

Important Work Completed At Synod Convention

Missouri Synod Fellowship Suspended by 124-49 Vote

Aug. 17, 1961, will go down in history as a day which will long be remembered. It was a sad day, yet a day which, the majority of voting delegates felt, could not be avoided if our concern and love for members of our church body, for members of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, and for those all over the world who love the truth of God's Word is to be manifested.

After 60 hours of committee work and nine different days of discussion, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod voted to suspend fellowship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. The vote was 124 in favor of adopting the resolution to suspend this fellowship and 49 opposed to adopting the resolution.

Much of the discussion centered on our doctrinal committee's theses on fellowship in contrast to the stated position and practice of the Missouri Synod.

It was a serious business. There was no elation and great joy among those who were convinced that the time had come to sever this relationship, only a somber realization of the results of this action.

It is clear that many adjustments must be made. But with patience, consideration and understanding, these problems will be solved. Some of the high points of the resolutions were as follows:

Whereas, The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod has lodged many admonitions and protests with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, during the past 20 years to

win her from the path that leads to liberalism in doctrine and practice;

(Here the proceedings of the Synod Conventions from 1939 were mentioned with their numerous references to unionistic practices of the Missouri Synod in the areas of joint prayer and communion arrangements with groups not in doctrinal agreement, military chaplaincy, scouting and similar matters.

Whereas, Our admonitions have largely gone unheeded, and the issues have remained unresolved; and ...

Whereas, The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has not retreated from the unscriptural position long held by it and also expressed in Theology of Fellowship II, but continues to defend that position and carries on fellowship practices which conform to the principles set forth in that document; and

Whereas, We recognize our sacred trust and the obligation to "contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints," and also to give vigorous testimony on Church Fellowship before the church and the world; be it

RESOLVED: a. That we now suspend fellowship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod on the basis of Romans 16: 17, 18, with the hope and prayer to God that the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod will hear in this resolution an evangelical summons to "come to herself" (Luke 15: 17) and to return to the side of the sister from whom she has estranged herself; (Here it was pointed out that word "suspend" means that our Wisconsin ...)

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New officers of the Synod are (from left) the Rev. Oscar Siegler, second vice president; the Rev. Oscar Naumann, president;

the Rev. Irwin Habeck, first vice president, and the Rev. Norman Berg, secretary.

'Scientific' Bible Interpretations Are Attacked

Current "scientific" interpretations of the Bible were attacked in a convention essay delivered by Professor Frederic E. Blume of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis. His essay was entitled: "Why We Are Certain That The Bible Is The Word Of God."

Prof. Blume pointed out that the situation in the world of Biblical scholarship today is not encouraging. He warned: "There has never been a time in the history of Christendom when so many and such impressive forces have been marshaled to undermine and to destroy our certainty that the Bible is the very Word of God, that in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments God speaks to us with a clarity brighter than the sun itself."

Critics of the Bible tell us, the essayist continued, that the Scriptures are the "naive and primitive product of misguided religious enthusiasts who peddled off their writings to unsuspecting followers who, in turn, claimed that these writings were the inspired Word of God."

Prof. Blume explained how this view constitutes a threat to our personal salvation: "Our Christian faith and the attitude we take toward the Bible go hand in hand. If I am to believe that the Bible is a noble collection of thoughts on the part of men and a record of events in which God was active ... then all I have ... are the thoughts and words of men, well-meaning, sincere and earnest, but still men like myself," the essayist said.

"This isn't a matter that concerns only pastors. This view spells the greatest conceivable threat to our Christian religion. If the Bible is nothing more than a noble collection of the best thoughts and words of men, sincere thoughts about God, then what has my faith to rest on?" the essayist asked.

Naumann Elected For Second Term

The Rev. Oscar J. Naumann of Milwaukee was elected to a second term as full time president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod at its convention conducted Aug. 8-17 in Milwaukee Lutheran High School.

This office was first made a full-time position at the convention in Saginaw, Mich., in 1959.

