

CELEBRATING THE 175TH ANNIVERSARY OF WELS



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—1993 *Book of Reports and Memorials*

THE AMALGAMATION

When the Wisconsin Synod merged with Minnesota and Michigan in 1917, it operated a seminary in Wauwatosa, Wis.; a college and prep school in Watertown, Wis.; a college and prep school in New Ulm, Minn.; and a prep school in Saginaw, Mich. In 1927 the synod opened another prep school in Mobridge, S.D. Except for moving the seminary to Thiensville in 1929 and a short-lived, junior teachers' college in Milwaukee, the ministerial education system remained the same for more than 50 years.

In 1979 Martin Luther Academy in New Ulm moved to Prairie du Chien, Wis. Northwestern Lutheran Academy in Mobridge closed, and its students and faculty were invited to join Martin Luther Academy at the new Martin Luther Preparatory School in Prairie du Chien.

Soon financial difficulties and questions about the best way to train pastors and teachers prompted calls for a re-evaluation of the ministerial education system. A Preparatory School Study Commission was appointed. Its report to the 1989 synod convention expressed support for the prep schools but suggested merging Martin Luther Preparatory School and Northwestern Preparatory School and combining Northwestern College and Dr. Martin Luther College.

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A Feasibility Study Committee, appointed by WELS President Carl Mischke in 1991 to study this proposal, presented its preliminary report to the 12 districts in 1992 and a final report to the synod in convention in 1993. The report indicated that the amalgamation of the schools was indeed feasible but recommended that the colleges be merged on a new campus in Wisconsin.

For two years, many opinions—pro and con—were expressed orally and in print. After a final debate, the synod convention in 1993 approved the amalgamation of Martin Luther Preparatory School and Northwestern Preparatory School on the Watertown campus and Northwestern College and Dr. Martin Luther College on the New Ulm campus by a 195-176 margin. In the fall of 1995, Martin Luther College opened in New Ulm, with Rev. Theodore Olsen as the first president. The combined prep schools formed Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, with Rev. Mark Schroeder as the first president.

The governing boards, faculties, and presidents worked hard to overcome the difficulties of combining faculties and student bodies while attempting to honor the memory of the previous institutions. Today the new schools continue to serve as their predecessors had, blessing the synod with a ministerial education system that is the envy of other church bodies: two prep schools, a college, and a seminary.



New Ulm, Minn., is the site of WELS' College of Ministry, Martin Luther College, originating in 1995 with the merger of Northwestern Lutheran College, Watertown, Wis., and Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

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