

MICHIGAN DISTRICT
LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD
125 YEARS: 1881–2006

125th Anniversary



A COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY



THE MICHIGAN DISTRICT LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD 125 YEARS: 1881–2006

A COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

A 125th Anniversary causes us to remember the blessings granted by our Lord to his Church in Michigan. Moses told the children of Israel, “Remember the days of long ago, think of ages past.” (Deuteronomy 32:7)

“This booklet provides a few brief glimpses into *the days of long ago* in Michigan. It testifies to the faithfulness of our God whose grace has brought us to our present opportunities. May we continue to proclaim His saving Gospel to all generations!”

(Rev. Dr. C. Wm. Hoesman, President, the Michigan District, LCMS)

“Whatever has come to Michigan in 125 years has come through the hand of the Lord.” (Rev. Eldor Bickel)



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EARLY LUTHERANS IN MICHIGAN



In 1833, the Basel Mission Institute of Switzerland sent **Friedrich Schmid** “the pioneer Lutheran minister of Michigan” (Erickson, 1924), as its first missionary to the United States. A newly ordained pastor from Wurttemberg, Germany, Friedrich Schmid arrived in August 1833 and led the first Lutheran service in Michigan inside a Detroit carpenter shop. Schmid is credited with founding some 20 churches in Michigan, including parishes in Monroe, Detroit, Plymouth, Ann Arbor and surrounding areas. Rev. Schmid’s last parish was Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Ann Arbor where he served until his death in 1883. He is buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in Ann Arbor.

PREACHING &

St. Thomas Church Michigan Historic Site

The congregation, located just west of Ann Arbor, began under the leadership of Pastor Schmid. The present edifice comprises an 1874 church and 1965 additions.



TEACHING THE FAITH



Hart Schoolhouse Frankenmuth

Christian education has been a priority for Lutherans since the first immigrants came to Michigan. At Hart Schoolhouse in Frankenmuth, children learn what a “one room school house” was like in the early 1900’s.

MISSIONS AMONG NATIVE AMERICANS

During the **1830s AND 1840s**, German Lutherans settled in large numbers in the Saginaw Valley, Detroit, and Monroe. A prime objective of the missionaries was to work among the American Indian population. As Reverend Gilbert Otte (1955) put it, “their heroic intention was to make Michigan ... Christian.”

Luckhard Indian Museum in Sebewaing



1845 In July, three Lutheran missionaries, Reverend Johan J.F. Auchs, Reverend J. Simon Dumser, and Reverend George Sinke arrived in the Saginaw area. They were sent from Ann Arbor by Friedrich Schmid to evangelize the Chippewa Indians. Another Lutheran missionary in the Frankenmuth area was Friedrich August Craemer, a German Pastor who spoke and taught English. With the help of an English speaking interpreter of the Chippewa language. Pastor Craemer visited Chippewa villages to spread God's message to the natives (Deterding, 1995).

In **1846**, Bethany Lutheran Indian Mission was founded near St. Louis, Michigan by Pastor Joseph Clapp.

EXTENDING GOD'S MISSION THROUGHOUT MICHIGAN

In **1856**, the first Lutheran congregation, Immanuel Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, was established with Rev. Frederick Richmann installed as pastor.

Before **1880**, Lutheran Pastors, Bruss and Karrer, traveled north to establish missions in the northwest part of the state.

FROM “NORTHERN DISTRICT” TO MICHIGAN DISTRICT

1847 Michigan and other states form what was to become the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

1855 First convention of the “Northern District”

Congregations from Wisconsin and Michigan formed the new “Northern District;” the first convention was held in Wisconsin, but most delegates (13 congregations and 9 pastors) were from Michigan. Teachers from St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth and Trinity in Detroit also attended.

1874 Ontario joined Michigan as the “Northern District,” while Wisconsin became an independent district, taking the Upper Peninsula with it (in 1867, the Eastern half of the UP reunited with Michigan). By 1874, the number of Michigan congregations had grown to over 100 parishes. The reorganized “Northern District” met for the first time in Saginaw in 1875.

1878 Wisconsin and Ontario established separate districts, so for a few years Michigan alone was called, “The Northern District.”