The Rev. Irwin Habeck, Bethesda Ev. Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, was re-elected first vice-president; the Rev. Oscar Siegler, of Mt. Calvary, Wis., second vice-president, and the Rev. Norman Berg, Plymouth, Mich., secretary, succeeding the Rev. Theodore Sauer, Oshkosh, Wis., who has accepted a call to Synod's mission field in Northern Rhodesia, Africa.

Synod Mourns Death Of 20-Year Treasurer

Carl J. Niedfeldt, Synod treasurer for the past 20 years, passed away Aug. 4. Opening sessions were delayed half an hour to allow delegates and friends to attend funeral services.

Mr. Niedfeldt accepted the position as Synod treasurer in 1941, moving to Milwaukee from Madison where he was active in the investment field. Funeral services were conducted by the Rev. W. W. Pless, St. James Church, Milwaukee, where Mr. Niedfeldt was a member.

Special Committees Set To Study Synod Matters

Study committees will be set up to consider several items too complex to be decided by the convention at this time. Such matters include possibility of a Synod-wide every-home subscription to the Northwestern Lutheran; district autonomy in financing home missions within the district, and a method of control and follow-up on synodical offerings.

\$4 Million Plus Budget Is Adopted

A record annual budget of \$4,093,104.78 was adopted for the next two years at the convention.

As Synod and its work expands, so does the budget. Even though this is a record budget, more than \$600,000 over that of 1959-1961 budget, it still was not high enough to cover many requirements. Missionaries, professors and other synod workers have only a \$15 monthly salary increase in this budget, leaving their salaries woefully low.

The Board of Trustees was instructed by the convention to give more study to the question of salaries among synod's workers.

It was pointed out that every time we do not meet the budget voted at the convention, some part of the proposed work program must be curtailed. This is the budget breakdown: Education ... \$1,968,073 ... 48.1 percent; Home Missions ... \$1,097,550.42 ... 26.8 percent; World Missions ... \$572,400.86 ... 14 percent; Adm. and Prom. ... \$235,979 ... 5.8 percent; Benevolence, Pens. ... \$219,261.50 ... 5.3 percent.

1963 Convention Set for Milwaukee

The 1963 Synod convention will meet again at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, Milwaukee.

Delegates accepted the invitation to meet again at this site to facilitate the observance of the Centennial of our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in that year.

The convention accepted the invitation of Northwestern Lutheran College, Watertown, to meet there in 1965. At the same time, the Centennial of this pastoral-training school will be observed.

Overseas Theologians Speak On Church Fellowship Matters

At the meeting of the Synodical Conference this spring, a delegation of overseas theologians from Australia, Germany, England, Brazil and other countries presented their study of the Fellowship Theses of the four synods of the Synodical Conference.

It was their considered opinion that all of the theses started from a wrong viewpoint and thus they pleaded with the various doctrinal committees to re-study the matter of fellowship from the viewpoint of the Doctrine of the Church and of the Marks of the Church.

Our Doctrinal Commission and the Floor Committee on this matter at our Convention found that, in the words of a

Whereas our resolution to suspend fellowship with the Missouri Synod, "In the new forum, suggested by the overseas committee and adopted by the Synodical Conference, we see no avenue that will lead to the removal of the difference in regard to church fellowship principles which now exist between the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod and our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod."

Although the Synod declared that such discussions had no bearing on our differences with the Missouri Synod, it declared its willingness to meet with the overseas theologians with whom we still are in fellowship.

Other Conference Ties Unaffected

Suspension of fellowship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod does not affect our fellowship with other synods of the Synodical Conference nor other church bodies throughout the world with whom we have been in fellowship.

Decisions relative to the future of the Synodical Conference must await further discussions and meetings.

Continued support of the joint projects of the Synodical Conference and of such carried on by groups within the Synodical Conference was assured by resolution of the Convention, "until we can adjust to the new conditions brought about by the suspension of fellowship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod."