

A HALF-CENTURY OF MISSION INVOLVEMENT: ELS Foreign Mission Work prior to 1968

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Must a church body conduct foreign mission work in order to be faithful to the Lord and fulfill the Great Commission? Does the Evangelical Lutheran Synod have the sufficient size and resources to support a world mission field? Those were questions facing the ELS as she approached her golden anniversary. They also were questions which, no doubt, were faced by the synod during her infancy.

Following the storm of 1917, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS; until 1958, The Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, also referred to as the Norwegian Synod) looked over the former field. The previous year, just prior to the synodical merger, the foreign mission work of the Norwegian Synod consisted of

- a field in China, consisting of six missionaries serving three congregations with seventy-two members and 171 individuals receiving instruction; there also were five schools consisting of 119 pupils;
- the independent Schreuder Mission in Zululand and Natal, South Africa which was supported by individuals in Norway and many congregations of the Norwegian Synod.¹ In 1916, this field consisted of six missionaries;
- the Bethany Mission at Wittenberg, Wisconsin with approximately 140 students receiving instruction and care; and
- the Brevig Mission near Teller, Alaska.



Now it was all gone; it was blown away by the storm of merger.

Mission work within the old Norwegian Synod had followed a pattern similar to that of other Lutheran bodies in America and Europe when church bodies did not necessarily directly commission missionaries to foreign fields. Foreign mission work was accomplished through independent mission societies. It was only later in time that the synods began their own autonomous mission fields. In 1918 the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States (Missouri Synod) conducted foreign mission work in India and China; the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States (Wisconsin Synod) considered the Apache Indian Mission in Arizona to be a foreign field. The Synodical Conference was conducting mission work among the “Freedmen of the South.”

Missouri Synod Years (1918–1938)

The early years of the re-organized synod, after 1918, were dominated by a need to reach out to those individuals who had been left without a church home. But although workers were

¹ The story of the Schreuder Mission is told by Andrew Burgess in *Unkulunkulu in Zululand* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934).

few and the world was big, the Savior's Great Commission was not forgotten. At the Lime Creek convention, the Rev. H. Steger from the Missouri Synod, preaching a sermon based on the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32), said that God's kingdom has a small beginning but by the power of God's Word there are great results. He then reminded the small band that they did not exist for the sake of themselves but to extend the kingdom of God. He said, "That we might build and extend this, our Lord's glorious kingdom of heaven on earth, that is the reason why He lets us remain in this wicked world. You have assembled here for this purpose and to find ways and means to perform this work to the best advantage. Surely we should not weary in this work."² At this first convention, where only the most pressing business essentials were cared for, two committees were formed: missions and publications. The first Mission Committee consisted of the Rev. Christian Anderson (Minneapolis, Minnesota), the Rev. H. Ingebritson (Lake Mills, Iowa), and Mr. L. G. Mellem (Northwood, Iowa).

The importance of foreign missions to the fledgling body is seen at the 1919 constituting convention when the synod consisted of only fourteen congregations. The Foreign Mission Committee which had been formed the previous year was enlarged as committees were established for both home missions (*Indremissionskomite*) and foreign missions (*Ydremissionskomite*). The first Foreign Mission Committee consisted of Pastor G. O. Lillegard (Chicago, Illinois), Pastor L. S. Guttebø (Deerfield, Wisconsin), and Mr. G. H. Kiland (Madison, Wisconsin). These men were instructed to investigate possibilities for foreign mission work. The following year, they reported that the most practical plan would be participation in the work of the Missouri Synod and to place a representative on the Missouri Synod Board for Foreign Missions. The immediate result of this enabling resolution is seen the following year where the disbursements for foreign missions identified the foreign mission fields.

Mission in India	\$132
China Mission	344
Negro Missions	684
Indian Missions	603
Schreuder Mission	35

This totaled \$1,798 out of total disbursements of \$10,624.³ It is striking that these fields paralleled the mission fields of the old synod.

Throughout the first half-century of the ELS, foreign mission work was thrust upon the synod. The synod did not seek it nor did it have the financial resources to do so. Yet the Lord of the Harvest was repeatedly opening doors for His gospel and His work.

China

The first door for foreign mission work was opened in China where the reorganized Norwegian Synod established her first foreign missionary presence. The Missouri Synod recently had received a mission field centered at Hankow, China where work had started only four years earlier.⁴

² H. Steger in Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (May 14-19, 1918), 139.

³ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (May 29-June 4, 1921), 117.

⁴ The China Mission Society, later known as the Evangelical Lutheran Mission for China, was established in May 1912 by Pastor Edward L. Arndt who, at that time, was a professor at Dr. Martin Lutheran College in New Ulm, Minnesota. The following year Missionary Arndt arrived in China and established himself at Hankow. In 1916 an offer was made to turn this work over to the Synodical Conference. The matter was deferred until individual synods

The Lord already had given our small synod a trained missionary in the person of the Rev. George Lillegard.⁵ The former Norwegian Synod missionary to China was serving as the pastor of Lake View Lutheran Church in Chicago, Illinois. Already in 1918 Pastor Lillegard offered his services to return to China under the auspices of the Missouri Synod.⁶ In 1920 a call was extended and, in December of that year, the Missouri Synod Board for Foreign Missions announced, "... in China the saving work of our mission is well established. But there also there is a severe shortage of manpower. How joyous for us then that a young brother from our Norwegian sister synod, who has already worked in China, Pastor G. Lillegard, with his young bride, will quite soon travel to China and work side by side with our missionaries."⁷

He was first stationed at Ichang (*EE-chang*) which is located 400 miles above Hankow on the Yangtze River. The Missouri Synod mission board explained this location was chosen because "it is at the eastern end of a vast territory hardly yet touched by missionaries" and "because we have work farther west at Shihnanfu." In recording this history in 1922, the Missouri Synod also reports:

The missionaries stationed at Ichang are Rev. Geo. O. Lillegard and his wife, members of the small Norwegian Synod, which is a member of the Synodical Conference and which will, if possible, support this mission alone. Quite an undertaking for a body having only 33 pastors and supporting a professor in St. Paul! May God bless the plucky little band and by their example teach us that we can maintain a body of one hundred missionaries in China and India, if we try seriously.⁸

Earlier that same year, Missionary Lillegard had written:

I was glad to hear that our Synod Mission Committee was getting busy and that it would come with definite recommendations to the next Synod Meeting with regard to Foreign Mission work. It has always been my hope that the Norw. Synod would support my work, in part to begin with, and eventually, entirely. \$3000.00 gold would be enough to cover all expenses at this station per year, including my salary, although not the purchase of land and building [sic]. Is it too much to expect that the Norwegian Synod should be able to raise that much for the China



Our Task in China, page 11.

and districts could react; however, in 1917, the work of this society was transferred to the Missouri Synod. In time, Missionary Arndt would become a protagonist of George Lillegard concerning the "Term Question."

⁵ Missionary Lillegard's story is told in "George O. Lillegard, Foreign Missionary in China," *Oak Leaves; Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society* 2: special (Annual Meeting 1998), and *Called According to His Purpose: Missionary Letters from China* by Deborah Blumer (n.p., n.y). The story of Missouri Synod mission work in China is recorded in *Our Task in China* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1922).

⁶ R. Krezchmar on behalf of the Board for Foreign Missions, Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, to Rev. George O. Lillegard, 17 April 1918, quoted by Blumer, 87.

⁷ R. Krezchmar on behalf of the Board of Foreign Missions, Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States to Rev. George O Lillegard; 14 December 1920, quoted by Blumer, 112.

⁸ *Our Task in China* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 11.

Mission? Although our membership is small, \$3000.00 would not mean any large amount per capita. If the will is there, it could surely be done. I fear that some of our pastors are not very much interested in heathen Missions. It seems to be the case that those who are zealous for the preservation of the true doctrine are likely to be less zealous for its propagation throughout the world and to confine themselves to the work in their immediate neighborhood with those who already are Christians. I suppose that is because it is hard for mortal men to be zealous for the carrying out of every part of such an all-inclusive command as: Go ye forth into *all* the world, teaching them to observe *all* things. If one part is carried out, the other is likely to be neglected. The Reformed Churches emphasize the first part, the Missouri Synod and other conservative Lutherans have emphasized the latter part. Only in exceptional cases do men seem to have a real interest in the work of carrying out both parts of the command. But I wish that the Norwegian Synod as a whole could show itself such an exception!⁹

The synod gave significant financial support to this first effort at foreign mission work. Whereas, in 1919, contributions to the "China Mission" were \$46.26, the following year that number increased nearly ten-fold to \$344. In 1924 the board reported, "... our Synod last year, has contributed the amount of \$1,661.86, which sum includes the balance of \$688.10 from the previous year. The amount this year has been sufficient to take care of Missionary Lillegard's salary, but fell short of paying the other expenses incidental to foreign mission work."¹⁰ Financial support continued through the years that the synod had its own representative on the field. After 1927 the support declined significantly but small gifts continued to be given for work in this field until 1945.

In 1922, George wrote to his sister:

I guess nobody has written you any details about our work here yet. Well, I start the days work by teaching religion in our boys' school from 8 to 9 in the morning. Then I read with my teacher for an hour. Am studying the Chinese Classics now, which are pretty hard stuff. After that I generally study by myself for an hour or two. There are so many things to talk over and arrange now with regard to the work with the school, the catechumens, and the orphan boys, that most of the afternoon goes in looking after various business details. Then we are having repairs made on the place by several carpenters, who have to be looked after more or less.... Then we have meetings almost every evening. Tuesdays and Fridays I also have a class of women in the catechism. On Wednesday, Thursday, Sundays and Mondays, I also have meetings with the men. So you see we do not get very much leisure. We have no Chinese Christians here yet to whom we can entrust things, so that all the work and responsibility devolves upon us.¹¹

There were two doctrinal issues which occurred during this time. The first related to the name of the mission. Most Lutheran missions in China, including the Missouri Synod, identified themselves with the name "The Faith-Righteousness Society." However, during these years, the

⁹ George Lillegard, to Dad, 27 February 1924, quoted by Blumer, 379-380 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (19-25 June 1924), 78.

¹¹ George Lillegard, to Louise, 26 October 1922, quoted by Blumer, 273.

Missouri Synod mission felt that the use of the historic Lutheran name was a confession of faith and discontinued the use of the alternate name.

The other larger issue was the “Term Question” which centered on which Chinese term should be used to express the name of the one true God of the Bible. The two “terms” were “Shang-Di” which was the name of the foremost Chinese deity and “Shen” which was the generic name for god in the Chinese language. Six months before their departure from China, Missionary Lillegard described the situation in a letter:

... I must say that I am getting rather tired of this Term Question—a question which orthodox Christians should be able to settle without any difficulty at all, it would seem to be, but which these St. Louis people for some mysterious reason insist on looking at it in about as “skak-kjoert” [“distorted,” “perverse;” literally “pulling to one side” (Norwegian)] a way as possible. ... Bernice and I have been indulging in plans for coming home next year accordingly! I have told the Board plainly that I did not care to work in a Mission that defended the use of the term Shang-Di and shall stick to that.... To identify a god of the heathens with the true God ought to be considered a far more dangerous sin than unionism, synergism, or any of the evils which have caused the Norw. Synod to separate from other Norwegians. As yet these Missourians, one after the other, have been criticizing me for “separatism” and what not, because I take that stand! Of course they do not admit that the use of Shang-Di involves syncretism, but the fact is that it does, and they will never be able to get away from that fact by any amount of quibbling or fallacious reasoning.... It is really too bad that these St. Louis professors were not present to tell Paul and the other apostles that they should use Zeus or Jupiter for the true God, instead of Theos, which was so “contaminated by idolatry,” even Venus, Bacchus, and all the other immoral gods being included under that term!¹²

The discussion of this question continued for several years after George Lillegard returned to the United States even prompting the (later withdrawn) resignation of S. C. Ylvisaker as a representative on the Missouri Synod Mission Board.¹³ In 1932 the synod referred this discussion to the General Pastoral Conference which reported four years later:

2. We hold that the proper name of an idol cannot be used for God since Scripture prohibits its use
5. The question as to which term in Chinese correctly translates God ... must be decided in accordance with the accepted linguistic usage in China. We agree with the Term Question Committee Report that this term is “Shen.”¹⁴

¹² George Lillegard, to his father-in-law, 26 June 1926, quoted by Blumer, 449–450.

¹³ A brief summary of this issue was reported by the Board for Foreign Missions in the 1930 *Synod Report*, pages 90–91. A detailed presentation of the issue was written by George O Lillegard, *The Chinese Term Question: an Analysis of the Problem and Historical Sketch of the Controversy*. Originally published in Shanghai: The Christian Book Room. Transcribed and edited by David Lillegard, Sebastian, Florida, 2010.

¹⁴ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (5–11 June 1936), 62.

