

Concordia Theological Monthly



NOVEMBER • 1955



ARCHIVES

THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

Washington, D. C. — President Eisenhower signed legislation allowing churches and religious organizations to enter their publications as second-class mail without having to maintain separate subscription and membership lists.

Under a previous law, church organizations were required to obtain a signed statement from their members that a part of their contributions should be regarded as a subscription to the periodical. Scientific and fraternal organizations have for many years been able to send their publications to members upon a simple resolution to their boards of directors. However, this privilege was not extended to churches, since they do not generally collect specific membership dues or fees.

At hearings before the House Post Office Committee, it was pointed out that many churches have inadvertently been violating the law, unaware of the technical requirement. The new law will particularly benefit churches which maintain parish bulletins. Such bulletins can now be entered as second-class matter, mailable at one and one-half cents a pound or one-eighth cent apiece, by resolution of the governing board of a church that all persons carried on the membership rolls shall receive the parish paper. The privilege will also be open to diocese and denominational papers, although most of these operate on the basis of specific subscription lists.

Mexico City. — Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas, will be crowned "Queen of Work and Workers" at a special ceremony on December 11, a day before her feast day is celebrated throughout Mexico.

It will be the first time the Virgin has been named patroness and protectress of workers anywhere in the world.

BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NEWS BUREAU OF THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

New York. — Membership of the Lutheran Churches in America passed the seven-million mark in 1954. According to the annual statistical summary compiled by the Division of Public Relations of the National Lutheran Council, Lutheran Churches in the United States and Canada reported 7,117,906 members in 1954, an increase of 248,840, or 3.6 per cent, over the previous year. The average gain during the past five years has been about three per cent.

Comprising the third largest Protestant denominational grouping in America, the Lutheran Church is exceeded in members only by the Baptists and Methodists. Of the total Lutherans, 6,906,331 are located in the United States and 211,575 in Canada. The latter are affiliated with churches in the U. S. The Council's summary is based on statistics supplied by sixteen Lutheran church bodies plus the Negro Missions conducted by four groups associated in the Synodical Conference. For the first time in many years all the bodies replied to requests for data.

Of the sixteen groups, thirteen recorded gains in membership in 1953, while three showed losses, as did Negro Missions. Most of the losses are accounted for by revision of figures which had remained unchanged for several years. The increase in baptized membership of 248,840 for 1954, distributed among the 17,239 congregations, represents an average increase of 14.4 new members per local church, compared to 11.5 in 1953, 11.7 in 1952, 10.4 in 1951, and 10 in 1950. Confirmed or adult membership increased by 139,012 persons to a grand total of 4,797,727, a gain of 3 per cent. This would indicate an average accession of 8.1 adult members per congregation in 1954, compared with 6.3 in 1953, six in 1952, 5.4 in 1951, and 5.7 in 1950.

For the tenth consecutive year the highest numerical increase was made by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Its gain of 84,625 baptized members, or 4.4 per cent over 1953, boosted the Synod's total to 2,001,135. Over the past decade it has added 561,764 members, an average of 56,176 annually. The Missouri Synod is the second-largest Lutheran body in America.

Among the major bodies, the American Lutheran Church for the second consecutive year showed the greatest advance on a percentage basis, its 37,703 additions representing a gain of 4.6 per cent. The ALC, with 862,238 members, is the fourth-largest Lutheran body. Close behind was the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which up to 1953 had the greatest gain on a percentage basis for seven successive years. It reported an increase of 41,112 members or 4.5 per cent in 1954. With 960,952 members, the ELC is the third-largest Lutheran body. The United Lutheran Church in America, largest of the sixteen, reported an increase of 62,908 members, or 2.9 per cent, for a total membership of 2,206,280.

Other gains were reported as follows: Augustana Lutheran Church, 17,328, or 3.5 per cent, to 516,968; Joint Synod of Wisconsin, 6,022 or 1.9 per cent, to 328,969; Lutheran Free Church, 2,869, or 4.4 per

cent, to 68,773; United Evangelical Lutheran Church, 2,979, or 5.5 per cent, to 56,908; Suomi Synod 2,431, or 7.9 per cent, to 33,314.

Also, American Evangelical Lutheran Church, 741, or 3.5 per cent, to 21,847; Slovak Church, 180, or 0.9 per cent, to 20,988; Norwegian Synod, 1,334, or 12.1 per cent, to 12,371; and Eielsen Synod, 75, or 4.8 per cent, to 1,625. The National Evangelical Lutheran Church showed a loss of 497 members, or 5.7 per cent, to 8,187; Finnish Apostolic Church, 8,292, or 50.9 per cent, to 8,001; and Lutheran Brethren, 796, or 20.3 per cent, to 3,133.

Negro Missions, conducted jointly by the Missouri Synod, Wisconsin Synod, Norwegian Synod, and Slovak Church, reported a decrease of 1,892, or 23.3 per cent, to 6,217. In explanation it was said that a rising number of the Negro congregations are affiliating with the Missouri Synod.

In the field of parish education the churches enrolled a record total of 3,226,552 pupils, 226,629 more than in 1953. Sunday schools gained 138,678 pupils; vacation Bible schools, 74,922; released-time schools, 7,951; and parochial schools, 5,078. The pupils were taught by 326,007 teachers, a gain of 37,457, in 29,703 schools, a gain of 237.

Sunday schools had 2,240,653 pupils in 16,655 schools, with 252,402 teachers; vacation Bible schools had 741,960 pupils in 9,690 schools, with 62,230 teachers; released-time schools had 102,573 in 1,810 schools, with 6,711 teachers; and parochial schools had 141,366 pupils in 1,548 schools, with 4,644 teachers. Most of the parochial, or Christian day schools were conducted by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, with 1,177, the Joint Synod of Wisconsin, with 214, and the American Lutheran Church, with 76.

The number of ordained ministers rose to 15,881, an increase of 268 over 1953. Of these, 12,136, or 189 more than the previous year, were serving pastorates in 1954.

A total of 233 churches were organized, 111 more than in 1953, to raise the number of congregations to 17,239, while the total of preaching stations dropped by 122 to a total of 408.

Property valuation passed the billion-dollar mark for the third straight year, with an increase of \$123,166,922, or 11 per cent, to a record high of \$1,238,843,998. At the same time, indebtedness increased by \$22,554,039, or 16.8 per cent, to a total of \$156,766,470. In 1945 church debts amounted to \$14,656,131, but the trend has been sharply upward every year since then.

In congregational finances, expenditures by the churches for local expenses increased by \$21,664,038 to \$218,214,297. Contributions

to church work at large increased by \$6,311,849 to \$54,297,470. Total expenditures amounted to \$272,511,767, an increase of \$27,975,887 over 1953.

A separate compilation of statistics for the Lutheran churches in Canada, included in the foregoing figures, revealed that Canada has 211,575 baptized members and 138,338 confirmed or adult members. They were served by 1,010 congregations and 88 preaching places. The clerical roll consists of 550 pastors, of whom 447 are serving congregations.

Property of the Canadian Lutheran churches, which are all affiliated with parent bodies in the U. S., is valued at \$23,062,210, with indebtedness of \$3,148,108. During 1954 they devoted \$4,066,733 to local expenses and \$982,380 to church work at large. Total expenditures amounted to \$5,049,113.

New York.—The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has decided to terminate the co-operative activities which it has carried on with the National Lutheran Council among Lutheran refugees in Great Britain for the past seven years. Formal notice of the Missouri Synod's plans to withdraw from the program was given by Dr. H. A. Mayer of St. Louis, its Secretary of Missions, in a letter to Dr. Paul C. Empie, Executive Director of the NLC.

Dr. Mayer stated that the joint support of the Lutheran Council of Great Britain has been "a constant source of embarrassment to the officials of the Synod" and that its action in England has been "misunderstood and misinterpreted both within the ranks of our Synod and among Lutherans of other Synods."

The Lutheran Council of Great Britain was established in 1948 by the NLC and the Missouri Synod to provide a ministry to some 40,000 Lutheran DP's and refugees who entered England, Scotland, and Wales in the late forties. The NLC's responsibility was later transferred to the Lutheran World Federation, with major financial support continuing from the United States.

The Council now supervises the work of some 30 pastors who are serving the refugees in 250 congregations and preaching points. Most of the exiles are Germans, Poles, Latvians, and Estonians, but nearly a dozen nationalities are represented in their numbers.

Dr. David L. Ostergren, now on furlough in this country, has been the NLC/LWF representative in Great Britain since 1949, after a year's temporary assignment there in 1948, when he laid the groundwork for the formation of the Lutheran Council. He is a member of the Augustana Lutheran Church.

A statement accompanying Dr. Mayer's letter pointed out that the emergency status of relief activities in Great Britain "has come to an end and is giving way to permanent church work." The Missouri Synod, it said, "holds that joint church work involving Word and Sacrament can be done only with churches with whom doctrinal unity has been established." As the member churches of the NLC and the LWF are not in fellowship with Missouri, it added, "it cannot consistently conduct church work jointly with the NLC and/or LWF."

The statement also disclosed that the Missouri Synod has granted its two sister congregations in London a release to establish the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England (ELCE) and has entrusted its interest in, and concern for, Lutheranism in England to the care of the new church.

Further, it said, the Missouri Synod has pledged its "wholehearted moral and financial support" to the ELCE in its endeavor "to foster and expand Lutheranism in England; to achieve doctrinal unity among Lutherans in England; and to give financial aid to such churches or church bodies in Great Britain as share the doctrinal position of the ELCE or will work together with the ELCE in an earnest endeavor to establish full doctrinal unity and fellowship on the basis of Holy Scripture."

In his reply to Dr. Mayer's letter, Dr. Empie expressed the belief that the joint work of the NLC and Missouri in Great Britain has been "positively beneficial for the cause of Christ and the strengthening of Lutheranism in Great Britain."

"Personally I look forward to the day—and I know that in this hope many pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod join me—when your great church body will take its place with other Lutherans in the world in co-operative activities which further the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ through churches of the Lutheran confession," he added.

Dr. Empie said he accepted the Missouri Synod's decision "with full understanding and without impairment of our cordial relationships" and voiced the conviction that the action "will not interrupt the development of closer working relationships between our respective groups."