1881 The Michigan District adopted its new name “without any recorded resolution which we can find” (Otte, 1955).



This unidentified photo of Michigan District pastors was most likely taken at Immanuel, Bay City in 1906 or 1911.

HIGHLIGHTS IN MICHIGAN DISTRICT HISTORY

1870s TO 1920s

1873 The **Evangelical Lutheran Deaf Mute Institute** was founded in Detroit by the combined efforts of Rev. J.A. Heugli and Rev. George Spechardt. Their work inspired others to ministry among the Deaf, and today there are 63 Deaf congregations in the US, and a number of Deaf schools throughout the world.

1890 German Americans made up the single largest foreign-born group in Michigan.

1901 The Church Extension Fund (CEF) was organized for the primary purpose of serving the congregations and entities of the Michigan District. CEF is a resource for the financing of new church buildings, the expansion of existing facilities, the purchase of church sites and other activities related to the Kingdom of God. Through the investments from God's people, CEF has grown into a Fund which today exceeds \$245 million in assets.

1918 "The First World War was undoubtedly a milestone" in the history of Michigan's German Americans. Loyalist tensions ran high, but many Lutheran pastors encouraged young men to enlist into the U.S. Army. St. Lorenz of Frankenmuth sent 62 men into the service, Trinity in Monroe sent 36, and Immanuel of Bay City sent 46 soldiers (Kilar, 2002).

The English language became standard for congregational worship, hymns, district publications, and convention proceedings. Lutheran schools began to teach only in English. Although English became the official language of the district, many churches continued German language services for several decades.

1924 *The Michigan Lutheran* began publishing with Issue #1 in September. The cover story was "St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Amelith."



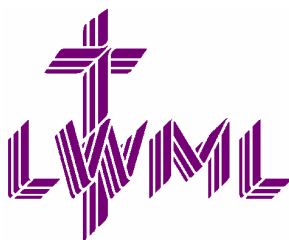


HIGHLIGHTS IN MICHIGAN DISTRICT HISTORY

1930s TO 1950s

1930 Michigan Lutherans celebrated the 400th Anniversary of the Augsburg Confessions with a parade down Woodward Avenue in Detroit, and a worship service at the Michigan State Fairgrounds. The service included a 1,500 voice choir and 4,000 children reciting the Apostles' Creed.

1946 The Michigan District Lutheran Women's Missionary League organized and joined the national LWML. An auxiliary organization of the LCMS, Michigan's league now includes 31 zones in the lower peninsula and part of the upper peninsula of Michigan. There are 345 congregational units and 361 societies with a membership of over 9,000. Its purpose has always included the support of missionary work through the collection of small "mite boxes" filled with spare change. The name refers to the small coins in the lesson of the widow's mite in Mark 12 and Luke 21.



1959 District congregations participated in the "Preaching-Teaching-Reaching" program, an intensive effort of inspiring and training pastors and lay people to share the Good News with family, friends, and neighbors.

HIGHLIGHTS IN MICHIGAN DISTRICT HISTORY

1960s

1963 Concordia Lutheran Junior College was dedicated on September 29 in Ann Arbor with a crowd of 15,000 attending, and a choir of 2,000 voices praising God in song. Since its beginning, Concordia has educated young men and women “for lives of service in the church and in the world.” Thousands of graduates have entered the preaching and teaching ministries in Michigan and throughout Synod.

1963 The Michigan District established “Michigan Lutheran College,” a vocational school located on Woodward Avenue in Detroit. The college continued to educate students until 1970.

1964 The Michigan District Convention, for the first time, began its current tradition of meeting on the campus of Concordia University.

1966 In June, the new District Headquarters building, located on Geddes Road in Ann Arbor, was completed. President Harry Krieger assumed a full-time presidency to manage the inclusion of several divisions of the District into one building. Before 1966, all presidents served “part-time” while also serving a parish.



The Michigan District Office at Geddes Road in Ann Arbor. The building is located across the road from the campus of Concordia University.

