

A History Of NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN ACADEMY

A Mission In Christian Education On The Dakota Plains

by Prof. Wayne Ten Broek

Forward

Previous histories of the Academy have appeared over the years. In 1939 the synod authorized the first such formal history for distribution among the synod's constituents. Its intent was to provide information as to the origin, purpose and ideals of the Academy and the service it was rendering to the Kingdom of God. It covered the history of the school from 1928 to 1941. It was written by a four man committee: R.A. Fenske, W. Meier, E. Gamm and G. Schlegel.

In 1951 in the observance of the synod's centennial, a history of the synod, "Continuing in His Word", was published. It contains a chapter on the Academy which updates the school's history to 1950. It was written by R.A. Fenske.

By far the most ambitious and complete history of the Academy appeared in 1992. It is a chronological record of the Academy story from its beginning in 1928 to its close in 1979. A project of the Academy Alumni Association, it was authored by Hans Johannsen assisted by his wife Charlotte, who are Academy alumni. It bears the title: "Like a Tree Planted by the River of Waters." Its research included information gleaned from the synod reports and proceedings, articles from the Northwestern Lutheran, Board minutes, old letters and the Synod Archives. More recently the historical section of this book appeared in the October 1993 edition of the WELS Historical Journal.

When approached on the matter of writing an Academy history for enclosure in the Dakota-Montana District's 75th anniversary booklet, the present writer was fully aware that he would be able to add little to the story already told. He also recognized the debt he owed to those who previously had researched the records of the past and without whose efforts this edition would not be possible. His only advantage lies in the long relationship he has had with the Academy. A native of the Dakota prairies, he spent 37 years of his public ministry in the Dakota-Montana District. He received his high school education at the Academy in the early thirties and for 26 years served as an instructor at the school up to the time of its closure in 1979.

When one's life has been attached so long and closely to the subject of his writing there is a likelihood of its bearing tint-marks of personal feelings and opinions. If such sentiments seem to show, it was not by the intention of the writer. It is rather his conviction that personal judgements on such recent history are premature. At a future time, when the Academy story can be viewed within the framework of what God has planned as our synod's role in the building of his Kingdom, there will be a better vantage point for unbiased appraisal and reflection. For the present an unfinished task beckons our attention: to spread the Gospel and to nourish souls and this within the framework which God in his wisdom has provided in our synod here and now.

Yet to have received the assignment to author this version of the Academy history I count as a unique opportunity. From a personal perspective it presents a means to express a long-felt debt of gratitude. It is to this humble institution and the training it afforded in my adolescent years that I owe the life of service God has privileged me to enjoy. The message of Christ's amazing grace which formed the core of all its training and instruction gave life its true meaning and served to awaken the desire to pursue full-time ministry. The years in the pastoral and teaching ministry God has privileged me to have are to be traced to the Wisconsin Synod's mission in Christian education on the Dakota plains. May the reading of this account serve to encourage a continuing interest in the cause and the importance of Christian education.

Sowers of seed. Feeders of lambs. These familiar pictures symbolize our work as laborers in Christ's vineyard. They help us see what happens in winning souls for Christ. The process is much like sowing and feeding. We sow the seed of the Gospel into the hearts of men. With this message, which is God's power for salvation, the Holy Spirit awakens faith. He calls and gathers sin-lost souls into the Holy Christian Church. But the process then continues. As a plant without water will droop and then die, so a faith without nourishment is not able to survive. We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. In order to live sanctified lives of service we need the nourishment of the Word. Therefore Jesus says: Feed my lambs. With the Gospel's power the Holy Spirit sanctifies and keeps us faithful Christians.

Jesus commissioned his followers both to sow and to feed. "Go ye...preach the Gospel to every creature." We are to plant the seed. "Teach them to observe everything I have commanded." We are to feed the lambs.

In response to the Savior's mission call our Lutheran forefathers began sowing the Gospel seed on the Dakota plains in the early 1900s. As promised, the seed took root and hungry souls were gathered into tiny parishes across the prairies. Now an even more challenging task confronted the early missionaries. How were they to provide nourishment for the flocks? Who would feed the lambs?

Since Reformation times thorough Christian training has been held to be the key to the future welfare of the Church. As early as 1516 Luther said: "This (lack of Christian training) is the total ruin of the Church, for if it is to flourish again we must begin by instructing the young." In the Preface to his Small Catechism he says: "Therefore I entreat you for God's sake...pastors and preachers, to devote yourselves heartily to your office, to have pity on the people who are entrusted to you, and help us inculcate the Catechism upon the young."

Guided by these principles the fathers of our Wisconsin Synod at the first Synodical Convention in 1850 resolved: "that every pastor...shall devote himself especially to the youth and conduct day schools, Bible hours, mission hours, etc." In 1920 when the Dakota-Montana District organized as a district of the Wisconsin Synod one of its primary concerns was how to provide for the Christian training of the young.

The Dakota-Montana District extended over a vast area, a region nearly three times that of the state of Wisconsin. In the early 1920s it held promise for great mission expansion. Settlers emigrating from Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and South Russia were

staking their claims in this land of opportunity. Large numbers of these early settlers came from Lutheran backgrounds and they welcomed the visits of our early missionaries as they began stretching the Gospel net across the plains. The work was seldom easy. Preaching stations were small, often meeting in homes and country school houses and separated by long and tedious miles over roads scarcely better than cattle trails. And therein lay one of the more perplexing problems for the early circuit riders.

To build a future church on a solid foundation the Christian training of its youth could not be neglected. But under the prevailing circumstances how was such training to be properly provided? The establishment of local parish schools was clearly not the answer. A viable alternative seemed to be a centrally located academy. Such an institution could make it possible for at least a nucleus of the youth to gain a sound Christian training. They in turn upon their return to their home parishes could serve as responsible leaders of the flocks. They could be a leaven. For those who wished to prepare for full time church work an academy would provide a way to receive their first years of instruction without being separated great distances from home. Thus the concept of an academy was born. It is an interesting story to recall how the Lord of the Church arranged the circumstances which led to the actual founding of Northwestern Lutheran Academy.

How the Academy Idea Became Reality

The Dakota-Montana District held its first meeting in 1922. Professor August Pieper read an essay on Christian education. In it he said, "But our church must not stop with Christian elementary education. The need of higher education is growing among us from year to year. It is just our public schools that are at variance with what is intrinsically Christian and becomes dangerous to our youth. Therefore we must also found Lutheran high schools for all our Lutheran boys and girls; otherwise they will be lost to our church and to Christ." At the next district convention in 1924 Professor Bliefert from Dr. Martin Luther College in an eloquent essay again pointed out the inadequacy of state schools for our Christian needs and said, "We Christians must more and more take the thought to heart that we establish Christian high schools for our Christian youth." With such encouragement the interest and desire for an academy within the Dakota-Montana District intensified. In its 1926 convention, the district petitioned the synod for an academy.

It was in this same time frame of the mid-twenties that a movement was mounting to update the

synod's educational system. State laws were beginning to require school attendance through the high school years. The fear was growing that such laws would eventually erode interest and concern for parish schools on the elementary level. The synod's resolve to sustain a well-trained laity might well be jeopardized. These concerns prompted the 1927 Synod Convention to take action. Its Committee on Education presented the following recommendation: "That Synod should authorize and subsidize the establishment of preparatory schools, or academies, in many parts of its territory, preferably according to conferences."

In response to this recommendation and the petition from the Dakota-Montana District the 1927 Synod Convention adopted the following resolutions:

- 1) Synod authorizes the founding of an academy in the Dakota Montana District.
- 2) Synod appoints the members of the district to select the place at which the academy is to be established.
- 3) Synod elects the Board of Regents for the academy.
- 4) Synod allows \$5000 for maintenance.

A synodically sanctioned academy, supported and supervised by the synod in every respect, had received its first life. A host of details needed attention if the school was to open, as intended, by September of the next year, 1928.

