

## Iowa Synod Since 1939

Time brings many changes in boundary lines of ecclesiastical bodies. When the Iowa Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church was constituted in 1939, it was found that some regrouping of the widely scattered Iowa congregations had become necessary. For Iowa Synod was formed by the union of three distinct older church bodies: *Iowa District*, Evangelical Synod of North America; *Iowa Classis*, Synod of the Midwest, and *Ursinus Classis*, German Synod of the Northwest. The last two bodies had formerly belonged to the Reformed Church in the United States.

The fourteenth annual session of Iowa Synod was held, April 23-25, 1952, in the beautiful new house of worship of the St. Luke Evangelical and Reformed Church in Burlington, the Rev. Ernst Press, pastor. The Rev. Joseph M. Newgard, Iowa Synod president, could report "enthusiasm and faith of our pastors," albeit "cause for worry" arose from the fact that the Synod's growth during the year preceding was "less than a hundred" souls.

As listed in the 1951 *Year Book*, the 104 E & R congregations in Iowa operate under three sepa-

rate synodical jurisdictions: Iowa Synod has 79 churches; Nebraska Synod, 21; and Northern Synod, 4. The dividing line between the Iowa and Nebraska synods is in Polk County. The Iowa congregations in the Northern Synod are in Allamakee and Kossuth counties. Seven churches affiliated with Iowa Synod are located in Illinois, while two are in Missouri. In fact, the largest church in Iowa Synod is historic Salem congregation at Quincy, Illinois, with 1,150 members. It is significant that the *largest* E & R church on Iowa soil today is also the *oldest* "E" group church in Iowaland — First Evangelical Church of Burlington (founded in 1843), with 800 members in 1950. Seven other Iowa congregations report more than five hundred members: *Peace*, Elkader, 667; *Zion*, Waukon, 639; *Zion*, Hubbard, 575; *St. John's*, Ackley, 554; *St. Paul*, Keokuk, 550; *Trinity*, Hartley, 522; *St. John's*, Clarence, 501. Many Iowa congregations count fewer than a hundred souls, but today's state-wide E & R total membership is not far from 20,000. Iowa Synod, with 18,151 members, is the largest E & R synod west of the Mississippi River.

A significant accomplishment has been the monthly publication of the *Iowa Synod News* since September, 1947. Until May, 1952, the Rev. Frederick H. Haag, pastor of First E & R Church of Cedar Rapids, occupied the editorial chair, but with his recent transfer to Chicago

other arrangements for its publication are being made. (The State Historical Society of Iowa has been presented with a complete file of this valuable church paper by the Synod.) *Iowa Synod News* has brought strikingly into focus many items of interest relative to Youth Fellowship work, Women's Guild projects, meetings of the four Regionals, Kingdom Service programs, Apportionment payment records, World Service contributions, and the like. Interdenominational matters, Reformation Day services, and photographs of pastors and church buildings and groups of members are thus given extensive publicity.

One of the highlights in Iowa E & R work was the bringing to Cedar Rapids in 1947 of the Rev. Dr. Martin Niemoeller as the guest of Pastor Haag and the First Church. The largest crowd ever to assemble to that time in the Memorial Coliseum heard the lecture by the famous German churchman and former U-boat commander, in the interest of the World Council of Churches.

Another item picked up by the *Iowa Synod News* reveals how a number of E & R youth were given the opportunity of knowing their Church inside and outside and from top to bottom. This referred to the four-day chartered bus tour of thirty-two persons, mostly young people from St. Paul's and Zion E & R churches near Marengo, sponsored by their pastor, the Rev. Emanuel Jas-

mann. The 947-mile trip during the week of August 12, 1951, included such points of interest as Black River Falls and Neillsville, Wisconsin, where the seventy-four-year-old E & R Winnebago Indian Mission church and school are located. E & R Mission House at Plymouth in the same state, Elmhurst College, and Chicago were also visited.

Over the past eleven years the Iowa Synod has shown a marvellous gain in the amount of Apportionment and World Service funds paid to denominational benevolences. From a total of \$37,125 given in 1941 a steady climb has taken place to a record \$106,097 in 1951. This has been equal to a *per capita* growth in benevolence giving from \$2.40 to \$5.77 annually. A special significance attaches to the fact that in Iowa Synod the number of 100 per cent paying congregations on Apportionment rose from 37 to 70 between 1941 and 1950.

Two outstanding features of the work of Iowa Synod are the Leadership Training School at Mount Pleasant and the summer camp program at Camp Wapsie Y near Central City on the Wapsipinicon River. By combining efforts with the Congregational-Christians through the United Student Fellowship, E & R college and university students engage in numerous church interests centering in evangelism, "Christ's Workday," and world peace projects.

Perhaps one of the happiest occasions to mark the life of Iowa Synod occurred on Sunday, October 21, 1951, when the Rev. and Mrs. Joseph M. Newgard were honored upon the completion of twenty-five years of service to Grace Church, Wilton Junction, and Trinity Church, Moscow. The Newgards were presented with many gifts, including a "silver tree." Now residing at Dixon, Pastor Newgard continues as president of Iowa Synod.

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