HIGHLIGHTS IN MICHIGAN DISTRICT HISTORY

1970s TO 1980s

1974 A doctrinal controversy regarding the “Nature and Function of the Holy Scriptures” erupted in St. Louis, and Michigan felt repercussions when several congregations withdrew to join the new “Seminex.” Members of those congregations who supported Synod joined to form a new parish, Christ Our Savior, Livonia. Today, it stands as one of the largest parishes in the district. “This controversy, in the end, strengthened Synod’s position on the Holy Scriptures,” commented Rev. Richard Schlecht.

1980 Michigan District celebrated 100 Years! Rev. Richard Schlecht, president at the time, remembers, “a great service was held at Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor . . . Dr. Weber . . . preached a powerful and pastoral sermon. The combined choirs of Trinity, Jackson and St. John, Rochester offered the great music of the church.”

1981 LCMS adopted a three-year convention cycle for Synod and Districts. Prior to that, in the 19th and early 20th century, the District held a convention every year - then every other year.



Pastors attending the 1906 District Convention.

1984 The District established the Ministerial Health Commission, now known as the Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support.

1985 “His Love-Our Response” campaign began with training at the District Offices. District President Richard Schlecht challenged the campaign coordinators to see 1985 as a “God-given time for renewal and mission.”

1988 was declared the “Year of Families.” The District Convention and *The Michigan Lutheran* emphasized Family Life.

HIGHLIGHTS IN MICHIGAN DISTRICT HISTORY

1990s TO CURRENT

1993 "In Touch" was the district theme in a successful campaign encouraging congregations to develop creative outreach projects in their communities - 55% of Michigan churches participated!

Concordia College celebrated its 30th anniversary of preparing men and women for "life of service in the church and in the world." The college has, throughout its history, prepared more men and women for the parish and teaching ministries than any other LCMS college across the nation.

1995 In September, additions and renovations to the district offices were dedicated as "The Michigan District Congregation Resource and Information Center." President John Heins delivered a message that concluded with "God bless this day ... may He bless this building and all that transpires in it to the glory of God. Amen."

2002 *Michigan In Touch* began publication in January 2002, replacing *The Michigan Lutheran*. The new magazine featured district-wide news with color photographs printed on glossy pages. In issue #3, District President, Rev. Dr. C. William Hoesman wrote, "Our greatest joy in District ministry is to see fulfillment in the hearts and lives of congregations, professional church workers, and congregational leaders." In the same year, the District established weekly "E-bulletins" and developed a District website to enhance communications.



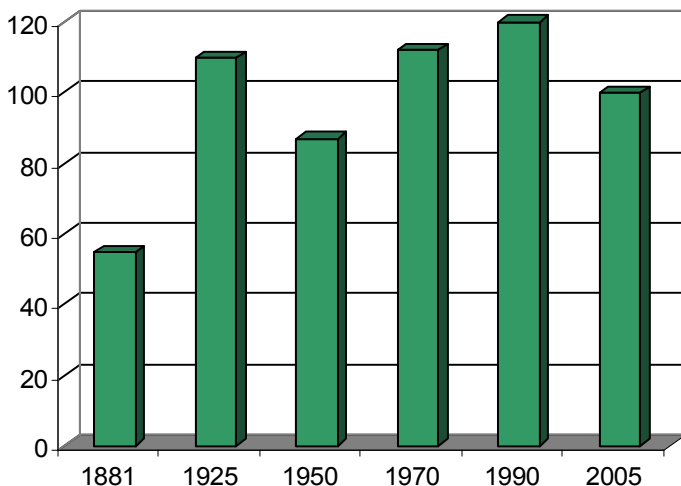
2003 The Michigan District Convention took the theme "Celebrating Christ's Mission: Near ... Far ... Forever ..."

MICHIGAN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS

125 YEARS OF GROWTH

The number of students in Lutheran day schools increased by 100% between 1930 and 2000.

Of all Lutheran teachers, the ratio of men to women changed from 100 to 1 in 1930, to 100 to 175 in 2000!



Why the jump in enrollment after 1924?

Did you know that between 1920 and 1924, the existence of Lutheran schools was threatened by a proposed amendment to force all children to attend public schools? Lutherans in Michigan and throughout the nation “rose to the occasion” and campaigned voters to defeat the amendment. As a result of their actions, Lutheran schools eliminated the German language in classrooms, began certification of teachers, and established an office of Lutheran School Superintendent.

