Celery prices rose to eight dollars a crate and prior Duda corporation expansion projects (that included new holdings in Zellwood, Kissimmee and Belle Glade) enabled


the Dudas to contribute generously to the congregation. Florida's "golden celery" became popular because of its unique sun-bleached color and taste and provided the congregation with a different type of gold. In 1943 and 1944, the Andrew Duda family gave $60,000 for the proposed school and $40,000 for the future orphanage and old folk's home.\footnote{Weber, "Lutheran Church in Florida," p. 64; Growing.}

A second reason for the congregation's success was its status as a war-time agricultural center. Most members worked in agriculture and received automatic draft deferments. This helped the congregation maintain stable leadership, quite a contrast to Trinity. Paul Mikler's war-time experience was an exception, rather than the rule, in the congregation.\footnote{Mikler interview.}

Tuhy's duties as the only permanent SELC pastor in Florida made him responsible for mission work. In 1934, Tuhy visited Masaryktown, a Slovak settlement thirty miles north of Tampa and 114 miles west of Slavia. In the community, there was a treasury, church officers and a record book but no Lutheran services were being held. He and Andy Duda, who knew many of the residents, canvassed the town.\footnote{Weber, "Lutheran Church in Florida," p. 35; Duda, Fiftieth Anniversary, p. 13.} In their monthly visits to the community, they discovered that Masaryktown had a history similar to that of Zellwood and Slavia.

\textbf{Masaryktown}

In 1924, Joseph Joscak, editor of \textit{The New Yorksky Dennik}, a daily Slovak newspaper in New York City, promoted Florida's beauty, climate and...
rich soil. Excited by the Florida land boom, Joscak formed the Hernando Plantation Company and raised funds to buy land in Florida. Its members sold shares for $1,000 each and guaranteed the share-holder twenty acres for each share purchased. A committee of five, including Hermina Getting Hrvol (whose step-daughter Anna Hrvol served Trinity), explored one site near Orlando and another ten miles south of Brooksville on U. S. Highway 41. They found the Orlando region too swampy but the Hernando County land was suitable for citrus.15

Milan Getting, a shareholder who was the Czech Consul for Pennsylvania and West Virginia, investigated the area more thoroughly. He received information from the agricultural department of the University of Florida that the Hernando County region was a cold pocket susceptible to freezes. A Tampa editor of the Florida Grower advised him the area was safe for citrus.

In December, 1924, a party of 135 from Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York, traveled by train from Washington, D.C., to Tampa and chartered busses to take them to the site. Like the Slavia colonists, they found the area uninhabited except for a few blacks and uncleared except for a sawmill and small Baptist church. They named their community after Thomas Masaryk (the first president of newly-created Czechoslovakia), their north-south streets after American Presidents, the east-west streets after Czechoslovak poets, writers and heroes and their main street for President Wilson because he had helped create Czechoslovakia. The Catholics lived west of Wilson Street and the Lutherans lived to the east.

The grass streets divided the town into square blocks with ten lots in each block. The members designated the nearby sinkhole as their community meeting site. Upon completion of the three-day exploratory trip, they journeyed home and made arrangements to move their families to the area.

Not until 1926 did most of the settlers return. Primarily college-educated doctors, lawyers and professors, they erected their cement block homes and made the Masaryk Hotel their social gathering place. Community members started a grocery store and a grammar school. Hard frosts in the cold pocket during the late twenties destroyed the fledgling citrus cooperative, forcing many to leave the community. Those who remained, including some families whose fathers, like those in Slavia, had left them behind to raise money elsewhere, grew onions, sweet potatoes and cucumbers. These crops had no market and not until one settler started a poultry egg farm did the community have a profitable product. Publix markets and Tampa store owners purchased the eggs. A canning factory also began operation in 1932. For four years it employed about twenty-five people during the season. They canned orange juice, grapefruit sections, vegetables and meat. It also closed as the Depression depleted its meager capital.16

Two community organizations, the Zivena Society and the Sokol, helped people maintain community spirit during the Depression. Mrs. J. M. Bradac, a founder of the women's Zivena Society, encouraged this group to raise what money it could to provide aid for local needy families. During the winter months, the society served family-style chicken dinners, kolacky and strudel to tourists who came from Tampa, Brooksville and St. Petersburg.

16 Ibid., pp. 2-4; Interview, Reverend Donald Burgdorf, April 8, 1984.
To entertain the tourists, the women supported the formation of the Beseda, a group of folk dancers who performed in ornate costumes. Bradac also encouraged the national Zivena Society to build an old folks' home. Many retirees were moving into the Tampa region and this presented another opportunity to help the economy. Although the men did not create an auxiliary fund raising organization, they formed the Sokol, a gymnastics society, in 1932. They believed strong bodies built healthy minds.17

When several colonists arrived in 1930, the SZS of the ULCA attempted to establish a community Lutheran church. Probably because of the Depression and the absence of pastors, the congregation collapsed shortly after its formation. Former SELC members formed their own community Lutheran worship group. In 1933 they located some Slovak hymnbooks, listened to lay readers and used the 1922 Slovak prayer book in services. In contrast to the Slavia colony, they chanted their church liturgy as they had in the old country. Like the New Upsala Swedes, they shared several traditional cultural activities with the larger non-Lutheran population.

Each Christmas, they distributed the oplatkey. At Easter, the community's members distributed painted eggs to close friends and relatives. At Pentecost, they distributed lepa leaves from the linden tree. This reminded the people it was "cleaning time" for their souls.

Three secular festivals highlighted the community's calendar. Each March they celebrated Masaryk's birthday and in October they commemorated Czech independence day. However, the Lutheran event of the year took place

on the fourth Sunday of each January. The Dorcas Society, formed during the Depression by the women whose husbands had gone elsewhere to earn money, served an annual chicken paprikash dinner to raise money for the possible revival of a Lutheran congregation. These patriotic and religious activities maintained the Lutheran and community spirit during the Depression and preserved the Lutheran desire to reestablish a congregation. 18

The unstable economic times and lack of a visiting pastor (only Vojta in 1928 and Tuhy in 1934 visited the community) discouraged many from attending the reading services. By 1940, the congregation had disbanded. Tuhy and Duda made their canvass in 1940 and while visiting the mission once or twice a month, revived interest in organizing a congregation. It was formally reorganized on October 17, 1943, with twenty charter members. While the war involved many of the young men in the town, Tuhy carefully maintained the congregation's slow but steady growth. Finally, in 1954, the congregation dedicated its own church building and called the first permanent pastor, Candidate Paul Grexa. 19

Tuhy's service and the community spirit fostered by cultural and religious festivals kept alive the Lutherans' hopes the congregation would revive. The ability of the community to establish new enterprises when the weather or economic difficulties destroyed fledgling trades also gave the Lutherans a chance to restart their congregation. Like in Slavia, the colony system provided the initial stability to create a community.

---

18 Interview, Martin Gavora, Anna Matis, Susie Rosko, April 8, 1984, describes the Lutherans' attempts to preserve religious and cultural practices.

19 Duda, Fiftieth Anniversary, p. 12, describes Tuhy's ministry in Masaryktown. "Dedication Service," Holy Trinity, Masaryktown, May 9, 1982, summarizes the years of reorganization and the calling of Grexa.
Unlike New Upsala, a natural disaster did not destroy the colony. Unlike Slavia, the community spirit survived because of its cultural identity and Lutherans and Catholics shared in the community's hardships and celebrations. A desire to restart the congregation contributed to the enthusiasm exhibited by those settlers who celebrated the many festivals.

**The Augustana Synod in Orlando**

In 1940, Orlando residents formed the second Lutheran church in the city. St. Paul, Orlando, became a temporary mission of the pastor at Zion, Groveland. The Augustana Synod that owned property in New Upsala had established a congregation in the heart of Orlando.

In 1910, a group of Rockford, Illinois Swedes, drawn by the promise of fertile farms and rich groves, moved to the small community of Groveland, then called Taylorville. These Lutherans held occasional reading services until 1915 when Norman Swanson, a member of Ebenezer, Pierson and principal of Groveland's school, requested Ebenezer's members permit their pastor to organize a congregation in Groveland. At the time, Ebenezer, Pierson, the first successful Augustana congregation in Florida (1884), was served by Pastor A. T. Fant. During his four month term at Ebenezer, Fant visited Groveland several times, as did his successor, Pastor J. E. Swanbom. 20

---

20 Weber, "Lutheran Church in Florida," p. 30; Interview, Emma Moeckel, April 8, 1984. Arvid J. Peterson, Ninetieth Anniversary, 1884-1974, n. p., describes the history of Ebenezer, Pierson. Driscoll, Florida Synod, p. 127 and Zion, Groveland's "Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration," provide more information about the interrelationships between Ebenezer and Zion. These last two sources also list a G. F. Swanbom in place of J. E. Swanbom, but this apparently is a mistake in transcribing records. Driscoll includes no G. F. Swanbom in his official list of pastors who served in Florida.
On May 17, 1919, in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Anderson, fifteen Groveland citizens signed the congregation's charter. The families started a choir and Sunday school. Unfortunately, several members returned to Rockford in 1920 and in 1922, after a few visits, Swanbom also returned north. Pastor J. P. Leaf, a pastor who had served in Tennessee, was stationed in Ebenezer and visited Zion during Holy Week, 1922. Because pastoral visitors came infrequently, lay readers led most services, even when Pastor O. O. Eckardt, also from Pierson, reorganized the congregation in late 1922.21

During his pastorate, Eckardt baptized the congregation's first Florida-born child. He also brought the Pierson choir to perform a cantata in Groveland's Methodist church to celebrate Zion's first fund drive to build a facility. During the thirties the Pierson choir visited Zion each year, camping in Groveland the Saturday night before the service and returning to Pierson the next afternoon.22

Zion's members completed their first church building in 1924 and when Eckardt's duties in Pierson prevented him from visiting Zion, Pastor S. H. Newman, a Swede by birth (as had been Eckardt and Swanbom), served

21"Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration," Zion, Groveland; Driscoll, Florida Synod, p. 127. While there is no record when the Zion congregation worshiped in Swedish, if they had, one may assume they worshiped in English after 1925. See Arden, Augustana Heritage, p. 251, for more information about the language transition.

22"Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration," Zion; Interview, Paul E. Bouman, July 8, 1985.
the congregation for the next five years. Newman apparently bought a house, because in 1932 the congregation purchased "the parsonage" from him. Because the congregation and town grew when a sawmill began operations locally, the congregation's members felt they could support a full-time pastor and wanted to offer the candidates the use of a parsonage.

During Newman's pastorate, Zion's membership increased. They formally incorporated the church, witnessed their first local confirmation service in 1926 and added an altar rail and piano to their furnishings. By 1930, the Depression severely hurt the Pierson Swedes. In a reversal of roles, Zion's members sent Newman, "their" pastor, to serve Ebenezer even though the members could not pay him.23

Newman also helped form the Southeastern Mission District of the Augustana Synod, attending its constituting convention in Pierson in 1925. Delegates chose Eckardt as president and Newman as treasurer, an office he held for six years. In 1926 and 1930, Newman hosted conventions at Zion.

There were seven Augustana congregations in Florida and almost 300 members. Four additional congregations in Alabama were included in the mission district, but the majority of members lived on Florida's "gold coast." Only Ebenezer, Zion and the non-functioning New Upsala congregation were located outside the resort area.24


In 1931, Dr. August Norrbom, a supply pastor who unsuccessfully attempted to revive the New Upsala congregation in 1930, replaced Newman at Pierson and Groveland. He served part-time until Zion called its first full-time pastor, J. A. Mattson, who served from 1932-36. By this time the church furnishings included an organ, a stained glass window and a sidewalk.

In 1936, one year after Mattson hosted the Southeastern Mission Conference meetings, he helped the congregation develop a new mission, the Camp Emanuel retreat center. Mrs. Selma Carlson presented the congregation two and one-half acres located on a nearby lake in memory of her son and daughter-in-law, Pastor and Mrs. Robert Emanuel Carlson. Carlson had been serving a Methodist church in the Keys in 1935 and was killed in the hurricane that swept through southern Florida that fall. Selma Carlson donated $500 as a memorial for the construction of a Methodist church in LaBelle that had been built in Carlson's honor. She felt she should also give a donation to her home congregation. After the Fritz Holmgren family donated an adjacent tract of land that doubled the size of the site, the members cleared the grounds, planted shrubbery and painted another structure used as an assembly hall. In July, 1937, twenty-four Luther Leaguers held a three-day retreat to mark the opening of the facility. Missouri Synod Walther Leaguers, including Trinity and Zion members, held at least one summer camp in Groveland during the war.²⁵

²⁵"Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration," Zion; Moeckel interview; Weber, "Lutheran Church in Florida," p. 31; Driscoll, Florida Synod, p. 80. Roth, Ten Years, n. p., describes the Walther League camp, though supplies no date for the activity.
During the next several years, Zion's members expanded Camp Emanuel. Using lumber from an old building in Groveland, the members constructed the first dining room. Two years later, in 1940, they built a women's dormitory. After World War II, members purchased surplus materials from an abandoned army camp and built "the barn," (a boys' dorm) and several cabins. Zion's congregation supervised the camp until 1957 when the Florida District of the Augustana Synod took responsibility for its expansion and upkeep as it developed a system of outdoor retreat centers to serve the rapidly-growing Florida population and the increasing number of tourists.26

In 1936, Pastor O. E. Liden, a former chaplain at the Old Peoples' Home in Evanston, Illinois, replaced Mattson. Liden, the first American-born pastor to serve Zion, also became the Southeastern District's secretary (1938-40) and president (1941) and continued the congregational tradition of hosting a district convention in 1939. Like Trapp had done in Gotha in 1916, Liden served Zion, the outlying congregation, while he initiated work in Orlando. Like Trapp had done in the early twenties, Liden organized a number of Augustana Lutherans into an Orlando congregation and left Groveland in 1941.

Pastor Carl H. Nelson replaced him in the late fall of 1941. Nelson, born in Sweden in 1875, was sixty-six years old when he arrived. His term as pastor is symbolic of the problems Zion faced during its first fifty years. During the previous pastorates, of those whose ages are known, Eckardt at fifty was the youngest to serve the congregation. Mattson, whose four-year term as a full-time pastor was the second-longest term, was seventy

26 Driscoll, Florida Synod, pp. 80-81.
when he accepted the position. It appears the Augustana Home Mission Board classified Zion as an "easy" pastorate because it had few communicants and used it as a "resort" for retired pastors. This, when coupled with the town's slow growth, may explain why Zion never lost its mission status.

Nelson's pastorate lasted long enough for him to send six of the congregation's fifty members off to war in 1942. This is a similar ratio to that experienced by Trinity's congregation and rather high when compared to St. Luke's total of one in the service. One may wonder why Zion, located in a citrus area and the same size congregation as St. Luke, did not have as many members receive deferment status as those in Slavia.

Pastor S. F. Hammerlof arrived in late December, 1942, to replace the retired Nelson. He also fit the mold of Zion's pastors, having been born in Sweden and sixty-six years old when he took office. Despite his age, Hammerlof initiated planning for a new parsonage and church. He also may have established contacts with a pan-Lutheran group of Clermont Lutherans interested in organizing a congregation. By the end of World War II, his congregation numbered sixty baptized and fifty-three communicants. The increase in the town's population, tourism and outdoor camping appeared to guarantee success for Zion and Camp Emanuel. However, one might note the congregation did not have many children. Because the traditional age for a confirmand was twelve or thirteen, one may assume there were only seven children (or fewer!) in the congregation.

27 Ibid., n. p.; "Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration," Zion.
28 Ibid.
The Augustana Synod's emphasis of urban ministry that began in 1946 had its central Florida precedent in pre-World War II Orlando. Liden, perhaps knowledgable of Trapp's activities in Gotha and Orlando, started his ministry in a rural mission headquarters and nurtured the growth of a congregation in Orlando. Liden, after working in Orlando for almost two years, moved to the city when the mission board reassigned him to Orlando.\footnote{Nore G. Gustafson, "The St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Orlando, Florida," n. d., p. 1.}

When Liden began working in Orlando, there were a number of Augustana Lutherans, some of Swedish extraction who desired to form a new congregation. They felt unwelcome at Trinity because the Missouri Synod principle of closed communion forbade their communing at Trinity. Like in New Upsala fifty years earlier, several joined a local Presbyterian congregation. However, they still desired to establish a new Augustana congregation.\footnote{Lundquist interview; Swanson interview.} After contacting a number of families, Liden met the group in one of the member's homes on September 27, 1940. Liden, the twelve adults and nine children formed St. Paul. After worshiping in homes for several more months, they arranged to use a Seventh Day Adventist church on Rosalind Street and Robinson Avenue where they held services and Sunday school until the spring of 1945. Mrs. O. E. Liden played the organ and directed the choir.

In 1945, the mission board transferred the New Upsala property to St. Paul's ownership and authorized the congregation to move the church building to the new site. After discovering the availability of the Orlando Christian Church on the corner of East Church and South Lake streets,
the congregation bid on the property and applied for a $13,500 mission board loan. It acquired a three percent interest rate for the loan and renovated the building so it would be ready for services on Easter Sunday, 1945. St. Paul's members faced the post-war era with the challenge of serving a growing urban population. Membership increased to eighty-four adults and thirty children when several Carolina families moved into the area. 32

Members of St. Luke, Slavia and Zion, Groveland used the colony method to provide stability for their settlements in the early twentieth century. Despite frontier-like isolation, economic hardship and infrequent pastoral care, the members persevered in their attempts to maintain their worship traditions. By 1945 the St. Luke congregation had laid the groundwork for a complete Lutheran community that could care for its needs from the "cradle to the grave." Tuhy became the "Slovak Fischer," reviving the Masaryktown mission. Zion, Groveland served as the "Augustana Gotha," providing occasional support for Ebenezer, Pierson and starting St. Paul, Orlando. Later, Zion's members initiated mission activities in Leesburg and Clermont. St. Luke, Slavia, Zion, Groveland and St. Paul, Orlando played instrumental roles in establishing Augustana and Missouri Synod districts that included Florida. They also developed new mission enterprises to serve the needs of the people of Florida in the post-war era.

CHAPTER VII

THE END OF THE WAR-- LUTHERANS ORGANIZE

By 1945, the Florida members of the Augustana and Missouri synods promoted plans for creating independent regional synodical associations. The Slovaks, particularly those in Slavia, did not form a district in their synod but played an instrumental role in expanding the Missouri Synod's Florida missions. The new districts accepted the challenges of the post-war era and organized an institutional structure to serve the people of central Florida.

Florida in 1945

Orlandoans had several reasons to celebrate in 1945. In March they commemorated the state centennial, sponsoring downtown street dances and parades. When the Germans surrendered in May, more that 1,200 participated in a parade that included white and black military personnel and a Women's Army Corps unit, field guns and a captured German V-1 robot plane. On August 1, 1945, 18,000 celebrants watched demonstrations at the Orlando Air Base that commemorated the founding of the Air Force. Orlando's V-J Day activities capped the celebrations, with civilians driving their cars in the parade because gas rationing had ended.1

The state government began refurbishing roads and buildings that had suffered war-time neglect. The state initiated a junior college system

1 This paragraph is a brief summary of Bacon, Orlando, 2, "1945."
to provide local education for high school graduates who then could finish at Florida A. and M. (for blacks), Florida State (now permitted to include men) and the University of Florida (now permitted to include women). To finance these projects that had been delayed by the war, the legislature approved a three percent sales tax on food and clothing purchases under $10. Floridians also could take advantage of the new business boom that accompanied the state's rapid population growth following the war.

One problem began to occupy many people's attentions--black rights. In Orlando, the blacks started a weekly newspaper and chamber of commerce and worked for better economic and voting rights. A strike by black citrus workers in 1947, an attempted conversion of the Roxy Theater to serve blacks, requests by blacks to participate in Orlando's white primary and the rezoning of black neighborhoods created local tensions. Truman's appointment of only two Southerners to the fifteen-member Committee on Civil Rights motivated Floridian support for Strom Thurmond's Dixie-crats.

Despite these problems, local organizations aided European refugees. Orlando's Jaycees encouraged each family to adopt a family in Volos, Greece. Like the LWML, the Jaycees fed and clothed as many as possible. Orlandoans appeared to be doing their part to heal the wounds of the war and fulfill the promise of the future.

Orlando’s Lutherans Organize

During the post-war prosperity, tempered by racial tensions, the two synods with representatives in Orlando organized autonomous Florida districts. St. Paul, Orlando and Zion, Groveland of the Augustana Synod accomplished this task in 1946. Trinity, Orlando and Zion, Gotha helped the Missouri Synod’s Florida constituency form a district in 1948. St. Luke, Slavia, aided the Missouri Synod formation of the district.

During the war years, the Augustana Synod’s Home Mission Board recognized Florida’s potential for new ministries. The Southeastern Mission District received support from the board as it planned to establish retirement communities, camping centers and urban congregations. The board also encouraged the district’s involvement in the Lutheran ecumenical movement.

In 1946, there were only seven Augustana congregations in Florida. The two in the Orlando area symbolized the synod’s dilemma. The older, established congregation, Zion, was located in a rural community. St. Paul, the newer congregation, was located in a rapidly-growing urban area. The 1946 delegates to the Southeastern Mission District convention in Ft. Lauderdale, interested in administering their own expansion program, requested the Augustana Synod coordinate its task with that of other Lutherans in Florida. With fairly limited resources, there was no need for Lutherans to squander money in competition with each other. The Augustana Synod’s mission board consulted the NLC’s pan-Lutheran mission board (The SELC and Missouri Synod were not members of the NLC), and in 1947, arranged the funding of the sites delegated to its new Florida District.4 Perhaps the

4Driscoll, Florida Synod, pp. 24-25.
Augustana Synod's new Board of Youth Activities could advise the Lutheran League in canvassing neighborhoods, while the established Lutheran Brotherhood men's organization and Women's League could aid the financing of missions.

Zion, Groveland and St. Paul, Orlando participated in this new venture. Pastor Hammarlof of Zion attended the constituting convention of the Florida District and prepared Zion's members for the task of supporting missions in Leesburg and Clermont. When he was killed in an auto accident in January, 1951, Pastor M. L. Swanson completed these projects and organized a mission in Deland.

Pastor O. E. Liden's duties kept him in Orlando. In 1948, the church board authorized the construction of a parsonage, sold the property located on the north shore of Lake Ivanhoe and installed an organ. In 1950, the congregation became self-supporting, tripling its 1944 membership to total 197 adults and sixty-two children. The congregation burned the church mortgage four years after entering the building. The property sale and contributions of tourists and winter visitors helped St. Paul's members fulfill their mission potential.5

With St. Paul's and Zion's assistance, the new Florida District's membership grew rapidly. In 1946 there were only 1,085 baptized with 822 communicants in eight congregations. By 1950 there were nine congregations, 1,942 baptized, 1,478 confirmands and three tentative mission sites in central Florida. This growth reflected the synod's general success. In 1945, the

Augustana Synod had only 275,000 members in the United States. By 1950, it included 375,000.

Trinity in Transition

The local Missouri Synod congregations benefitted from Orlando's post-war prosperity and population increase. Like the Augustana congregations, they supported a similar attempt to win autonomy by creating a separate Missouri Synod district. The auxiliary organizations played an instrumental part in establishing the thirty-ninth Missouri Synod district and, despite Trapp's failing health, the Florida Pastoral Conference worked for the creation of the new organization. Trinity's members played a major role in the formation of the district and maintained the church's auxiliary organizations and ministry during the transition that took place when Trapp fell ill.

When the war ended, Trinity's Senior Walther Leaguers collected clothing for the synod's Emergency Planning Council. Others publicized the arrival of Mrs. Larry Meyer of St. Louis. She addressed the second annual Florida conference LWML at Trinity, describing the visit her husband, Pastor Laurence Meyer, executive director of the synod's Emergency Planning Council, had made to Europe while accompanying synodical president John W. Behnken. In 1945, President Truman granted Meyer and Behnken permission to survey Europe's needs and make recommendations for physical and spiritual relief. They created the synod's "Marshall Plan" to reconstruct the Lutheran church in Germany and Europe and aid the war refugees. By 1947, the synod's centennial, the members contributed more than $1,000,000 for German welfare

---

and the 60,000 member LWML designated $1,000,000 per year for an orphanage, clothing and food collections and the distribution of German hymnbooks, Bibles and catechisms.7

Trinity's members also were encouraged by their new member drive. Three of the new members helped form a men's club that considered membership in the Lutheran Laymans League, a synodical organization that supported Lutheran Hour broadcasts and other mission ventures. The congregation reduced its church mortgage to $30,000 and prepared for the 1946 Southern District Convention. For almost fifteen years, Trapp, Trinity's members and colleagues in peninsular Florida had worked for the formation of a district to meet the area's unique challenges. Unfortunately, disaster struck the 321 member congregation. Trapp fell deathly ill.8

By the end of 1945, there had been indications Trapp was suffering from ill health. He occasionally forgot appointments or could not remember where he had parked his car. By early 1946, Trapp carried an ammonia-soaked handkerchief during services so he could revive himself when he began to lose consciousness.9 It was obvious he needed immediate medical help.


9James and Carl Kunze interviews; Erwin Puch interview; Otis Lundquist interview. According to another interview, after several incidents that some members considered were embarrassing to the congregation, these members attempted to remove Trapp from Trinity's ministry. When the nature of his illness became known, they supported those who desired to call a temporary student pastor to replace Trapp while he convalesced.
The family took Trapp to a Tampa clinic and the congregation gave an emergency advance of Trapp's salary to the family so they could pay for medical expenses. The congregation held a special meeting on June 9, 1946, to request the services of a student pastor until Trapp returned to health. Should no one be available, the officers would serve as lay readers. While Trapp received treatment for a brain tumor, no lay reader or student pastor was needed because Tuhy and Fischer served the congregation. They ably carried out Trinity's responsibilities and even accepted five new members. However, their successes were overshadowed by Trapp's death on July 10, 1946.

Wesche of St. Paul, Lakeland, delivered the funeral address. Pastor Fred Lorberg, chairman of the Florida Circuit Executive Committee (of which Trapp had been a longstanding member) and Tuhy officiated at the service. The pallbearers included several representatives of the executive committee, including Fischer. A newspaper obituary stated that one of his most important gifts was that "He was congenial and friendly, always willing to help others even at the expense of his own health."

Trapp's term of service resulted in the organization of the largest Lutheran congregation in peninsular Florida. He had also helped develop plans for a new Florida District and had accepted the time-consuming duties of circuit visitor, installing and observing pastors who entered the area. If Fischer had been the "planter," then Trapp was the "cultivator." His careful nurturing of youth groups, women's and men's auxiliary organizations and new congregations established Lutheran institutions in Florida.

10 Elmer Trapp interview; TR, Officers Minutes, June 27, 1946; TR, Minutes, June 9, July 21, 1946.

11 Clipping, July 13, 1946, no title, Catherine Campbell interview.
After Trapp was interred in Maryland, his surviving wife, Marie, and four sons faced an immediate problem. Trapp had not joined the synod's retirement and survivor program for synodical church workers. Marie Trapp had to apply for a special dispensation so she could collect the pastor's benefits. While the congregation paid all medical and funeral bills and permitted the family to use the parsonage for several months, Marie's health was not good and she still had to support her teenage son, George, Jr.12

Synod's official reaction to her application was somewhat reserved. Edwin Sommer, chairman of the synod's Board of Support and Pensions, wrote,

While Pastor Trapp was not a member of the Pension Fund, ... this application will be given firm consideration, although the reaction of our Board to requests of this kind is not always as generous as when a Pension Fund member or his widow requests financial assistance.13

While the final pension settlement is not known, Trinity's congregation gave her a monthly allowance until she died in 1971.14

Congregational activities continued during and after the Trapp tragedy. For the first time, the congregation listed its number in the telephone directory. It sent John Senkarik to the Southern District convention in New Orleans, donated $100 to the European Relief fund and compiled a list of prospective pastors. On October 10, 1946, with Tuhys advice, the congregation asked Southern District President M. W. H. Holls to provide a list of candidates for Trinity's vacancy. Holls replied by naming two

12 Ibid.; James Kunze interview; TR, Officers Minutes, July 18, 1946.
13 Edwin A. Sommer to Dallas Gibson, July 27, 1948, Florida Pastoral Conference (FPC), Correspondence. Gibson, pastor at Trinity, Ft. Lauderdale, played a role similar to Trapp's in developing south Florida missions.
14 James Kunze interview.
candidates, pastors A. H. Besalski of New Orleans and Fred C. Stein of St. Louis. Besalski had served a downtown church in New Orleans, worked with blacks in Alabama and POWs in Louisiana. Stein had been a chaplain during the war. The call committee selected Besalski. Tuhy, Fischer and Dr. Eifrig (a retired River Forest science professor living in Gotha) ministered to the congregation until Besalski arrived. These men installed him on January 19, 1947. 15

Besalski faced a challenge. The congregation had not had its own pastor since mid-1946. While Tuhy and Fischer had adequately provided part-time support, auxiliary organizations and congregational duties probably lost some coordination as they functioned without their pastor. However, the crisis also required congregational officers and committee members to communicate more with each other as they attempted to maintain the congregation's activities.

Besalski restructured the congregation's Christian education program. He reorganized the Sunday school and included the superintendent in all board meetings. He established a Board of Education to investigate the possibility of starting a Christian day school and initiated Wednesday evening doctrine classes to provide prospective members an opportunity to learn about Lutheranism. At the suggestion of several members, Besalski attended civic functions and led devotions. He visited Jaycee and YMCA auxiliary meetings and led prayers at a meeting of the Orlando Friends of 15

---

15 Ibid.; TR, Officers Minutes, October 4, November 15, December 19, 1946; TR, Minutes, July 21, August 3, 1946. FPC, Minutes, October 26, 1943, provide the information about Besalski.
the Library. He delivered several brief radio devotionals and served a college sorority. Those who suggested these activities were concerned with Trinity's image as a lower-class German congregation. Many in local social circles, including attorneys and doctors, did not know what a Lutheran was. Besalski is credited with improving Trinity's public relations and accessibility after the war.16

Besalski, with very few other district duties, had a chance to "fine-tune" Trinity's ministry to the Orlando community. His activities did not interfere with regular congregational duties. His public visibility even enhanced the congregation's ability to solve budget problems.

The congregation, experiencing the post-war boom, adopted a $15,600 budget for 1948, twice that of the budget of 1945. Pleased with Besalski's activities, the congregation raised the pastor's salary $1,000, totaling $2,700 annually. The members also celebrated the building's twentieth anniversary and the synod's centennial by collecting an additional $1,400 thank offering for missions. As the congregation continually met the AAL mortgage payments, it also solved a vexing problem. The organ had worn out. The members sold it to Zion, Gotha for $250 and purchased another for $1,000. They completed these transactions in time to host the first convention of the Florida-Georgia District.17

Besalski ably replaced Trapp. While he emphasized a more visible presence in Orlando's social circles, he did not neglect his congregation.

16 James Kunze interview; Otis Lundquist interview; TR, Officers Minutes, January 30, February 21, June 5, 1947.

A reemphasis of Christian education and the congregation's prosperity earned Besalski the respect of the FPC. The conference rewarded his ministry by selecting his congregation to host the first convention of the new district.

The Formation of the Florida-Georgia District

During the development of the Florida mission field, a number of problems challenged the pastors. As members of the Southern District, they traveled great distances to attend conventions or pastoral meetings in New Orleans. Like the Slavia Colony members, they felt ignored by the district, frequently awaiting delayed replies to pressing questions or the assigning of additional workers. To alleviate these problems, the Southern District created a Florida pastoral conference. Beginning with the Orlando meeting of October 29, 1924, the peninsular pastors met biannually to discuss mission problems, share theological papers and develop programs to minister to the rapidly-growing population. The conferences also provided three days of fellowship for clergy whose normal circle of colleagues did not include Lutheran pastors.

An examination of conference papers provides insight to the pastors' concerns between 1924 and 1947. During the first few years, topics included preparation for sermons, ministering to the sick and the challenges presented by liberals and fundamentalists. As the conference included more pastors and congregations, speakers selected appropriate items. They presented community canvass plans, debated the place of women in the church, discussed the staffing of missions in Ft. Myers, Ocala, Cocoa and Havana and informed new missionaries about Florida's specific needs.18

18 FPC, Minutes, November 1, 1928, October 23, 1930, October 26, 1931, October 20, 1932, October 24, 1933, October 27, 1936, April 28, 1942.
Because Florida's population grew so quickly, the pastors frequently discussed public relations and publicity techniques. They compiled lists of successful advertising campaigns that included the posting of roadmarkers, handbills, hotel bulletins and the distribution of pamphlets in libraries. The Miami-area pastors led proposals for financing radio broadcasts. At several other meetings, they discussed the creation of the *Florida Lutheran Messenger* to aid regional communication, but the Depression apparently made funding impossible.

As the number of Lutheran congregations in Florida increased, the pastors met missionaries from other Lutheran bodies. In several meetings, they discussed how Lutheran synods differed in their interpretations of Biblical inspiration, an important topic because of Missouri Synod fellowship discussions at the time. During the Missouri Synod-American Lutheran Church fellowship discussions, the conference officially encouraged cooperation with other Lutherans in Florida.

The pastors did not limit their work to Lutheran circles. They critiqued several high school texts because they contained "ungodly" approaches to creation and developed a proposal to secure released time for confirmands who attended public schools. Finally, they delegated the responsibilities of serving POWs and Florida military bases to several pastors, including

19 Ibid., October 29, 1932, October 24, 1939.

20 Ibid., October 25, 1938, October 24, 1939, October 26, 1943.
Trapp, Fischer and Wesche.21 Despite these conferences, the members still felt the distance to New Orleans presented their most difficult problem.

Southern District executives attempted to alleviate the problems of attending district conventions. To take advantage of lower rail rates, they moved the convention date to precede Mardi Gras. Unfortunately, this did not satisfy the pastors because the rates did not apply to Florida travelers, and each pastor missed at least one Lenten service.22 This last difficulty was particularly galling because at that time, "Churches are filled with strangers who are upset . . . because they find either reading services, or, as in most cases, no services at all."23 When the Florida pastors did not receive printed minutes eight months after a convention and the Southern District rejected the conference's suggestion of a June convention date, they felt they were ignored and treated as second-class members.24

The problems of travel, expenses and missed services plagued Florida representatives. In 1946, the district granted all Florida representatives the opportunity to travel by plane to attend conventions. But even this was not satisfactory. Conference representatives pointed out the cost was prohibitive. In 1947, it cost $2,221 to fly twenty-one Florida pastors and delegates to New Orleans. It cost $9,999.04 to bring the other sixty-one

21 Ibid., April 6, 1937, May 6, 1943, April 18, October 31, 1944.
22 Pastor A. H. Klamt to the Florida Conference, September 28, 1930.
23 FPC to Southern District Board of Directors, October 27, 1930.
24 FPC, Minutes, September 28, October 27, 1930.
district representatives to the convention. A separate district could cut convention expenses measurably.

A second problem that frustrated the Florida Conference was the shortage of mission workers. In 1928, the conference recommended a missionary be sent to Gotha. When none was sent, Fischer began serving—and continued to do so until the early fifties. He never received a formal assignment to the congregation until 1931. Another incident made it appear the Southern District did not pay much attention to Florida. The conference requested the district send a missionary to serve Gainesville and Ocala. The members suggested that Candidate Richard Lineberger, a former member of Wesche's congregation and one who frequently attended worship at Trinity with his sister Eunice, take over the responsibility because he was familiar with the area and could minister to the students at the University of Florida because he was near their age. Lineberger was assigned to a New Orleans congregation and no one was assigned to the missions. Naturally, the conference members recognized the district’s mission board was beset by financial problems during the Depression and probably could not send anyone. But everything seemed to stay "at home" when budgets were cut. The continuing shortage of housing, personnel and the district’s failure to appoint a local field secretary also dissatisfied the pastors.  

Permission to travel by plane was granted in a letter, A. H. Klamt to Pastor L. C. Gerhardt, 1946. E. J. Bergt to C. F. Kellenmann, June 7, 1947, includes a comment about the cost of flying the pastors to district conventions.

FPC, Minutes, November 1, 1928, October 26, 1933, April 18, 1939.
Another frustrating episode occurred when the Florida Conference LWML helped the New Orleans LWML chapters purchase a mission trailer. When the Louisiana chapters restricted its use to only that state, the Florida pastors protested on behalf of their LWML organizations. The restrictions were lifted but again it appeared Florida did not warrant any special attention. Another appeal for missionaries included a list of eighty-five Florida cities that had more than 2,000 inhabitants. Only twenty-six had Lutheran churches and thirteen cities of more than 5,000, including Sanford, Tallahassee and Deland, had no Lutheran church. In desperation the conference suggested newly-retired pastors serve these mission stations. Perhaps they had observed the Augustana Synod's success in maintaining central Florida congregations by using retirees.

These difficulties exaggerated tensions between the district and the conference. Frustrations surfaced. At the same time the LWML protested the trailer restrictions, the Florida pastors complained there were no Florida members on the Southern District Board of Directors. No Floridian had even been nominated for a position. They also heard there were board members who had not attended district meetings and asked that because the participation of the members of the Southern District Board leave much to be desired, . . . we respectfully request that the delinquent members be rebuked and admonished and encouraged to faithfulness in the trust placed upon them.

After District President Holls corrected their misinformation, they withdrew their protest. 28

27 FPC Executive Committee (EC), Minutes, December 10, 1945; FPC, Minutes, April 23, 1946, October 28, 1947.

28 FPCEC, Minutes, July 9, 1946. The quote is from ibid., December 10, 1945.
Most of the time cooler heads prevailed. No one suggested secession from the parent district except when the district faced difficult financial problems during the Depression. In 1933, the conference requested the Florida congregations pursue membership in the new Southeastern District that included most of the coastal states between New York and Georgia. At that time there were only three independent Florida congregations, so the conference decided it should not join the undercapitalized venture. 29

As Florida's pastors assumed responsibility for their needs and felt "neglected," the conference provided an opportunity for fellowship with other synodical groups. In 1935, two Tampa pastors, Dr. Conrad of the Augustana Synod and Pastor Marinck of the Norwegian Lutheran Church, attended a conference as guests. Other conferences included representatives from other synods, but none were as readily accepted as Tuhy of St. Luke. While synodical policy dictated the termination of fraternal discussion with other church bodies and forced the conference to rescind its resolution to pray with other guests, 30 Tuhy, a Synodical Conference colleague, could still attend.

Only months after he became a full-time pastor at St. Luke, Tuhy was accepted as a member of the conference. He was given full rights of membership and presented a paper at the next meeting. It was entitled, "Martin Luther—A Pattern for the Preachers of the Present Day." Five years later, Pastor L. A. Jarosi, the SELC president, attended with Tuhy.

29 FPC, Minutes, October 24, 1933, April 6, 1937.

30 Ibid., October 29, 1935, October 28, 1942, October 26, 1943; FPCEC, Minutes, July 10, 1944.
Unfortunately, after Tuhy joined, other duties kept him from attending regularly. He missed several conferences and did not inform the officials in time to permit them to find a substitute for his key-note address or theological treatise. In 1939, the conference formally chastised Tuhy for not attending regularly and requested "... from him information as to his desire for continued membership with us."\footnote{FPC, Minutes, October 30, 1934, April 23, 1935, April 28, 1939. The quote is from ibid., October 24, 1939.} Had Tuhy’s conference membership resulted in a destruction of bonds that tied together several Orlando congregations? Tuhy apparently had been called to other SELC duties. As the only SELC pastor in Florida, Tuhy served on the SELC Executive Board, assisted the SELC’s Eastern Conference Mission board, served Masaryktown and developed a "Haven of Mercy," an orphanage and old folks' home.\footnote{Ibid., October 23, 1945.} Despite the tension, Tuhy made it clear the orphanage and old folks' home was available to members of the Southern and Southeastern districts. His service to Trinity during Trapp's illness reaffirmed the conference's trust in him.

Two events occurred before the Florida Conference became the Florida-Georgia District. In 1944, at St. Paul, Lakeland, the members celebrated Fischer's fiftieth year of ministry. Despite his rather nebulous position in the Southern District, the Florida Conference recognized his contributions to the growing mission areas of Florida. During the thirties and forties his preaching stations included Gainesville, Mims, Titusville, Williston, Ocala, Leesburg, POW camps and military facilities.\footnote{Ibid., October 31, 1944.} The man who "planted"
Lutheran missions in Florida still served faithfully after a half-century of service.

The second important event was the start of black missions in Florida. During the forties, the International Walther League raised questions in behalf of blacks. When plans were made for integrated conferences, camps and conventions, serious conflicts arose over listening to "non-church" voices or if the organization should listen to its own leaders. 34

Until 1944, any black pastor that desired to join the Missouri Synod had to join the Synodical Conference. This separate arrangement continued until the Missouri Synod accepted a black pastor into membership in the fifties. For a brief time the synod considered forming a separate black conference (much like the Central Jurisdiction of the Methodist church, the Missouri Synod's English District and the Slovak Zion Synod in the ULCA), but most people supported full integration. Gradually districts admitted black pastors and congregations into membership. The Southern District, which had the largest concentration of black pastors and congregations, continued to support a separate structure. Not until 1961 did the Southern District accept blacks. 35

Peninsular Florida's first black mission (probably in Tampa) was simply commended for its fine work in 1941. It was not until 1947 that Tuhy requested an Alabama field missionary be sent to Florida to investigate sites for work among blacks. That summer, Synodical Conference representative Pastor William Kennel canvassed Jacksonville, Tampa, Miami, 

34Witt, "Youthful Years," p. 17.
35Ertl, God's Amazing Grace, pp. 93-94.
Orlando and St. Petersburg. He recommended the synod begin work in the first three sites as soon as possible.  Additional requests for black missions in Gainesville and Ocala could not be filled by the understaffed Florida conference. Kennell convinced the Synodical Conference to assign a man to the Jacksonville area and serve the Tampa and Orlando-Slavia areas if he had the time. He probably wanted the Synodical Conference to begin supporting traveling missionaries among blacks like the Reisepredigeren had done for the whites years before.

The Florida Conference of the LAMML considered a black mission project, and one pastor suggested the Florida conference utilize the services of Pastor A. J. McLeod, a black Episcopalian in Homestead. Unfortunately, the man was divorced, preached at Methodist and Baptist services and there was no one capable of examining him to grant membership in the conference. He would have to apply to the Synodical Conference for the appropriate measures.

The development of Florida's black missions temporarily ended until the mid-fifties. The responsibilities of creating a new district probably absorbed most of the conference's energies. Social traditions also limited local ministry to blacks. No one in Gotha, Groveland, Slavia or Orlando

36 FPC, Minutes, April 22, 1941, April 22, 1947; FPCEC, Minutes, September 16, 1947.


38 FPCEC, Minutes, October 29, 1947.
remembered blacks attending services. Trapp privately communed a black Sanford family during the war, but they apparently returned north after the war ended. When compared to at least one other Protestant body, the Lutherans were quite late in developing their ministry to blacks. The Episcopalians had purchased land for a "colored mission" in west Orlando in 1896 and built a church in 1897.

Despite the problems that arose between the Florida conference and the Southern District, the temporary tensions about Tuhy's absences and the new challenge of ministry to blacks, the conference looked to the Southern District for guidance and support. Pastor C. F. Kellermann, the senior member of the circuit (except for Fischer), stated,

I have no personal complaints to register with regard to district administration. I have found our officials open to reason and ready to cooperate as well as their own restrictions and limitations, and especially, Southern District finances permitted. In many respects I would prefer our present status and have no real relish for what lies ahead when our district aspirations are realized. But then how shall the Confessional Lutheran Church accomplish her great work and meet the challenges of Florida's opportunities?

In the interest of harmony, Kellermann saved his data and arguments for a new district for presentation at a future meeting instead of trying to blitz the 1941 synodical convention. The Florida pastors realized international tensions and synodical fellowship discussions with the ULCA and

39 James Kunze interview.


41 C. F. Kellermann to F. W. Lorberg, May 9, 1941.
the ALC would take up most of the convention's floor time. Alleviating
the Depression's monetary problems also would detract from any attempt to
create a new district.42

Nevertheless, Lorberg, chairman of the FPCEC, compiled a list of
reasons the pastors could use to justify the formation of a Florida District.
In a letter to circuit congregations, Lorberg asked them to petition the
Southern District to organize a Florida District. The petition included
the following points:

1. Rapid expansion of peninsular Florida demands immediate and
aggressive action
2. Florida's peculiar needs require administration and supervision
by men living in the field and acquainted with its needs
3. Absentee administration due to distances has repeatedly resulted
in costly delay in spite of the best efforts of able officials
4. Contrasting regional requirements between the settled Old South
and Florida demand different policies of administration
5. Synod-wide attention would be focused upon mission opportunities
of Florida, resulting in more effective development
6. Increased responsibility upon pastors and congregations would
result in greater interest and in more earnest discharge of
stewardship duties

In 1941, Trapp was included as one of the committee of five to continue
negotiations with the Southern District. The District Planning Committee
had to receive the unanimous support of the pastors and congregations in-
volved, the endorsement of the Southern District and the approval of the
synod before creating the new Florida District.43

When the war began, the FPC District Planning Committee delayed its
request because the congregations lost many members to the service and

42 Ibid.
43 F. W. Lorberg to Circuit F, May 13, 1941. Circuit F was the
Southern District designation for the FPC.
industrial areas. Trapp cautioned his colleagues from forcing the issue of a separate district. In an undated letter he wrote, "... why spoil a good thing with undue haste?" President Holls supported their efforts. He "... had always been of the opinion that as soon as the Florida group is large enough [it should separate] in the interest of its own development." His endorsement is not surprising when one remembers the financial difficulties and personnel shortages that plagued the Southern District during the thirties. Holls' only reservation about the proposal was the Florida District include the financially-troubled Isle of Pines mission near Havana, Cuba and the state of Georgia. These were closer to Florida than they were to New Orleans.

For six years the FPC debated about the most opportune time to apply for the formation of the district. Unfortunately, another topic, its area of jurisdiction, almost destroyed the effort. Of twelve congregations that responded to a petition circulated by a committee that included Besalski, four opposed jurisdictions that included Georgia, the Isle of Pines or the panhandle. They argued these areas would drain the district's funds and make it a permanently subsidized unit.

When the Florida conference could not achieve unanimity and the synodical convention drew near in June, 1947, Wesche decided to send the

---

44 C. F. Kellermann to Lorberg, July 14, 1942.
45 Trapp to Lorberg, n. d.
46 Holls to Lorberg, October 13, 1941.
47 FPC, Minutes, April 29, 1947.
petition to Holls, anyway. He expressed the opinion that Florida's pastors could apply to become a district no matter what territory they were assigned. When Kellermann heard this, he was incensed and questioned Wesche's integrity. Wesche apologized about the compromise petition he sent to Holls but accomplished his purpose. The petitioners would bypass the Southern District convention and apply for admission to the synod at the Missouri Synod's Centennial Convention in Chicago. The final petition included the major points compiled in 1941 (see p. 207 above).

The 1947 synodical convention granted the request to form a Florida District, with the stipulation that the boundaries for the new district be established by the synod's Board for Missions in North America and in consultation with the Board of Directors of the Southern District. Paul Wesche, a Walther Leaguer attending the convention as an usher and convention steward was interviewed by Don McNeal on the nationally-syndicated Morning Breakfast Club radio program. He received the privilege of announcing to Floridians over the live broadcast that they had finally attained their independent district. Its boundaries included only peninsular Florida and Georgia.


49 Wyatt A. Kimberley, "The History of the Florida-Georgia District," paper presented at the Florida-Georgia District Convention, St. Petersburg, 1973, p. 3. This action did not follow the traditional method of creating a district. If a group of pastors and congregations requested such action from the synod, a synodical convention could approve the request and the parent district could protect its interests by helping define the new district's boundaries. In an interview with Pastor Gerald Seaman, Florida-Georgia District Executive Secretary, October 22, 1985, Seaman stated this method was used infrequently because it risked antagonizing the parent district.

50 Wesche interview.
The thirty-fourth synodical district included twenty-one congregations, 2,378 communicants, more than 3,400 baptized, three elementary schools and one high school. While this was only a small fraction of the Missouri Synod's 1,639,337 baptized and 1,115,453 communicants, the new Florida-Georgia District grew quickly, outstripping both the Augustana Florida Synod's and ULCA's growth. (The ULCA still had no congregation in the Orlando area.) Within ten years, the district's congregations tripled in numbers. Trinity, the district's largest congregation with 550 baptized and 360 confirmed members and the center of activity for Florida's Walther League, LWML and pastoral conference, played an instrumental role in the formation of the district. On February 6, 1948, Trinity hosted the first convention for the new district. Besalski helped lead the opening services and later was selected to the mission board. Trinity's John Senkarik served on the Board of Directors and George Kline was selected as financial secretary. While Fischer did not play a major role in the formation of the district, he became its first missionary serving Tallahassee in 1949.51

After almost eighty years of ministry in the Orlando area, three Lutheran synods had established institutional structures to minister to the needs of the people in the region. Despite an abortive attempt to establish a congregation in New Upsala, the Augustana Synod served members in Groveland and Orlando and fostered the development of urban ministry in Florida. The St. Luke congregation became the first complete Lutheran community in Florida.

when it added an orphanage, retirement and nursing home and school. Tuhy promoted inter-synodical activities and helped keep Trinity functioning during Trapp's illness. He also promoted the development of black ministry in peninsular Florida. Besalski reestablished Trinity's ministry after Trapp died. He also worked with Tuhy and Fischer to establish a new Florida district in the Missouri Synod to provide the institutional structure that could supervise the ministry to the growing Florida population during the post-war boom years. Two new synodical organizations—the Augustana Synod's Florida District and the Missouri Synod's Florida-Georgia District—supplied the leadership that created new mission stations during the fifties. A third Lutheran synod, the ULCA, encouraged by such progress, entered the area shortly after 1950.
CONCLUSION

After eighty years of ministry in the Orlando area, Lutherans established three self-supporting congregations (Trinity, Orlando, St. Luke, Slavia and St. Paul, Orlando) and three mission stations (Zion, Gotha, Holy Trinity, Masaryktown and Zion, Groveland). Each of the congregations had a pastor and a youth group, women's auxiliary and men's club. While members at the mission stations established auxiliary groups to maintain congregational duties, they did not call their own pastors until the fifties. Lutherans in New Upsala and Zellwood failed to establish congregations.

Lutheran congregations that served the people of central Florida were started in two different ways. The Slovaks and Swedes established or were hired by colony companies to found agrarian communities. In most cases they started congregations to maintain traditional cultural and religious practices and then requested their synods to send pastors to serve their community's congregation. German-heritage families came to the region without colony company assistance and settled in promising agricultural areas. The Missouri Synod sent traveling missionaries to "gather them in" to the church and then created congregations to preserve confessional beliefs.

Participants in the colony system did not always establish Lutheran congregations. Swedes in New Upsala and Slovaks in Zellwood discovered foreign language worship and distances from other Lutherans limited congregational growth and regular pastoral service. During twenty years of struggle with "Americanization," many members of the New Upsala community discovered they could maintain Swedish cultural traditions without Swedish Lutheran
worship and joined the English-language Presbyterians. In Zellwood, the few Lutherans in the agricultural colony failed to establish a Lutheran congregation. However, participation in the Slavia Colony's worship life aided the preservation of Slovak Lutheran traditions at St. Luke, Slavia.

Colony settlements helped establish three Lutheran congregations. The Slovaks in Slavia struggled for twenty years before permanently establishing St. Luke. They succeeded because northern Slovak congregations sent financial assistance and infrequent pastoral care forced them to focus their energies on maintaining their congregation. In turn, the maintenance of this congregation helped preserve the Slovak community. Pastor Stephen Tuhy led the members in creating a Lutheran community that could care for Lutherans from the "cradle to the grave" and ensure the preservation of Slovak Lutheran traditions.

The success in Slavia probably encouraged Masaryktown's Slovak Lutherans to perpetuate their traditions. Despite the small size of the community, economic hardships and distance from other Lutheran Slovak congregations, they worked to establish a self-supporting congregation. They held lay services and preserved a Lutheran community spirit by celebrating Slovak cultural and religious festivals. The dedicated work of Tuhy and Andrew Duča helped revive the congregation and by the mid-fifties, Holy Trinity was self-supporting.

The Lutherans of the third colony settlement, Groveland, faced hardships similar to those experienced by the Slovaks. A rural location, slow community population increase and the hardship of being a "retirement center" for Augustana Synod pastors hindered Zion's membership growth. Its limited success in the early thirties, highlighted by the purchase of a parsonage
and the support of its own pastor, made Zion the temporary headquarters of the Augustana Synod's Southeastern Mission District. Zion's pastors served as central Florida missionaries, developing St. Paul, Orlando and stations in Leesburg and Clermont.

While members of Zion, Gotha did not organize a colony community, they came to Florida in search of the same agricultural opportunities other colony settlers pursued. Like the Slovaks, they formed a foreign-Language worship group but when World War I-sparked nativism pressured them to end German-language worship, they adopted English to preserve their doctrinal teachings and worship practices. Zion served as a synodical mission headquarters for peninsular Florida and helped establish Trinity, Orlando. During two pastorates, Pastor Edward Fischer founded many missions in the state. Despite few members and a rural location, Zion's status as a Missouri Synod mission base guaranteed its survival.

Trinity and St. Paul, Orlando originated as missions of rural congregations. Urban locations provided opportunities for membership growth and both congregations attained self-supporting status within a decade of organization. Trinity served as the Missouri Synod's focal point for Florida. Despite a debilitating church mortgage, Pastor George Trapp and the congregation accepted the responsibilities of Missouri Synod leadership in Florida. This action gave Trinity's members an opportunity to host auxiliary organization meetings and pastoral conferences. The members played instrumental roles in the selection of service projects, establishment of mission programs and the organization of a new Missouri Synod district that included Florida.

While St. Paul never reached the pre-World War II status that Trinity attained, its existence accentuated the shift in mission emphasis in the
Lutheran synods. Lutherans no longer limited their work to serve rural communities of Germans, Slovaks or Swedes but conducted mission work in as many communities as possible. The deemphasis of foreign-language worship after World War I helped promote mission work among all people. Post-war missionaries established English-language stations throughout central Florida. While Fischer started Lutheran congregations in Ocala and Gainesville, Zion, Groveland's pastors initiated contacts with Lutherans in Orlando. Adult confirmations at Trinity during World War II and the addition of English services at St. Luke exemplify the new mission commitment to all people.

This was a reversal of previous synodical traditions. Most Lutheran synods avoided "Americanization" before World War I, attempting to preserve institutions by practicing political quietism and restricting members' contacts with the doctrinally contaminating influences of English-language worship, the Sunday school, the social gospel, evangelical Christianity and even other Lutheran synods. The pressures of public anti-German (and later anti-Nazi) and anti-European sentiment forced the Augustana and Missouri synods to adopt English worship. This probably prepared the synods for the acceptance of the new mission techniques used by the smaller congregations in mission areas like Florida. The Florida Lutheran congregations could not depend upon a parochial education system and a "gathering in of Lutherans" to maintain membership. They needed to develop auxiliary organizations to educate children and provide the support for pastors who were responsible for serving their congregations and other mission stations.

As Lutherans in Florida experienced the state's rapid economic and population growth, members desired the independence to serve the area's specific mission needs. Auxiliary organizations played an important role
in establishing a Missouri Synod district that included Florida. While smaller congregations like Zion, Gotha had difficulties maintaining Sunday schools or women's groups, larger congregations like Trinity helped create independent regional groups like the Florida Conference of the Southern District LWML and the Walther League's Florida District. The successes experienced by auxiliary groups encouraged Florida's Missouri Synod pastors to request the formation of a new district. In contrast to the Missouri Synod, the impetus behind the formation of the Augustana Synod's Florida District was quite different. Because the auxiliary organizations were not so active, the pastors led the separation movement from the Southeastern Mission District.

Auxiliary organizations, particularly in Missouri Synod congregations, helped broaden social ministry. As Synodical Conference members, Zion, Gotha, Trinity, Orlando and St. Luke, Slavia, attained financial stability and a permanent membership base, the auxiliary organizations did not limit activities to raising money for paying the mortgage, entertaining youth or canvassing neighborhoods. Instead, they aided district and synodical financial programs and donated funds and services for national and international projects that included European relief, new missions, religious radio programming, campus centers and literature for servicemen. Members of Zion, Groveland, encouraged by the return of tourism and a gift of land during the Depression, developed a retreat center.

The pastors led these mission enterprises. They canvassed prospective mission stations, coordinated regional youth meetings and led choir tours. During World War II they ministered to servicemen and German POWs. Fischer, Trapp, Liden and Hammarlof played instrumental roles in establishing
regional synodical organizations to serve the rapidly-growing Florida population. Tuhy, as a member of the Synodical Conference, led the Missouri Synod in initiating work among Florida's black population. While leaving this as one of the last priorities (probably because of social pressures and monetary commitments), the congregations supported this ministry as they established the Florida-Georgia District.

Florida pan-Lutheran fellowship originated during the last years of the Depression. While Lutheran inter-synodical discussions during the late thirties encouraged the formation of pan-Lutheran cluster groups, the collapse of inter-synodical discussions short-circuited local developments. In the case of St. Paul, Orlando, the Missouri Synod's principle of closed communion encouraged the development of a separate Augustana congregation that had no formal contacts with Trinity's Lutherans. However, Missouri Synod and SELC policies fostered cooperation between Zion, Gotha, Trinity, Orlando and St. Luke, Slavia. As members of the Synodical Conference, Tuhy, Fischer, Trapp and Besalski shared pulpits and communed each others' parishioners. Membership in the conference encouraged additional inter-congregational cooperation reflected by the joint sessions of LWML, LLL and Walther League chapters and the structuring of black ministry.

After eighty years, Orlando-area Lutherans had established the institutional framework necessary to serve the needs of Floridians. Cooperative efforts replaced congregational provincialism. Despite occasional problems created by poor economic times, ill-planned expansion projects, slow membership growth and congregational dissension, the members and pastors established organizations to minister to all people in the area.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Unpublished

Government Documents


Church Documents


——. Correspondence, 1948-1951.
Florida-Georgia District archives.

Florida Pastoral Conference. Correspondence, 1929-1948. Florida-Georgia District archives. This includes all correspondence cited in the text. Excellent source for the discussion of the development of the Florida-Georgia District.

——. Minutes, 1924-1948.
Florida-Georgia District archives. Excellent source for studying the history of the Missouri Synod missions in Florida.

——. Executive Committee Minutes, 1932-1948. Helpful compilation of committee officers' comments discussed while conducting administration of Southern District Florida ministry.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Orlando, Records. Minutes, 1919-1950. Excellent source of information about Trinity's ministry during development of Southern District's Florida ministry. Unfortunately, some of the proceedings are unsigned, but all officers are listed. Includes Ledger Book, 1919-1926, though other financial records are not available except when mimeographed pages are fastened to journal entries.

——. Officers Minutes, 1928-1950. Though less complete than minutes, excellent source for information about mortgage negotiations with AAL.
Dissertations and Theses


Supplied by the author, an excellent source that includes the Missouri Synod's general history during this period and provides a lengthy analysis of synod's response to the wars and Depression.


Excellent for the New Upsala settlement. Importance of cultural institutions for immigrant groups as they faced "Americanization."


Excellent for synod's history, but little about the South.


Good source for the initial study of Florida Lutheranism, though organization by geographical areas disrupts continuity. Includes all synods and defunct congregations. Highlights St. Luke, Slavia.

Papers

Diefenthaler, Jon. "Lutheran Schools in America." Paper presented at the Concordia Historical Archivist Conference, St. Louis, Fall, 1983.

Good summary of Lutheran education and maintenance of synod's doctrine. Comparison of Lutheran synods' philosophies of education.


Excellent description of formation of district, including discussion of reasons FPC desired a new district status.


Excellent summary of early mission work in Florida peninsula.

Kohlhoff, Dean Wayne. "Lutherans and the New Deal: The Missouri Synod as a Case Study." Paper presented to the Concordia Historical Institute Archivist Conference, Fall, 1983.

Excellent summary of Missouri Synod membership political behavior during the Depression. Includes synodical commentary about FDR.

Excellent summary of history of the New Upsala settlement.

Trapp, George, Sr. "Church Record of Trinity Lutheran Church of Orlando, Florida." Paper written to record the history of Trinity Lutheran Church, Fall, 1924.

Brief summary of the congregation's early history, probably presented at the first Florida Pastoral Conference, 1924. Found in church records with minutes.

Church Histories

"Fiftieth Anniversary Memorial Booklet." Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Tampa, Florida, 1943.

Mimeographed booklet that commemorates the founding and history of the congregation. Includes brief biographical sketches about Fischer, Wambsganss, Heckel and others.


Brief summary of history of congregation. Includes no names except those of Liden and his wife. Excellent summary of founding of church. Supplied by St. Paul congregation.


Found in Zion's files, this is a very brief summary of the history of Zion, Gotha, later moved to Pine Hills.


Good summary of the history of Masaryktown. Provided by Donald Burgdorf.


Found in Florida-Georgia District archives. Lists district mission projects and activities, officers and convention sites.


Found in Florida-Georgia District archives. Brief summary of history of Zion, Tampa.

"Trinity Minihistory." Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Delray Beach, Florida, Thanksgiving, 1976.

Apparently part of a "founders' day" celebration. Includes summary of Fischer's work in southern Florida. Found in Zion, Pine Hills, files.
Church Literature


Church Bulletins. Trinity Lutheran Church, October 10, 1926, March 27, 1927.

Found in Trinity Records, Minutes.


Brief summary of history of founding of St. Michael. Mentions several missionaries, including Fischer.

"Dedication Service." Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Masaryktown, May 9, 1982.

Includes brief history of congregation. Provided by Donald Burgdorf.

"Dedication Service Program." Zion Lutheran Church, Pine Hills, November 30, 1958.

Brief summary of history of Zion, Gotha.


"Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration." Zion, Groveland, n. d.

Good summary of the history of the congregation, including a list of charter members. Provided by Emma Moeckl.


It is not known if there was more than one annual mission festival.


Mimeographed. Found in Florida-Georgia District archives.

Miscellaneous Material

"Public Sale Advertisement Flyer." H. A. Wilkening, October 31, 1911.

Lists Wilkening's possessions auctioned when he took his family from Kansas to Orlando. Provided by Esther Fischer.

Interviews


Bouman, Paul E. July 8, 1985.

Burgdorf, Donald, Reverend. April 8, 1984.

Pastor at Holy Trinity, Masaryktown.
Campbell, Catherine. April 8, 1983.

Excellent source for Zion, Gotha historical summary and the Fischer ministry.

Gavora, Martin, Matis, Anna and Rosko, Susie. April 8, 1984.
These people helped restart Holy Trinity, Masaryktown during World War II.

Served as pastor in North Wisconsin District, and later as that district's president, between 1938 and 1960. Interesting contrast to Florida missions.


Hrvol, Anna. April 8, 1983.
Helpful interview, including much information about Trinity's auxiliary organizations.

Klinect, Carl and Martha. April 8, 1983.
Two of the founders of Trinity, Orlando.

Interesting stories about the Orlando boom of the twenties and the Depression.

Excellent interview that included much information about Trinity's history.


Helpful perspective on Besalski's ministry.

Helpful interview that included inter-synodical worship details. From St. Luke, Slavia.

Helpful interview about Zion, Groveland.

Pfantz, Martha. April 6, 1983.


Interesting perspective by two adult Lutheran "converts."

Helpful information about Orlando and Union Park life during the thirties.


Helpful information about Zion, Groveland and St. Paul, Orlando.


Published Books

Excellent for Augustana Synod, but not much about synod in South.

Chronology of Orlando history. No topical arrangement.

Synod's official centennial history. Good general information.

Excellent survey of Southern Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists.


Autobiography of first native-born Missouri Synod President.


Excellent essay-type description of Protestant denominations as they influenced American culture and social development.


Excellent compilation of historical documents that help describe the history of the Missouri Synod. The topical essays by the editor also provide a general history of the synod's development as an international institution.


General history of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League.


Any student of Lutheran history must begin with this volume to satisfactorily place the Lutheran experience in America in the context of American history.


Excellent description of the effect of World War II on American society, the economy, culture.


General history of the development of Missouri Synod educational institutions and practices.


Excellent general history of Lutheran education. It includes many statistical tables and graphs.


Excellent history of the Missouri District of the Missouri Synod.


Interesting story of development of retail grocery chain in Florida during the Depression.


History of the Slovak settlement in Slavia. It also mentions the Lutherans and their problems in the communities of Zellwood and Masaryktown.


General history of the Missouri Synod. Easy reading.

Periodicals


Good description of the formation of churches in the late nineteenth century.


Includes description of chaplain services for POWs.

Concordia Theological Monthly, February, 1936.

This periodical also has volume and page numbers but they were obscured when photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute.


A. Duda and Sons publication distributed as a magazine for employees and customers. No pagination or volume numbers.


This periodical has volume and page numbers but they were obscured when photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute.


Brief biography of environmentalist Marjorie Stoneman Douglas.

Maier, Walter A. "Redeem the NRA Leisure Time!" The Walther League Messenger, October, 1933.

This periodical has volume and page numbers but they were obscured when photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute. Excellent example of Maier's criticism of FDR.


This periodical has volume and page numbers but they were obscured when photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute.

Maier, Walter A. The Walther League Messenger, April, 1937.

This periodical has volume and page numbers but they were obscured when photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute.


An excellent summary of the historiography of religious history between 1910 and 1960.


Informal summary of author's childhood remembrances.


This periodical series has volume and page numbers but they were obscured when photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute. These issues include contribution totals by congregations in the Southern District and additional items including summaries of Walther League and Lutheran Laymans League activities.

This periodical series has volume and page numbers but they were obscured when photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute. These articles are a part of a general history of the development of Southern District missions and congregations, written by Wegener, a former president of the Southern District.


This periodical has volume and page numbers but they were obscured when photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute. It critiques FDR's administration.


This periodical series has volume and page numbers but they were obscured when photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute. They all critique FDR's administration.

Witt, Elmer N. "125 Youthful Years." Resources for Youth Ministry, Summer, 1972, pp. 11-18.

Brief summary of the history of the Walther League. Published by the Missouri Synod.

Newspapers


Graebner, Theodore. The Lutheran Witness, February 12, 1934, October 6, December 1, 1936.

This Missouri Synod newspaper has volume and page numbers that were obscured when photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute. Graebner critiques the general collapse of ethical standards and the various solutions that had been suggested to end the Depression.


This issue also has volume and page numbers that were obscured when photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute.


Clipping supplied by Esther Fischer.

The Lutheran Witness, December 21, 1938, February 29, 1944.
These issues have volume and page numbers that were obscured when they were photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute. The second issue includes 1942 statistics for all Lutheran church bodies, including membership totals and contribution averages.

Both of these issues have volume and page numbers that were obscured when they were photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute. Both articles describe the Fischer ministry at Gotha and Zion, Gotha's congregational growth.

Marlowe, Dick. "Old Safe Deposit boxes yielding goodies after 50 years." The Orlando Sentinel, August 2, 1983.
Describes the bank closings during the early thirties.


Describes the destruction of Florida's environment before the Depression.


The Orlando Lutheran, July 5, 1942, May 7, 1944.
These two issues are the only known issues that exist of the paper. Apparently, from discussions in Trinity, Orlando, voters' meetings, the first issues were published about 1930. These two issues are found in Trinity Records, Minutes, during the year indicated.


Sommer, Martin. The Lutheran Witness, November 20, 1934, November 17, 1936.
These issues have volume and page numbers that were obscured when they were photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute. Both summarize Sommer's denunciations of FDR's policies and the New Deal.

Describes Episcopalian mission district's purchase of land for black ministry in west Orlando. Citation provided by Paul Wehr.


This issue has a volume and page number that was obscured when photocopied by research assistants at Concordia Historical Institute.

Pamphlets

This pamphlet describes Behnken's trip to post-war Europe during which he assessed the needs of the Lutherans in Germany and Europe. Found in Trinity Records, Officers Minutes.

Describes the formation of the Missouri Synod's Florida-Georgia District and its growth during the early fifties. Supplied by Paul Wesche.


Brief history of Trinity, Orlando.

Brief illustrated history of Ebenezer, Pierson, Augustana Synod.

Brief illustrated history of the Florida District Walther League. Includes lists of officers and tables of information.

Brief history of St. James Catholic Parish, Orlando.
Advertisements include advertising prices and techniques that are based upon practices of the twenties and thirties. Brief biographical sketches of the priests who led the congregation are included in the text.

Church Records


Brief citation, supplied by Paul Wehr, about Episcopalian ministry in west Orlando in 1897.


The date of the report is the date of publication in most cases. The reports include statistical tables and paragraph summaries of resolutions. Supplied by Concordia Historical Institute. Some photocopied pages obscure.


The date of the meeting is the date of publication. The reports include congregational statistics, missionary duties and general conditions of mission work in Southern District. Excellent source for commentary about missions. Information supplied by James Ertl, Southern District Archivist.


The date of the report is the date of publication. Includes statistical tables of congregational membership, circuit assignments, number of services reportedly held in each congregation, contributions, value of church property. Excellent source. Some of the photocopied material, supplied by Concordia Historical Institute, is illegible.