

Fruit of the Years

The year 1954 marks a double centennial: of the founding of Wartburg as a Theological Seminary (the Normal School was begun in 1852), and of the organization of the former Iowa Synod, now merged into the American Lutheran Church. What has been the fruit of the years, the religious and social impact of the former Iowa Synod and the present American Lutheran Church in Iowa?

When the American Lutheran Church (hereafter noted as A.L.C.) was born in 1930 in Toledo, Ohio, in a merger of the former Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods, she brought together a total of 2,019 congregations, with 1,577 pastors, and a baptized membership of 510,153, in 33 states, the District of Columbia, and 5 Canadian provinces. The whole of the Iowa Synod in 1930 had 9 districts, 640 pastors, and about 960 congregations with 212,000 baptized members, scattered over 24 states and Canada. According to the 1926 religious census, the Ohio Synod had 24 congregations and 6,454 baptized members in the state of Iowa. These were chiefly in the northern counties of Iowa and had grown out of Ohio Synod expansion in the state of Minnesota. At the same time the Iowa Synod had 164 congregations and 42,714

baptized members in Iowa. Thus the merged Iowa District of the American Lutheran Church numbered 188 congregations and almost 50,000 members.

The first president of the American Lutheran Church was Dr. C. C. Hein, with headquarters at Columbus, Ohio. (The present president is Dr. Henry F. Schuh.) The first president of the Iowa District, A.L.C., was Dr. E. H. Rausch, pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran congregation at Waverly, Iowa. In 1932 Pastor Rausch was called to the presidency of Wartburg Seminary, and Pastor H. L. Adix of Monticello, Iowa, became president of the Iowa District. Besides caring for his congregation, President Adix served the district for seven years. Pastor H. W. Siefkes of Monona, Iowa, became the third (and present) president of the district in 1939. As of January, 1943, Dr. Siefkes became the full-time district president, and in 1947 a district parsonage and office was established at 184 Graceline Boulevard, Waterloo, Iowa. Dr. Siefkes also serves as first vice-president of the American Lutheran Church, and councillor to National Lutheran Council with special interest in student service. He has been to Europe several times in the interest of Lutheran World Federation affairs.

There has been much consolidation of congregations in Iowa, coupled with a steady home mission advance. In 1952 the district numbered 178

congregations (including 16 missions), 75,130 baptized members (of whom 51,158 were confirmed), 193 pastors (including 13 professors, 7 administrative officers, 4 chaplains to the armed services, and 3 foreign missionaries), 174 Sunday Schools with 21,466 pupils; 154 Vacation Bible Schools, with 11,065 pupils. More than 2,000 young people are confirmed annually. The amount given for church work in 1952 was \$2,630,639.

During the past ten years (1943-1953) 47 new churches were built in the Iowa District, and 32 churches were extensively remodelled. This means that 44 per cent of the congregations are worshipping in completely new or remodelled structures. In this same time twelve new parish house units were erected, and at present six more are in process of construction. The many new parish houses, and the remodelling of former educational facilities, bespeaks a new interest in religious education for young and old, and illustrates the Lutheran emphasis on an educated and informed laity.

On the level of higher education, Wartburg College enrolls almost 700 students, while Wartburg Seminary numbers about 175 graduate students of theology. The total number of students trained at the college would be difficult to estimate. The seminary has sent out about 1,300 pastors and teachers to serve Lutheran churches in Iowa and elsewhere. Both Wartburg College and

Wartburg Seminary have been improving and enlarging their facilities. One of the items of special interest on the Seminary campus is the New Guinea Ethnological Museum, which illustrates the stone age culture of that land before the coming of the white man.

The Iowa District also seeks to follow its students who go to secular schools. It is especially interested in the program of Lutheran Student Service maintained by National Lutheran Council at five places: Ames, Cedar Falls, Dubuque, Des Moines, and Iowa City.

Oldest of the social service agencies in Iowa is the Lutheran Children's Home, at Waverly, Iowa, whose director today is Rev. Melvin A. Bucka. The home was founded in 1863 at Andrew, Iowa, to serve Civil War orphans and others needing its care. In 1899 it was moved to Waverly, where its facilities have been greatly expanded. It now provides institutional care, and care in foster homes, for about 175 children each year. It treats emotionally disturbed children, and offers out-patient service along this line. It is accredited by the Child Welfare League of America. A second large institution is the Lutheran Homes of Muscatine, Iowa, founded by Pastor Henry Reinemund in 1895, in a large country home presented by Mrs. Elizabeth Hershey. About 55 aged persons and about 120 children are cared for each year. Children receive care in the homes or in foster

homes. A new boys' cottage was erected last year. Pastor L. A. Stumme is the superintendent of the Muscatine Homes. The American Lutheran Church in Iowa also cooperates fully with Iowa Lutheran Welfare, a social service agency with headquarters in Des Moines and several branch offices.

A number of hospitals in Iowa are backed by Lutheran groups. The A.L.C. is especially interested in Allen Memorial Hospital at Waterloo, and in the Lutheran Hospital at Fort Dodge. The number of homes for the aged has been increasing. Largest of these is the magnificent Good Samaritan Home (and hospital) at Mason City, Pastor E. M. Mueller, superintendent. Other Lutheran homes for the aged are found at Dubuque, Strawberry Point, and West Union.

Among the lay leaders of the Iowa Synod and the A.L.C. in Iowa the following might be mentioned: Gottlob Amman, the philanthropic founder of Frankenhilf, who then moved to Iowa to help found St. Sebald; F. Schack, who gave much of the ground and collected considerable sums for the placement of the college at Waverly; Professor O. C. Hardwig, who edited the *Wartburg Hymnal*; William Graening, long-time treasurer of the Iowa District, both before and after the merger into the A.L.C.; Fred Hagemann, who served as official attorney for the American Lutheran Church; Dr. C. H. Graening, physician and sur-

geon of Waverly, member and chairman of the Board of Christian Higher Education, both in the Iowa Synod and later in the A.L.C.; Ed Engelbrecht, banker of Waverly, and member of the Board of Trustees of the A.L.C.; Herbert Engelbrecht, assistant to the president at Wartburg College, councillor to National Lutheran Council, and formerly one of the vice-presidents of the A.L.C.; the Hon. Judge Henry Graven of Greene, Iowa, United States District Judge, and chairman of the Board of Pensions of the A.L.C. Because of his long interest in giving security to the pastors upon their retirement, Judge Graven became the originator of the A.L.C. contributory pension plan. Walter Voecks is head of the Lutheran Mutual at Waverly. Founded in 1879 as a mutual aid society, this was reorganized in 1938 as an old line type life insurance company for all Lutherans.

As the first century of her existence becomes history, the American Lutheran Church in Iowa displays a healthy life. She has remained theologically conservative, definitely Lutheran, but irenic and approachable. She has enjoyed remarkable growth in numbers, equipment, and influence. Her horizons have been expanding tremendously in education and social service. She does her full part in helping to support the foreign mission work of the A.L.C., and is happy to have furnished no less than eight workers at present on the New Guinea field — three pastors, four lay workers,

and one doctor. She shares in the fine youth program of the A.L.C. and offers leadership training and Bible camp adventure to her young people.

In the matter of inter-church relationships, the American Lutheran Church is in fellowship with four other Midwestern Lutheran groups in the American Lutheran Conference. She shares in the common enterprise of two-thirds of the Lutherans of America in the National Lutheran Council, which has a number of service divisions operating in such fields as home missions, student service, Lutheran world relief, and service to those in the armed forces. She holds membership in the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. Professor J. Bodensieck of Wartburg Seminary returned in 1954 from three terms (six years) of service in Europe. He went originally as Protestant liaison representative (United States Military Government of Germany) to the Protestant churches of Germany. On subsequent assignments he served Lutheran churches of Europe as Theological Commissioner of the United States National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation. Mrs. Bodensieck initiated the spiritual ministry among displaced persons in the British Zone of Germany in 1946-1947, and later served for two years each in Vienna and Berlin as representative of the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation in the administration of refugee and relief work.

Although the merger of the American Lutheran Church is less than twenty-five years old, as these lines are being written a new merger is in process of negotiation between four of the five members of the American Lutheran Conference. This merger involves the American Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Free Church, and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church. The Report of the Joint Union Committee to the conventions of the negotiating bodies has just been published. It seems likely that the merger will be consummated before 1960. If present plans materialize, the new Iowa District of the merged church will cover the state of Iowa, and will boast 392 congregations with some 147,000 members.

As the members of the American Lutheran Church in Iowa celebrate the centennial of the former Iowa Synod, and of the founding of Wartburg Theological Seminary in 1954, they will look back with gratitude to Almighty God for the contribution which their church was able to make toward the good life in the state of Iowa and elsewhere. But they will also look forward with confidence, assured that greater and nobler service lies ahead.

"Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be. . . ."

ALBERT A. JAGNOW