The newly elected Board of Regents consisted of four laymen: E. Mischke, A. Ottenbacher, E. Guenther, S. Thomsen, and three pastors: J. Schaar, S. Baer, K. Sievert. The board held its first meeting in Aberdeen on November 11, 1927. Professors E. Bliefernicht and H. Klatt of Dr. Martin Luther College were present as advisors as was the district President W. F. Sauer. The board issued a request for candidates for the school's first professor. It approved "Northwestern Lutheran Academy" as the school's official name. It called for a special district convention to select the site for the school's location.

The special district convention met at Watertown, South Dakota in January 1928. There were four offers of locations for the new school. Each offer included inducements for its selection. The offer from Mobridge included no less than 28 acres of land and a school building to be moved to the selected site. When the ballots were counted Mobridge received 51 votes, Roscoe 7, Bowdle 4, and Elgin 2.

Prior to this special convention E. Gamm, pastor of Zion congregation, sought for leads in Mobridge for establishing the Academy. Through these contacts the city's Commercial Club became interested in the Academy project. Through the efforts of its executive committee the Commercial Club became instrumental

in starting the Academy in Mobridge. It offered the choice of four possible sites of no less than 28 acres each and without cost to the school. Thus without any solicitation on the part of anyone in the Mobridge congregation the eventual location of Northwestern Lutheran Academy overlooking the scenic Missouri River valley became a reality. By August a landscape artist had completed plans for developing the site.

Similarly providential circumstances provided the school with its first building. The "West Side School," a two-story 48 X 50 foot frame structure was only 18 years old when it was put up for sale by the Mobridge Independent School District. Designed to serve 200 students it was no longer adequate to handle the city's growing school population. It had been replaced with a new structure in 1928. This vacated building was destined to serve in many ways throughout the Academy's history. It affectionately came to be known as the "White Building." Zion congregation purchased it for \$500.

The Board of Control also met in January 1928 to call the Academy's first professor and director. From a slate of eight candidates Pastor K.G. Sievert of Grover, South Dakota was elected. For 43 years he would remain a member of the faculty.

With the selection of a location and the election of the first professor plans were soon underway to begin classes in September. Two men would be chiefly responsible to achieve this goal. E. Gamm, the local pastor, would superintend the physical aspects of the early beginnings. Professor K.G. Sievert was in charge of setting up the academic program.

From its outset the Academy's purpose had been manifest. Its first catalog made that purpose plain: "to make a Christian high school education available to a greater part of the synod's congregations, this Academy shall serve primarily the congregations of the Dakota-Montana District." The institution offered three separate courses:

- 1) A four-year high school course for young men preparing for the ministry and desiring to enter Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin.

- 2) A four-year high school course for young men and women who desire to enter the teaching ministry and attend Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

- 3) A four-year high school course for young men and women who desire a general high school education under a distinctly Christian influence. By the time of graduation an Academy student held roughly twice as many credits as were required in a public high school. The courses ranged from Religion-History, Latin, German and English to Mathematics, Science,

Geography and Music. For the Academy's first year the enrollment was limited to the ninth grade. Professor Sievert taught 38 hours each week, including classes on Saturday morning. He also served as the school's administrator.

The first school year began on September 2, 1928 with the installation of Professor K.G. Sievert. The service was held in Riverside Park on the banks of the Missouri River. The school year itself got underway on September 5th in the leased facilities of West Side School, not yet moved to its future campus site. This building also served as the boys dormitory. Dormitory quarters for the girls as well as the dining hall and the living quarters for the matron-cook were located seven blocks away in a vacant hospital building.

These were no grandiose beginnings but they were a start. Board and room charges for boys for a year were \$120, for girls \$180. There was an additional charge of \$40 for those enrolled in the general high school course. The opening enrollment of 22 (all freshmen, though some were 16 to 18 years old) was larger than had been expected. Six students dropped out for various reasons during the course of the year.

There were great expectations for the oncoming year but disappointments were in store. During the summer members from St. Jacobi congregation in Glenham dug the basement for the White Building and the concrete work was completed. Zion congregation had purchased the White Building, but problems were encountered in moving the large structure to its new foundation. The building suffered extensive damage. The local congregation bore the cost not only of moving the building but also for repairing the damage, a liability of \$4500. And the Academy lost the use of the White Building for the major part of its second year as the building was being refurbished.

But there was good news too. In August 1929, the synod authorized the immediate calling of a second professor as well as a tutor for the year that would follow. Equally heartening was the synod's approval to build a dormitory with a central heating plant and of the construction of a professorage on campus.

The second school year began with the enrollment of 22 ninth and tenth grade students. Since the White Building was not available, the boys were housed in a rented residence in town. The auditorium and basement of Zion's church were used for classrooms. The school's dining room and the dormitory for the girls stayed in the vacated hospital. The Call for the second professor had not yet been answered. Professor Sievert's father, a retired teacher, provided

emergency teaching help. It was a difficult year. With the school scattered all over town, conditions were not conducive to proper supervision or stellar classroom achievement.

But better days were soon at hand. F.E. Traub, a veteran from earlier Dakota days and since then a pastor in Minnesota, accepted the Call to be the Academy's second professor. He was installed on November 3, 1929. Construction of the new dormitory and the heating plant as well as of the director's new home began in October. The dormitory cornerstone was laid in place with special services on Thanksgiving Day. By March all units were ready for occupancy. The boys settled into their new dormitory, the girls with their housemother moved into one of the second floor rooms of the White Building. Professor Sievert took up residency in the new professorage. A sense of stability had finally arrived.

The new dormitory was a two-story, 32 X 70 foot, brick structure. In its basement there were living quarters for the janitor and cook, a student dining area and kitchen, and space for the coal-fired general heating plant. Because of a funding shortfall the second floor had not been finished. The area, which was only roughed in, served as the general sleeping space for the boys. Student study rooms, tutors' quarters, a reception room and bathroom facilities were located on the first floor of the building. The total cost of the dormitory with its heating plant was \$22,949.17. Since this figure was slightly higher than the synod had appropriated, such things as basic furniture, furnishings, landscaping besides the unfinished second floor were items earmarked for the future.

The Academy had settled on its campus. It was an event worth celebrating. June 15, 1930 was set as the day of dedication for the boys' new dormitory. The school year had been extended a few days so the students could take part. From a hundred mile radius members of congregations came as did the pastors and delegates then attending the district convention in Roscoe sixty miles away. Sermons were delivered by Professor Bliefert from New Ulm, Pastor John Brenner of Milwaukee, Professor John Meyer from the Seminary and Professor K.G. Sievert. The chairman of the Board, Pastor Samuel Baer, read the dedicatory rites.

The entire appraised value of Academy property, land and all the buildings on campus, was set at \$50,000. Of this, the synod had invested \$28,000. The city, the local congregation and the district had given the rest in the interest of Christian education. Local and district support for this oasis of Christian training had developed early in its history.

Striving for Stability and Tested by Adversity—The Depression Years

Changes were less dramatic for the coming years as the Academy settled into an established routine. The White Building became strictly a classroom-administration building. Living quarters for the girls were shifted into the homes of the two professors, an arrangement which continued until 1949. As the school grew into a four-year institution tutors were assigned to teach the increasing number of classes. They lived in the boys dormitory and served as supervisors. Their example and encouragement led many of their charges to pursue the Call of full time ministry.

But the tutor system had drawbacks; it involved an ongoing change in teachers and in dormitory supervision. A sense of continuity was lacking. This situation was not improved when Professor Traub, after eight years on the faculty, returned to the parish ministry in 1936. Hilton Oswald, who had served as tutor for four years, received the Call of permanent professor and was asked to become the acting director of the school. He served in this capacity until 1939 when he followed a Call to Northwestern College. It was at this point that the Board of Control resolved to call a permanent director. The call went to Professor Reinholt Fenske. He had taught the ten previous years at Lutheran High School in Milwaukee and before that had served in the parish ministry in the Pacific Northwest. His tenure at the Academy began in July 1939 and extended to 1965, a period of 27 years. His years of service would leave a lasting imprint on the image of the Academy.

In the summer of 1939 the problem of continuity on the faculty was finally addressed. The Academy Board asked the synod to grant a third permanent professor. After intensive study the request was granted. Three professors and one tutor would now constitute the faculty. The three permanent men were now able to concentrate on specific teaching areas where continuity was especially important. Tutor Henry Meyer was called to become the third professor. In addition to his regular subject area he was given charge of the music department. The tutor, besides serving as dormitory supervisor and athletic director, was chiefly responsible for teaching mathematics.

But the story of the thirties would be incomplete without reference to the impact of the financial crash of 1932 and the crippling drought in the years that followed. Their effects left lasting marks on the Academy. Hopes for the school's existence flickered as mortgage foreclosures and sun-darkening dust storms drove farmers and ranchers from the plains, as wheat

sold for fifty cents a bushel and ranchers marketed their stock at five to ten dollars a head. Despite pleas to parents extolling the importance of Christian education Academy enrollments dropped drastically, from 32 students in 1931 to 17 in 1935. In 1939 there was but a single graduate. The cost of running the Academy had less than a three percent impact on the total synod budget, yet the 1933 convention studied a proposal to close the school. In the following year in an attempt to save \$800, the synod's trustees requested releasing the two tutors. The request was withdrawn. It would have forced the school to close. Efforts were made to cut costs in other ways. A stoker was installed to furnish heat by burning a cheaper grade of coal. A vegetable garden was planted. It was irrigated with water from the Milwaukee Railroad water lines which crossed the campus. Grasshoppers and Mormon crickets soon destroyed the little that grew.

These were trying times for the young Academy. Professors, tutors, staff and members of the board struggled valiantly with the daily problems. Parents bore extreme financial sacrifice to give their children a Christian education. For the students this was not a time for irresponsible or prolonged adolescence. It was a time to learn dependability, self-reliance, awareness of other people's needs and how to manage one's affairs. The duress of the times shaped lasting attitudes. Prudent foresight, careful management, conservative restraint became almost moral imperatives, maxims not to be forgotten even when better days returned. Yet through it all, the humble beginnings, the tiny student bodies, the trying times forged a family atmosphere which bound the students closely to their Alma Mater. For some it also awakened the desire to pursue the path to public ministry. The Lord clearly had not abandoned the Academy.

A Steady Hand during Days of Change The Early Fenske years

The 1940s mark the beginning of the Fenske era. The new director would soon be facing challenges unlike those of earlier years. With the nation's growing involvement in World War II the school would have to cope with shortages and cutbacks and increasing costs of everything. But there were pleasant problems too, such as the return of prosperity and growing enrollment

In the fall of 1940 under Professor Fenske's urging the board inaugurated a number of changes. Once a bandsman himself in Northwestern College days, Professor Fenske pushed for beginning an Academy band. (Until now piano lessons and basic choral

drills had been the extent of the music offerings of the school.) With borrowed money and donated instruments Professor Meyer began the band, a troop which in future years would march in festive parades and win prized trophies for excellence. It was also at this time that the *Academy Advocate* came into being. A mimeographed school paper it was the brainchild of three students, Jerome Albrecht, Wilbert Blumhart and John Lau. Some years later, *The Wildcat*, a student annual, made its appearance as a second publication. It became a popular pictorial review of each year's activities and a cherished keepsake of each student. Another change was in recruitment. Student groups began making singing excursions to neighboring congregations. And the school catalogs were distributed to widening circles to increase Academy awareness.

Student enrollments did increase. From 1939 to 1948 the number tripled, from 20 to 69. This gave rise to a new problem, a problem that really never went away throughout the Academy's history. Where and how could space be found to accommodate the growing numbers? Since neither funds nor materials were at hand to provide anything permanent, stop-gap solutions were made from year to year.

In 1940 the Academy secured its second professorage. The home of former Professor Traub was purchased for \$3000 to become the residence of Professor Meyer. Professor Sievert purchased his own home and received a rental subsidy. Professor Fenske occupied the professorage on campus. Second floor rooms in the Fenske and Meyer homes furnished housing for sixteen Academy girls.

The only building designed for regular student housing was the boys' dormitory and its space was beginning to be strained. The unfinished portion of the second floor was finished off in 1941. The janitor's quarters were moved out of its basement. Though beset with wartime restrictions and shortages, dormers were eventually installed in the attic and third story sleeping quarters were thus made available. Because of the growing student numbers in the mid-forties the kitchen-dining area became too small and had to be shifted to the White Building. The vacated space was utilized as added dormitory quarters.

In 1944 Professor Fenske sounded the first of many pleas in *The Northwestern Lutheran* asking the synod to provide its school with necessary facilities. When enrollments reached seventy, four and five boys were cramped into study rooms designed for two students. They mounted two flights of stairs to reach their attic sleeping quarters. When space in the professors' homes was no longer sufficient to lodge all the girls, some girls were quartered in the boys dormitory

basement. At one time there were as many as nineteen girls living there. It was a stop-gap remedy for a problem that demanded a better solution.

The solution came in 1947. At its August convention the synod, alarmed by the existing housing conditions, budgeted \$65,000 for a girls' dormitory. After much discussion and modification of plans a bid for \$104,093 was signed in June 1948. The dormitory was a two-story brick structure, designed to house 44 girls. It also had a matron's apartment, a lounge and reading room and a reception room. In the basement there were piano rooms, laundry room, and a recreation area. Generous donations in time, money, and materials from ladies' groups and individuals provided many of the furnishings for the building and its matron's quarters. The dormitory was dedicated on April 24, 1949. Pastor L. Koeninger of the synod's Board of Trustees was the guest speaker. In the closing hymn the assembly sang:

*Almighty God, at Thy command
We brought our need before Thee;
Thy gracious help is now at hand
In this new dormitory.
Our voices then we raise
In thanks and in praise,
Our Father, God, to Thee,
Who hast so wondrously
Vouchsafed to us this structure.*

The words came from a hymn, composed for the occasion by Mrs. H. Lau, wife of Pastor Lau, chairman of the Board of Control.

Other building plans and changes lay ahead. The major need was a new classroom-administration building. This need had become critical when the kitchen-dining hall had been shifted into the White Building. In this change over two large first floor classrooms had been lost. One of these, the science laboratory, was moved upstairs into the library room. The library was pinched into a smaller room and the remaining second floor classroom, measuring 23 X 28, became the assembly room and chapel area for a faculty and student body of nearly eighty people. Space still had to be found for two more classrooms. A temporary building, a 22 X 40 foot cement block barracks, in later years to serve as a garage, was built to furnish the needed classroom space. Oil burners were still not available in 1946. Hand-fired coal burning space heaters furnished heat for the barracks. Even so students wore winter garments and overshoes to class to shield against the chill. A new classroom building was clearly a top priority as the forties merged into the fifties.

The forties and fifties were years of growing enrollments, from 28 in 1940 to 70 in 1948. Although

there was a drop to 58 in 1949, the number rose phenomenally to 106 in 1954. The growth called for an increase in faculty. A second tutor was added in 1944 and a fourth professor in 1948. Rev. A. Schuetze, who had begun his ministry in the Dakotas and was now pastor in Thiensville, Wisconsin, accepted this professorship. In addition to his regular teaching duties Professor Schuetze served as the librarian and in 1953 was asked to become the first Dean of Students. The Schuetze family occupied the original campus professorage. Professor Fenske moved into the recently constructed Cape Cod style dwelling which had been authorized in 1948. With the erection of the girls' dormitory in 1949 a new position, that of matron or housemother, became an integral part of the Academy family. Through the years many noble ladies would occupy this position, but the tenure of Mrs. Lottie Traub, the widow of former Professor Traub, was the longest. Besides having her as a housemother many Academy students received their first piano lessons under her direction. She served from 1950 to 1962 when she suffered a stroke.

The high point of the fifties was the construction of the long-awaited and sorely needed administration-classroom building. Planning for this structure had begun in 1944, although actual construction did not begin until the fall of 1951. Funds for the project were slow in coming. After the war in the mid-forties, synod had undertaken its Centennial Building Fund collection with a goal of a million dollars. Its purpose was to alleviate the crowded conditions in most synodical schools. The collection fell short of its goal by a quarter million. Pleas to complete the collection continued into the spring of 1951. Finally at its August 1951 convention, the synod authorized the beginning of construction at Mobridge. Additional funds as needed were to come from Church Extension Fund offerings once that fund had reached a goal of \$400,000.

The contract for building was awarded to Kyburz Construction Company of Aberdeen, South Dakota. The bid came to \$274,500. Construction began on September 21, 1951. Nearly a year and half later, on February 9, 1953, the building was occupied by students and faculty. It was a joyous day of thanksgiving in Academy history.

A second contract, this one for a pipe organ, was awarded to the Wicks Organ Company. In that time and for this western area a pipe organ was not a common instrument. Its cost was underwritten by two faithful friends of the Academy, Mrs. Sperling of St. Martin's in Watertown, South Dakota, and another anonymous donor.

Once major construction got underway the progress was slow, often delayed by inclement weather and government restrictions on materials. It should be mentioned that one important part of the project was already in place and was functioning. The new central heating plant, fueled by heavy oil, had been installed in 1950. This had become a necessity when the old coal burning furnace proved totally inadequate to supply the heat needed for two dormitories and the White Building.

Meanwhile other improvements were receiving attention. The dining area in the White Building was enlarged. A new entry was built and a cook's apartment was added. In the boys' dormitory the basement floor was tiled and the showers and lavatories were refurbished. With the addition of a canteen-candy store and equipment for a game room, the area which once had been the kitchen-dining area became a welcome recreation room for the boys.

It was the occasion for district-wide rejoicing when the new Administration-Classroom Building was dedicated on April 26, 1953. Over 900 people from all parts of the district filled every available seat. Professor C. Schewpe of Dr. Martin Luther College delivered the address and Pastor H. Birner, chairman of the Board, read the dedicatory rites. A mass choir of over 200 voices under the direction of Professor Meyer sang praises to God. In an evening service with Pastor Albrecht speaking and W. Nolte from Mankato, Minnesota, presenting a sacred organ concert and a mass choir together with a children's choir singing praises, the new pipe organ was set aside for God's glory.

The new building so long in planning and construction was well suited for a student body of roughly 150 students. Its classroom area included, in addition to its five full-sized classrooms, a faculty room, a president's office, an assembly-chapel room, and a nicely furnished science laboratory. The gymnasium with locker rooms and showers for boys and girls compared favorably in size with those of other high schools in the area. The gymnasium wing also included a stage and storage areas, affording space for rehearsals, concerts, dramatic productions, as well as providing a focal assembly area for larger gatherings and conventions. A unique arrangement made it possible to move the console of the pipe organ from its location in the assembly-chapel room through a narrow passage way into the gymnasium. Thus it was possible to enjoy the use of the pipe organ in either area.

The new Administration Building spurred new interest and growth for the Academy. Enrollments climbed from 83 in 1953 (year of dedication) to 99 in

1954 to a then all-time high of 117 in 1957. The increases brought renewed growing pains in dining hall and housing facilities. Remedies for these would be slow in coming.

Changing ministries and new professorships brought new faces to the faculty. In 1953 the Academy received its fifth professorship and the funds for a professorage. That same fall after a fifteen year tenure on the faculty Professor Meyer accepted a call into the parish ministry. His position as head of the music department was filled by Professor W. Nolte. When Professor Nolte's arrival was delayed until he could complete his school year in Mankato, temporary music help was supplied by William Birsching, then a student at Dr. Martin Luther College. At the end of the 1953-54 school year Professor Schuetze asked to be relieved of his duties as the Dean of Students. In July 1954 Pastor Wayne TenBroek, a 1935 Academy graduate and at the time pastor in the Henry-Florence parish in eastern South Dakota, accepted the call to be Dean and Latin instructor. He would remain at the Academy until its close in 1979. The faculty now had reached its intended size of five professors and two tutors. One tutor was responsible for dormitory supervision, the second was given charge of the athletic program. Each tutor had teaching assignments.

Holding the Course Through the Sixties The Close of the Fenske Era

The fifties and sixties were times marked with high hopes as well as disappointments. The return of affluence and prosperity in the postwar years carried mixed blessings in their wake. Much is in the record of the change and restlessness of this period. Old traditions were attacked, past values were challenged, new life-styles came into vogue. Life at the Academy was not exempt from the stresses which came with the spirit of the times. In the effort to stay a steady course there were fluctuations of highs and lows. Some of this was reflected in the enrollments. But other factors also played a part in number fluctuations. Upward surges can often be accounted for by the larger student numbers coming from more distant places. In 1955 ten different states were represented in the student body of 115. Such surges were not constant. Larger numbers caused housing overflows and housing overflows created supervision problems. When the White Building had to be pressed into service to accommodate an overflow in boys, there was no provision for additional supervision. In 1957 the synod was again memorialized for more dormitory space for the boys. The request was delayed until a more propitious time.

Despite such a disappointment there were bright spots. The synod did allow an additional tutor to assist in the music department. (By this time there were 65 piano students.) This tutor was able to help with dormitory supervision. Another encouragement was the larger number of students continuing their studies into full-time church work. In the period during and just after the war this number had been minimal. By the mid-fifties nearly half the student body indicated their intention to enroll at Northwestern College or Dr. Martin Luther College.

The late fifties brought further faculty changes. In 1956, after an eight year stay at the Academy, Professor Schuetze returned to the pastoral ministry. Professor V. Weyland succeeded him as librarian and professor of German and history. Professor Weyland was not installed until January 1957. Tutor D. Kuske served as an emergency instructor during the first semester. In the fall of 1958 Professor Nolte followed a Call to Winona, Minnesota. Tutor F. Zabell served as music director for the 1958-59 school year. In the fall of 1959 Professor William Birsching became the music director and instructor in English and geography. The 1955 Synod Convention had granted two new professorships but there had been a delay in filling these positions. The first of these vacancies was filled in 1959 when Professor T. Pelzl was called to be the first full-time athletic director of the school. His coming answered a long-felt need.

Through the years, long before the Academy had its own gymnasium, the students had sought outlets for physical activity. On an outdoor court often buffeted by wind and piled with snow drifts they had practiced basketball. They had pitched horseshoes, kicked footballs and batted softballs. They had competed in intramural games with local high school teams. Each year they played a few games against nearby schools. For lack of adequate practice facilities such games usually proved to be unequal contests. Even after practice sessions were held on in-town courts there was little in the Academy athletic program to compare it with that of neighboring schools. The high point of the athletic year came on Memorial Day. A school holiday was declared and the classes competed with each other in day-long field day events. Such traditions were to change once the school had its own gymnasium and a full-time coach. Basketball for both the boys and girls remained the chief interscholastic activity. The quality of play improved and contests became more competitive. In time track was added to the program and a cinder running track was developed. Intramural play continued throughout the school year in regular physical education classes. In time conference play was

arranged on a limited scale. The apex of the athletic year came when the boys' basketball team took its annual trip to Wisconsin to participate in the Lutheran Invitational Tournament.

Enrollments in the sixties did not measure up to expectations. Population on the plains was declining. Fewer numbers were managing larger acreages and families were moving elsewhere in pursuit of greener pastures. The 1960 communicant membership of the district stood at 7,500. A lingering doctrinal dispute also disrupted the flow of students from several key congregations. One encouraging sign was the continuing influx of students from Nebraska, Arizona, Washington and even from the far-off California Mission District. But with an average enrollment of roughly 90 students it was difficult to make plans for future needs. To remedy the situation recruitment efforts were stepped up. "Academy Day," a visiting day for seventh and eighth graders was introduced, a Ladies Auxiliary was organized, an Academy filmstrip was developed, and the Academy traveling choir made recruitment tours to ever widening circles of congregations. There were improvements designed to better student morale. In the dining hall a cafeteria line replaced family style serving, a change which was welcomed by the students. The boys dormitory, its walls marred by years of abusive overcrowding, received a new look when the women of the district held a painting bee in 1962. Even the countryside took on a new and more inviting look as Lake Oahe, formed by the backwaters of the dam ninety miles downstream, began filling in the lowlands below the Academy campus. Within a few years the wide expanse of blue water would be an inspiring sight and would serve to suggest the theme for the school's 50th anniversary: "Like a Tree Planted by the River of Waters".

In 1964 permission was granted to call the seventh professor. This man was to become the Dean of Students. Professor Ten Broek who had served in this position since 1954 assumed a full classroom teaching assignment. Pastor R. Buss, who had served as tutor previously and had since that time been pastor in Reeder and Hettinger, North Dakota, accepted the Call. He was installed in January 1965. A recently constructed home near the campus was purchased as a professorage.

Despite the static enrollment figures of the sixties changes did occur on campus. When prospects for a new boys' dormitory loomed less and less likely, an alternative was pursued. The synod's Board of Trustees released \$15,300 for a complete renovation of the old dormitory. This project was completed during the summers of 1965 and 1966.

A second project, no less urgent and even more ambitious, got underway. For over twenty years the first floor of the White Building had housed the school's refectory. There had been an ongoing need for a more modern and suitable facility. Lack of funds and problems with architectural designing had resulted in delays. Permission to proceed was finally granted and ground-breaking ceremonies were conducted on January 12, 1966. The multipurpose building was designed to provide pleasant dining facilities for 200. It also furnished space for a student union, a publication room, and apartments for staff personnel. This was to be the last major building project for the Academy campus, as it was the last major project to be launched under the leadership of Professor R.A. Fenske. In February 1966, he announced his retirement.

The sixties saw several changes in personnel. Mrs. Lottie Traub had served as matron and piano teacher since 1950. In February 1962, she suffered a stroke and was unable to continue. Mrs. H. Kunde finished out the year as her replacement. Mrs. Orpha Lau became the next housemother and served until 1965. She was succeeded by Mrs. Irene Rauschke who remained through the 1967-68 school year. A new position, that of school secretary, was begun in 1962. An early Academy graduate, Mrs. Melvin Hepper, was the first to occupy this position.

As has already been noted, Professor Fenske had announced his retirement in February 1966. He had served the Academy for 27 years. Both the Academy family and the district at large honored the Fenske's with anniversary observances. They would spend their retirement years in Colorado, not to return again to the school, which he had guided through the changing decades of drought and depression, wartime shortages and postwar adjustments.

Intensive Efforts towards Growth The Malchow Era Begins

It was a different day in the land and for the Academy as the process got underway to call the Academy's second full-time president. The board named Professor Sievert the Interim Director. He served in that role for next two years as the call for a new president was extended sixteen times.

During the interim-directorship of Professor Sievert the construction of the Student Union-Refectory was completed. Its cost came to \$211,680. It was formally dedicated on October 22, 1966. The chairman of the synod's Board of Trustees, Pastor Harold Wicke, preached the sermon on the theme, "Finished Building-Unfinished Task." That theme was a harbinger

ger of events yet to come. Through the efforts of the ladies of the district and by gifts from individuals the Student Union was furnished with draperies and furniture. With the completion of this project the Academy stood in a good state of repair. With its dormitories filled to their capacity, 115 students could be comfortably accommodated.

The 1967-68 school year marked the Academy's 40th Anniversary. The school observed this milestone on graduation day, May 31, 1968. Pastor E.R. Gamm was the guest speaker for the occasion. He had been the pastor of Zion congregation at the time of the Academy's founding. He had played an important role in attending to the school's physical needs during its first years. In the same service Professor Sievert's forty years of service at the Academy was recognized. No one would surpass the years of dedicated service he had rendered to this school which had been the focus of his ministry.

Vital issues faced the Academy's Board of Control as it began calling a new director. The synod's commitment to the school was plain enough. Over the years buildings had been built, teachers had been trained, year by year increasing subsidies had been appropriated to maintain the school. What was expected was a greater commitment throughout the district to use the school for the Christian training of its youth. In its first forty years the enrollments had rarely reached the hundred mark, and even when that number had been reached there was little likelihood it would be sustained. As the board sought ways to cultivate a deeper understanding and appreciation for the school, one solution seemed to lie in developing a more vigorous and far-reaching recruitment effort. With this goal in mind, the Lord led the board to call Pastor Daniel Malchow as the president. It was the second time he had received the Call. The Lord led him to accept and he was installed on August 27, 1968.

An aggressive, energetic spirit characterized Professor Malchow's presidency. His goal was to awaken a renewed interest in the school and to redefine its image. Symbolic of this goal was the adoption of a new Academy seal. The seal featured an alert Wildcat (the Academy's mascot) striding on the east bank of the Missouri River and bearing on his back the cross of Christ. The imagery symbolized the purpose of the school, to prepare Christian youth for their role as members of God's kingdom and ready to bear the message of Christ's cross into the world.

A number of new ventures were inaugurated to increase interest and enrollment. The *Academy Bulletin*, a newsletter about the Academy and its activities,

was circulated throughout the district. It was also sent to interested congregations in the Nebraska, Pacific-Northwest, and Arizona-California Districts.

Steps were taken to seek and eventually to gain state accreditation. This opened the door to a wider range of student activities. Teams became eligible for competition in regular conference play. Music and choral groups, as well as students interested in drama, could now participate in a wide range of state-sponsored programs. These new outlets for achievement enhanced student life and helped to widen an awareness of the Academy and its program.

In spreading the Academy story it had long been the practice to arrange choir tours to congregations within reasonable traveling distances. Car caravans were the form of transportation that was available. When the Academy acquired a school bus in 1970 it became possible to embark on longer tours. In 1970 the choir traveled to the Pacific-Northwest District. In following years its travels took the choir to Nebraska, Montana and even into Canada. As they sang the Lord's praises in sacred concerts and mingled with the families of the hosting congregations, the young choir members spread the message of what the Academy had to offer. Under the Lord's blessings these renewed recruitment efforts began bearing fruit. In 1968 there were 102 students. This number grew steadily and reached an all time high of 133 in 1975

The early seventies saw a number of changes in faculty and staff. In 1970 Professor Buss accepted a Call to teach English at Dr. Martin Luther College. Pastor P. Wilde from Lake Mills, Wisconsin, succeeded him as Dean of Students. At the end of the 1970-71 school year Professor Sievert announced his retirement. Tutor R. Georg, an assistant instructor, was his successor as science instructor. In 1970 Mrs. Mary Majoros from Ontario, Canada, became the matron.

Mr. Robert Wright from California accepted the position as Business Manager, a new position on the staff.

When Professor Sievert retired in 1971 he had completed 43 years of faithful service on the Academy faculty. He had spent the entire 50 year span of his public ministry in the Dakota-Montana District, a truly unique event in this district of frequent pastoral changes. Professor Sievert's retirement was observed with a special worship service of thanksgiving. A plaque in recognition of his long service was placed in the main hall of the Academy Administration Building.

Two professorages were added to the complex of Academy homes in the early seventies. A new home for the president was built near the Academy's main

entrance. Directly across the street a home became available and was purchased as the home for the new dean. The former Fenske dwelling became Professor Georg's residence. The original Academy professor-age now was the home of the custodian.

The larger enrollments of the seventies again put a strain on dormitory facilities. Expanding athletic and music programs were also in need of more space. If further growth was expected these were clearly problems that called for a solution. But before embarking on a major building program, the synod in 1971 called for a restudy of the Academy's role in the worker training program.

Urgency for this study intensified when the state fire marshal declared the White Building unsafe for further student use. Since the erection of the new dining hall the White Building had been pressed into service as a music practice hall. Now with the fire marshal's ruling a real crisis was at hand. A feasibility study was authorized to examine the options. It concluded that it would be cost prohibitive to bring the White Building up to fire code. As an alternative the study suggested either shifting the music hall into the gymnasium and building a new gymnasium, or building a separate music hall. The results of this study became part of the assigned restudy of the Academy's role.

As the Academy Board began its assignment a number of significant statistics came under scrutiny. The entire communicant membership of the Dakota-Montana District was less than 9000. The enrollment in Christian Day Schools, of which there were four in the district, was 199. Though the ratio of Academy enrollees to district communicant membership compared favorably with that of Lutheran high schools in more populated areas of the synod, yet the fact remained that the per student costs for running the Academy were high and on the increase. It was also a fact that nearly half of the Academy students came from beyond the borders of the district. The study also zeroed in on the number of Academy students enrolled in the worker training program. The sentiment was growing that synod subsidies should not be spent to support general high school education and this was gaining more and more support as an increasing number of area Lutheran high schools were being established in other areas of the synod.

At the 1973 Synod Convention the Commission on Higher Education and the Academy Board of Control presented its restudy of the Academy's role. *The Northwestern Lutheran* reported the synod's reaction to this report: "The delegates directed the Academy board to make projections for a maximum on-campus

enrollment of 200 to consist almost exclusively of students preparing for the work of the church. A general Christian high school education would continue to be offered, but the Academy was encouraged to solicit and receive direct support from individuals and congregations associated with the school for general education students." During the 1973-74 school year the firm of Boettcher and Ginnow, Inc. of Neenah, Wisconsin, was engaged to develop the master plan requested by the synod.

From 1972 to 1974, as the Academy experienced its years of greatest growth, the entire campus took on a different look. An expanding range of extra curricular activities became available. Expanded programs in athletics, music and dramatics were introduced as outlets for student activity and achievement.

In 1974 Professor C. Lemke succeeded Coach Pelzl as athletic director. By this time football had become a part of the school's athletic program. With state accreditation it was now possible to compete in regular conference play in football, basketball, and track. This served to whet the interest and incentive of the young athletes and they responded by winning their share of trophies. At a state track meet in 1974 the Academy mile relay set a state D record.

The girls too enjoyed the advantages of interscholastic competition. Their highest achievement came in 1976 when the team returned from the girls' state B tournament with the runner-up trophy. But perhaps even more widely acclaimed were the performances of the Academy's tumbling team. Under the tutelage of Janine Vasold, who served as music teacher and girls coach from 1972 to 1974, their acrobatic routines delighted the crowds at the half times of basketball games.

It came as a real enhancement to the Academy's athletic program when an anonymous gift of \$10,000 was received to resurface the Academy track. When the paving was finished in the summer of 1975 the new all weather track was regarded as one of the best in the entire area. This fine track encircling the well tended gridiron led a local sports pundit to label the facility the Academy Sports Complex.

An increasing range of musical activities opened up for the students in the early seventies. Keyboard lessons continued to be offered to all who were interested. Everyone took part in the student body chorus. Those with special talents were encouraged to take part in A Capella Choir, the Boys and the Girls Glee Clubs. All these groups performed at regularly scheduled concerts in the Academy Auditorium. Smaller choral groups went on choir tours. A special treat for the young singers came with the invitation to join in

the annual Lutheran Choral Festival. These festivals featured choirs from our Lutheran high schools in Minnesota and Wisconsin. In the fall of 1977 the Academy even hosted such a festival. About 180 singers representing a dozen Wisconsin Synod high schools got a taste of western hospitality as they took part in the Mobridge festival.

The growing excellence of the band and the development of the Drum, Bugle and Fife Corps were further aspects of the Academy music program. Professor William Birsching had taken the lead in developing the music program and rich rewards crowned his faithful efforts. The music delighted the appreciative audiences, prizes were won at music contests, and the brisk routines of the marching band and the well drilled maneuvers of the flag twirlers won the applause of all who watched. The excellence of the young performers was attested by the high ratings they received in competition. Like the choir, the Academy band also enjoyed the fellowship which came with participation in the Tri-State Lutheran Band Festival. In March 1973 the Academy played host to this festival.

Dramatics was the third major extracurricular outlet open to the students. Over the years stage night presentations of one act plays had provided in-school entertainment and training for more serious public performances. One of the earliest of these was the 1957 student production of Gilbert and Sullivan's "HMS Pinafore." In the years that followed other musicals and plays challenged the abilities of the student actors and evoked the appreciation of the audiences. In 1975 the Senior class play, "Coming Round the Mountain" was entered in state competition where it gained a Number One rank and two of its players were awarded superior ratings. Professor Wilde had the satisfaction of coaching the young thespians to their winning performance.

As the Academy rejoiced in the progress with which the Lord was blessing the school, there were ongoing changes in campus personnel. In 1972 Robert Wright retired. Robert Travis succeeded him as business manager. Later he also assumed management of the food service department. After Mrs. Majoros' resignation in 1973, Esther Van Dyk became the housemother. Two new instructors joined the faculty in the mid-seventies. In 1974 Pastor H. Schewe became the school's eighth professor. In 1975 upon the resignation of Professor Georg, Mr. A. Jeffers accepted the call to fill the vacancy in science and physical education. State accreditation required all permanent members of the faculty to become state certified. This usually called for at least a quarter's attendance at a state college. When Professors Schewe and Jeffers

had fulfilled this requirement the Academy held the status of a fully accredited institution. A new home was built to house the Jeffers' family. The Schewes occupied the Ten Broek residence which became available when Professor Ten Broek purchased his own home.

Changed Conditions Alter Past Patterns The Academy Era Ends

It has already been stated that the synod had determined 200 students as the enrollment needed to warrant the capital funding envisioned for new and remodeled facilities. In September 1974 the Academy Board reviewed the master plan developed by the Boettcher-Ginnow firm. The Commission on Higher Education (CHE) endorsed the plan and in August 1975 the plan was adopted by the synod. Euphoria was in the air.

The Boettcher-Ginnow plan called for an outlay of \$1,805,000 in three phases. Phase one, costing \$1,095,000, projected the construction of a music facility, an athletic facility, and a remodeling of the Administration-Gymnasium. Phases two and three called for building and remodeling dormitory facilities large enough to accommodate 200 students.

It was now for the CHE to put these proposals into effect "according to schedule if at all possible" (to quote the wording of the resolution). It was no simple assignment. The 1975 convention had voted large sums for mission expansion. It had approved building programs at other worker training schools. A spiraling inflation and a looming budgetary deficit further complicated the problem. For the CHE it became a question of deciding how much and where synodical dollars could accomplish the most in producing future church workers.

When viewed in the role of becoming a purely worker training school, the Academy's request for a plus million dollar building program proved difficult to defend. The Academy had been producing about five percent of the students entering our worker training colleges. Its per student cost was roughly twice that of a larger synod prep school. Nor could the fact be disregarded that after its peak enrollment years the numbers had again started to decline and students in the pastor-teacher track were on the decrease. From the Southwest and the far West appeals were being heard to move the Academy to an area where there was a greater growth potential.

Such considerations prompted the CHE to reverse its 1975 endorsement of the Academy's master plan for expansion. Its revised recommendation to the

1977 Synod Convention was: Plan the removal of Northwestern Lutheran Academy to a new site and investigate the possibility of offering the campus to the Dakota-Montana District for a regional Lutheran High School. When the synod met in August all previously approved plans for expansion at the Academy (as well as at the Watertown and New Ulm preparatory schools) were suspended until a decision could be reached as to the future of these schools.

Classes resumed in September with an enrollment of 123. It was the golden anniversary year of the Academy. The theme selected for the celebration was: "Like A Tree Planted by the River of Waters." The scenic location of the school overlooking the waters in the Missouri River valley lent substance to the picture of the Psalmist. But there was a richer reason for this theme. Fifty years before a merciful God had led Wisconsin Synod people to plant this tree, this oasis of Christian knowledge, in this region far removed from the synod's heartland. For fifty years God's truth had permeated like a leaven all the subjects taught and had equipped young believers as workers in Christ's kingdom. Each year for fifty years, as fruits of the tree which had been planted, her graduates had gone forth as witnesses of the Gospel's power in their lives.

During the course of the anniversary year President Malchow and Dean Wilde were honored with a service of thanksgiving for their 25 years of service in the Lord's vineyard. The commencement concert and graduation exercises took recognition of the Academy's golden jubilee. In a fitting testimony of honor Professor emeritus K.G. Sievert served as the guest speaker for the occasion. As a close to the anniversary year festivities the Alumni Association hosted the first all-school reunion in July. About 450 people representing classes from early years and late returned to praise God for the blessings they had received from their Alma Mater. In view of the proposal to discontinue the Academy as one of the synod's worker training schools, 168 alumni signed a petition asking the synod to continue its support of the Academy.

The year 1978 marked the district's final efforts to forestall the Academy's closure. In a special January convention the district resolved to assume responsibility to fund the building program upon which future growth depended. Its first phase was to be the replacement of the music hall. By June the congregations had pledged \$177,500 towards this endeavor. It was an encouraging sign and hopes were stirred for the synod's favorable reaction and continuing support.

But events would soon occur which would discourage whatever hopes there were. In July 1978 the synod met in a special session and took a heroic step to

solve the pressing need for space on the New Ulm and Watertown campuses. It voted to purchase Champion High School in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin at the cost of nearly three million dollars. Martin Luther Academy in New Ulm was directed to begin its 1979-80 school year on this new campus. The first year of operation would cost half a million dollars. When these costs were factored into its regular budgetary responsibilities the synod was face to face with some serious financial pressures and decisions.

In October the CHE Planning Committee met to map a program for the future. Its completed report, though tabled at the time, left little doubt as to its plans for Northwestern Lutheran Academy. The school should be offered to the district as an area Lutheran high school; if this did not materialize the school was to be closed. The rationale for this proposal was the Academy's apparent lack of growth potential and the small number of its graduates continuing in our worker training colleges.

As the 1978-79 school year proceeded into its second semester the signs did not improve. In January the Program Planning Committee of the CHE revised its report to read: "That NLA discontinue operation as a synodical institution, effective with the completion of the 1979-80 academic year". Academy representatives on the Planning Committee took strong exception to this proposal and formulated a minority report. Their report recommended that the synod continue subsidizing the budgetary operation of the school as a worker training institution while accepting the district's offer to assume responsibility for future capital expenditures. Both the majority and minority reports were to be heard at the forthcoming August Synodical Convention.

As the school year drew to a close a number of instructors accepted Calls. Professor Lemke received the call to coach and teach at Martin Luther Preparatory School in Prairie du Chien. Dean Wilde returned to the parish ministry in Escanaba, Michigan. Miss Juroff, in charge of girls' athletics, accepted a Call to Wisconsin. With the Academy's future in a state of uncertainty no authorization was given to fill any of these vacancies or those that were to follow. When the class of 1979 graduated on May 24, there was little doubt as to what to expect at the forthcoming Synodical Convention.

During the early summer there was a further exodus of faculty. Professor Weyland accepted a Call to Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School near New Ulm. Professors Birsching and Ten Broek, who had been honored with anniversary observances in the Academy's final year, received calls to fill existing

vacancies on the Northwestern College faculty in Watertown. Professor Schewe was holding two Calls and pondering his decision. By the time of the convention only three members of the faculty remained on staff: President Malchow, Professor Jeffers and Tutor Starr. The imminent closure of the school as a worker training institution certainly had played a part in these developments.

For fifty-one years Northwestern Lutheran Academy had provided its students with a Christ-centered education. As a worker training school it had laid the ground work for many of its graduates to becoming full time workers in the Church. The 1979 Synod Convention took formal recognition of these facts. But the synod also recognized other facts. History had moved forward. The scope of the synod's mission had enlarged, its economics had grown more complex. Now per student costs and students enrolled for full time ministry had become criteria in determining the survival of a school such as the Academy. Since 1973 its role had been under scrutiny. The school stood at a crossroads. The Academy was too small to justify its costs, yet without facilities it was not able to grow larger. Even if the facilities had been granted, was there the potential for the growth that was needed? It was projected that an enrollment of 200 would be necessary to justify the capital funding being asked. Yet since the surge in students of the early seventies enrollments had again taken a downward trend, reaching a low of 114 in the 1978-79 school year. Even more disappointing was the decrease in the number of students enrolled in the worker training program. These matters became key issues when the Academy question came before the convention. Another side of the picture related to the faculty. In recent months the Lord had led the majority of the faculty to accept new calls and no authorization had been given to fill the vacancies. Without manpower the operation of the school would be impossible. Such was the setting as the delegates weighed the debate on the Academy question. By ballot vote and by a margin of 225-41 the following resolution prevailed: "that the synod, with deep regret, discontinue the operation of NLA as a synodical institution, effective immediately."

When the synod resolved to cease its support of the Academy, the land and buildings were offered without cost to the Dakota-Montana District for an area Lutheran high school. If this offer were not accepted within a stated time, the synod would dispose of the property to its best advantage.

The district in 1979 was not in a position to assume a take over of an institution the size of the Academy. The school had grown to its size largely

with the backing of the synod. It had depended on the synod for direction, for staffing, for much of its financial support. That sort of assistance was now gone. Other long time patrons of the school were also turning elsewhere. Over the years congregations in Nebraska, Washington, Arizona, and California had come to regard the Academy as their worker training institution. There were years when nearly half of the students came from these outlying districts. But since 1977 each of these regions had started Lutheran high schools of their own, often at great sacrifice with small initial enrollments and in limited facilities. The loss of these faithful and long time Academy supporters greatly eroded the Dakota-Montana's potential for assuming the take over of the Academy. The obligations which were involved were simply beyond reach, at least in the short term. An area Lutheran high school in the Dakotas would be a venture for a future time.

By the time the 1979-80 school year had begun the remaining members of the Academy faculty, President Malchow, Professors Schewe and Jeffers and assistant instructors, Mr. and Mrs. Huebner, accepted calls to Martin Luther Preparatory School in Prairie du Chien. A large part of the Academy student body from Mobridge transferred there and helped to swell the opening enrollment of the new school. Other members of the staff, the housemother, Mrs. Van Dyk, and Mr. Travis, as food manager, became a part of the transplanted Academy family on the new Wisconsin campus.

When the district declined the synod's offer to use the Academy as an area Lutheran high school, the property was put up for sale at a public auction. On July 28, 1980 the entire property was purchased by the Mobridge-Oahe Enterprises for \$375,000 as an investment endeavor. In December 1985 the Academy and its campus became the home of the Central Indian Bible College. After renovations its total investment for the school was reported to be nearly half million dollars.

IN RETROSPECT

In his history of the Academy in 1951 Professor Fenske set forth the Academy's purpose in these words: "it was a mission school in a mission district; it was to provide a general education on the high school level; it was to be a 'feeder' to our synodical colleges."

If measured by this yardstick, the Academy under God lived true to its purpose through the years. Its nearly 700 graduates, as well as those who were in attendance for shorter lengths of time, came in large part without the basics of a Lutheran parochial school education and often even without the benefit of thor-

ough pre-confirmation instruction. The unending miles separating the parish memberships in these western regions present real problems for the pastors in providing sound and systematic Christian training for the youth. It was to help remedy this problem that led to the establishment of the Academy in this mission district. The success of the endeavor is attested by the fruits which were produced. Academy graduates today are filling their roles as active members and enlightened leaders in their congregations, serving as helpful leaven in the life of the church.

Of those who received their high school diplomas at the Academy about 17 percent entered one of our worker training colleges. That a dual nature preparatory school had a part in providing this proportion of its graduates to the ranks of future church workers is not to be reckoned disappointing. That there should or could be more no one will dispute. It is God who grants the increase on what we plant and water. The laborers He gives are an answer to our prayers. We are humbly grateful for the workers whom God has given as a result of the training they received at the Academy.

Life at the Academy was characterized by unity of purpose. Christian faith and charity, daily refreshed at the well of God's life-giving Word, bound faculty and students together in the pursuit for excellence. The Academy sought no accolades of glory. It found its purpose realized in a faithful dedication to its duties day by day. This spirit may in part be traced to the dedication of its teaching staff. Some members on the faculty devoted well-nigh their total ministry in service to the school. For others the years of faithful service were for shorter lengths of time. Students sensed this spirit of unselfish dedication and it served them as a model toward faithful stewardship of time and talent. The bond of faith and steadfastness were at the heart of what may be called the Academy spirit. This spirit lives on in the lives of its former students and is very much in evidence when Academy alumni reassemble for their all-class reunions.