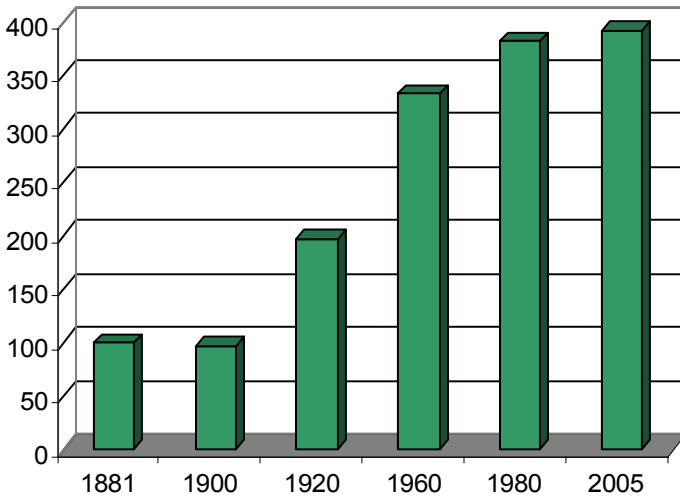


*2004 Beginning
Teachers Retreat at
Loon Lake*

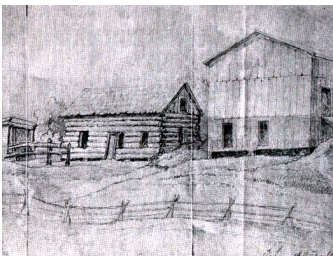
MICHIGAN CONGREGATIONS

125 YEARS OF GROWTH

The District has seen consistent growth in the number of congregations and new missions throughout the decades.



In 2004 alone, 14 new mission sites or congregations were dedicated to spreading His Word and serving His Kingdom.



*First Mission Log Cabin,
Frankenmuth*



MICHIGAN DISTRICT PRESIDENTS

NORTHERN DISTRICT

Rev. Ottomar Fuerbringer
(1854-1873)
Rev. J.A. Huegli
(1873-1875)
Rev. O. Fuerbringer
(1875-1882)

MICHIGAN DISTRICT

Rev. Joseph Schmidt
(1882-1891)
Rev. Gustav Spiegel
(1891-1912)
Rev. Theodore Engelder
(1912-1914)
Rev. Emanuel Mayer
(1914-1924)
Rev. John Schinnerer
(1924-1942)
Rev. Andrew Zeile
(1942-1957)
Rev. W. Harry Krieger
(1957-1965)
Rev. Edwin Weber
(1965-1969)
Rev. Richard L. Schlecht
(1969-1985)
Rev. John L. Heins
(1985-1997)
Rev. C. William Hoesman
(1997-current)



ARCHIVAL & HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Libraries and Archives where you can find Michigan District—LCMS records and artifacts:

- Michigan District Archives, Zimmerman Library, Concordia University, Ann Arbor
- Historic Trinity Lutheran Church, Detroit
- The Indian Mission Museum, Sebewaing
- The Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor
- The Archives of Michigan, Lansing

Publications and media that provide more extensive histories about Lutherans in Michigan:

Eberhard, David (1988). *Lutherans in Michigan and Detroit*.
Historic Trinity Lutheran Church website:
www.historictrinity.org/luthmid.html.

Deterding, John G. (1995). *Living with Jesus: A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saint Lorenz*. Frankenmuth, Michigan.

Erickson, Robert E. (1924). *History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of...Michigan*. Detroit: Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Kilar, Jeremy W. (2002). *Germans in Michigan*. Michigan State University Press.

Luckhard, Charles, F. (1952). *Faith in the Forest*. Published by C.F. Luckhard, Sebewaing, Michigan.

Michigan Memories: Things Our Fathers Have Told Us. (1985).
Published by the Michigan District of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Otte, Gilbert T. (1955). *Te Deum Laudamus! 1855-1955*.
Published by the Michigan District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

98TH DISTRICT CONVENTION
MICHIGAN DISTRICT, LCMS
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, ANN ARBOR
JUNE 25–28, 2006

CELEBRATING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

REDEEMED ...



REFRESHED ...

READY ...

MICHIGAN DISTRICT, LCMS

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