The Academy's prime purpose was to offer its students a sound Christ-centered education. A secondary purpose was also of significance. The Academy was a rallying point for pastors and parishioners of the vast and remote expanses of the central plains. It pro-

vided a special place for fellowship as the members of our churches came together to hear the concerts, to watch sporting events in field and gym, to attend school openings and graduation services. It was the focal point for district gatherings and meetings, the spot where people met for the exchange of ideas and mutual encouragement, so vital for those involved in the extension of Christ's kingdom.

For fifty-one years the Academy was the pattern for Christian education in the Dakota-Montana District. Among its patrons were many active laymen who from the day of its humble first beginnings gave freely of their time, their talents and their treasure to support its cause and purpose. Among the rewards for such dedicated service their children and the children of many others have been blessed with the special opportunity the Academy gave to grow in faith and in the grace of godly living. They were privileged to reap the blessings promised to those brought up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord.

The Academy's demise dares not spell despair for the cause of Christian education on the plains. It rather opens up the challenge to seek and find the ways available for Christian growth, ways to furnish our youth with the strength to stand steadfast in God's ways in a day of shrinking values and the scraping of God's truth. One such way lies in hastening the day when a Lutheran high school is established in an area where its needs can more easily be met and students more readily supplied. Lutheran elementary education too, the church's most effective means for early Christian training, needs our continued encouragement; it prospers as its values are appreciated and supported.

As new avenues of rapid communication and technology, geared for the effective spread of knowledge over distance, come into more common use, there may be found in these the tools to serve the cause of Christian training in areas ever so remote. There is no lack of materials or services for the furtherance of Christian knowledge. The responsibility remains to find the most effective way to bring these into contact with the learner. For until He comes again the commission stands: Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you; and surely, I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.

**PROFESSORS WHO SERVED AT
NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN ACADEMY**

W. H. Birsching	1959 - 79	H. C. Oswald	1937 - 39
R. E. Buss	1965 - 70	T. A. Pelzl	1959 - 73
R. A. Fenske	1939 - 66	H. A. Schewe	1974 - 79
R. C. Georg	1971 - 75	A. W. Schuetze	1948 - 56
A. L. Jeffers	1975 - 79	K. G. Sievert	1928 - 71
C. M. Lemke	1974 - 79	F. E. Traub	1929 - 36
D. W. Malchow	1968 - 79	W. B. Ten Broek	1954 - 79
H. G. Meyer	1940 - 54	P. H. Wilde	1970 - 79
W. H. Nolte	1954 - 57	V. J. Weyland	1957 - 79

MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMY BOARD OF CONTROL

Paul Arndt	1960-73	Rev. Herbert Lau	1941-52
Rev. G. S. Baer	1952-55	W. Mehlberg	1938-43
Rev. H. C. Baer	1940-45	Rev. W. T. Meier	1930-43
Rev. S. Baer	1928-40	Oscar Meyer	1947-54
Rev. Karl Bast	1945-51	Ronald Meyer	1954-55
Wilfred Bauer	1955-79	E. Mischke	1928-47
Walter Begalke	1955	J. K. Moser	1936-39
Rev. G. Birkholz	1957-59	Rev. Fred Mutterer	1958-61
Rev. H. Birner	1949-55	A. Ottenbacher	1928-29
Richard Brei	1973-79	Rev. David Plocker	1961-65
Rev David Buske	1966-67	Rev. Reginald Pope	1955-61
Rev. G. P. Eckert	1961-63	Rev. Marvin Putz	1968-70
Rev. Nathan Engel	1971-73	Rev. George Rothe	1967-71
Calvin Frey	1964-79	Rev. H. Schaar	1928-32
Rev. E. R. Gamm	1928-38	Rev. J. P. Scherf	1930-32
E. Guenther	1928-31	Martin Scherf	1943-63
Thomas Hansen	1975-79	Rev. G. J. Schlegel	1939-40
Rev. Dennis Hayes	1973-75	Rev. Thomas Schmidt	1973-79
Rudy Heier	1945-75	Rev. W. Schmidt	1940
Rev. Ronald Heins	1971-73	Rev. James Schneider	1964-68
Rev. Philip Janke	1951-57	Rev. W. Schumann	1956-58
E. Kehrberg	1930-31	Rev. Cyril Spaude	1964-66
John Klein	1929-32; 1938-60	S. Thomsen	1928-37
Rev. David Krenke	1973-79	Rev. Edward Werner	1965-67
Rev. Paul Kuehl	1955-56	Rev. R. Zimmermann	1959-64

ASSISTANT INSTRUCTORS

David Adickes 1957-58	David Johnson 1971-73	Harold Sauer 1943-44
Norman Berg 1944-46	Kathryn Juroff 1977-79	Ronald Schilling 1961-62; 1964-65
Leonard Bernthal 1946-48	Jon Kietzer 1962-63	Loyal Schroeder 1948-51
William Birsching 1954	Edgar Knief 1936-40	Raymond Schumacher . . 1977-78
Gerhard Birkholz 1952-54	Thomas Koepsell 1966-67	Melvin Schwark 1959-60
Robert Bock 1970-72	James Korthals 1973-74	Curtiss Seefeldt 1975-76
John Brenner 1974-75	Richard Kuckhahn 1962-63	Carroll Sengbusch 1959-60
Ronald Bretzmann 1937-39	Robert Kuehn 1964-65	Oscar Siegler 1940-41
Charles Buege 1969-71	David Kuske 1956-57	Robert Sievert 1960-61
Ruth Bunkowske 1977-79	Paul Kuske 1967-68	Roger Sievert 1966-67
Milton Burke 1948-50	Daniel Luetke 1970-71	Cyril Spaude 1954-56
Richard Buss 1957-58	Martin Lutz 1953-55	Richard Starr 1978-79
Robert Carter 1955-57	Gerald Martin 1932-37	Martin Stern 1950-52
Roger Dallmann 1964-65	Henry Meyer 1939-40	Janine Vasold Swain . . . 1972-74
Adelbert Dornfeld 1929-32	Paul Naumann 1976-77	Paul Swain 1971-74
Joel Ehlert 1964-65	Theodore Olsen 1963-64	Frederick Tabbert 1942-43
Willard Engel 1965-66	Hilton Oswald 1932-37	Verdell Tassler 1965-66
Charles Flunker 1962-63	Carl Pagel 1963-64	George Tiefel 1958-59
June Frank 1974-77	David Palmquist 1972-73	Aaron Uitti 1961-62
Immanuel Frey 1939-40	John Parcher 1957-58	Erwin Wagner 1931-32
Raymond Frey 1941-42	Henry Paustian 1945-46	Ronald Wels . . 1974-75; 1977-79
Ralph Gehrke 1944-45	Richard Paustian 1961-62	Rolfe Westendorf 1958-59
Grant Gentz 1956-57	David Pelzl . . . 1963-64; 1965-66	Harry Wiedmann 1947-48
Ronald Georg 1969-70	Philip Potratz 1974-75	Wilfred Wietzke 1951-53
Ronald Gosdeck 1968-70	Edward Renz 1945-47	James Wooster 1973-74; 1975-77
John Habeck 1957-58	Melvin Robbert 1959-60	Franklin Zabell 1958-59
Paul Hartwig 1973-74	George Rothe 1956-57	Philip Zarling 1967-68
Robert Huebner 1977-79	Fritz Rueter 1931-32	Walter Zimmermann . . 1968-69

HOUSEMOTHERS

Mrs. J. Burkhard 1950	Mrs. Irene Rauschke 1965-70
Mrs. R. A. Fenske* 1942-48	Mrs. B. Schlemmer* 1928-30
Miss E. Giziewske 1949-50	Mrs. A. W. Schuetze* 1948-49
Mrs. F. Gosch Sr. 1949	Mrs. K. G. Sievert* 1930-41
Mrs. H. Kunde 1962	Mrs. F. E. Traub* 1930-36
Mrs. Orpah Lau 1962-65	Mrs. F. E. Traub 1950-62
Mrs. Mary Majoros 1970-73	Mrs. Esther Van Dyk 1974-79
Mrs. Henry Meyer* 1941-49	

*An asterisk denotes those who were matrons in their homes.