These also were years of unrest in a politically fragmented land when warlords fought for the control of China and the presence of soldiers and bandits was common. These years included the rise of Chiang Kai-shek and in 1927 turned into civil war between the governing Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang led by Chiang Kai-shek) and the Chinese Communist Party (led by Mao Zedong). George writes in 1923,

So far as our own personal safety is concerned. I do not think there is any need to worry. So long as we do the work for which we have been called, I feel that our lives are in God's hands, and that we are humanly speaking, as safe here as any other place. If conditions become too bad, we have been directed by the Board to go to Hankow or some port city, where we should be safe, unless the Chinese take up war against the whole world. They are hardly stupid enough to try that now. If we travel in the inland there is, of course, a chance that we may run into bandits, but we need not worry about that bridge till we get to it. We shall take all precautions and try to keep out of districts in which bandits are operating.¹⁵

The Lillegards were scheduled to begin a furlough in the summer of 1927 but, in January of that year, the American Consul urged all Americans to withdraw from Szechwan Province. Great Britain also had ordered the evacuation of its citizens. The Lillegards sailed, with other missionaries, from Shanghai on February 20, 1927. This ended the direct personal involvement of the ELS in the China mission field. Of course, the synod continued to support this field in accord with the 1920 resolution to support the mission work of the Missouri Synod. Reports continued to be made to the ELS conventions; for example, in 1935 it was reported "In China we have a total of 19 white workers ... [and] 707 communicant members."¹⁶ Finally, after gaining control of mainland China in 1949, the Communist Party of China expelled all remaining Christian missionaries.

Red Springs Indian Mission

While George Lillegard was the first international missionary, one year before he sailed to China the memory of the former mission field in Alaska and the Bethany Indian Mission converged at Gresham, Wisconsin. A former Norwegian Synod pastor, who had been a missionary among the Eskimos in Alaska and who had not entered the merger, accepted a Missouri Synod call to serve at the Red Spring Indian Mission. At the time of the 1920 enabling resolution, the Rev. H. M. Tjernagel already was serving in this field. He served here until 1923 when he accepted a call to the Jerico and Saude congregations in Iowa. ELS support of this mission continued until the boarding school portion of the mission was closed in 1933.¹⁷

India

¹⁵ George Lillegard, to Father, 8 August 1923, quoted by Blumer, 322.

¹⁶ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (12-18 June 1935), 63.

¹⁷ H.M.Tjernagel had served the Norwegian Synod Brevig Mission in Teller, Alaska from 1910-13. In 1917 he was serving a congregation in Santa Barbara, California but, because that congregation entered the merger, he accepted a 1918 call to two Missouri Synod congregations near Crookston, Minnesota. Because of his experience he was called to the Indian Mission in 1919. He joined the ELS in 1923 when he received a call to the Jerico and Saude congregations in Iowa.

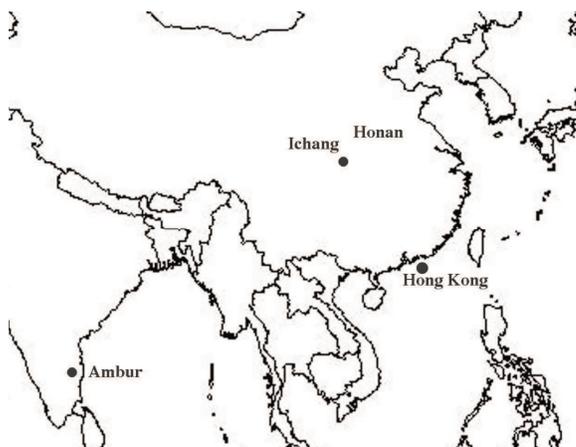
The story of H.M.Tjernagel's mission work in Alaska is found in the unpublished document, H. M. Tjernagel, *Breezes From Alaska*, H. M. Tjernagel file, Evangelical Lutheran Synod Archives, Mankato, Minnesota. Typewritten.

The Lord of the living harvest opened another mission door in India when Miss Anena Christensen captured the interest of the ELS.¹⁸ Following her graduation from the Norwegian Synod's Lutheran Normal School at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, she arrived in South Africa in December 1915 to teach at the Schreuder Mission. At this time her fellow missionaries in Natal were the Rev. Johannes Astrup and C. U. Faye; serving in Zululand, among others, were the Rev. Nils Astrup and the Rev. Hans Astrup. In 1923 George Lillegard wrote to S. C. Ylvisaker asking,

Is Faye going to take your place at Concordia or is someone else expected to take over your work next fall? I just received a letter from Rev. Brand saying that he had met Faye. According to that letter, I gather that the Missouri Synod will be ready to start a mission in Africa if Faye wants to go back. I have heard that Miss Anena Christensen is also going to leave the Norw. Church and affiliate with us or the Mis. Synod. Is it not about time that Astrup also "gets on the bandwagon"? It is a source of increasing wonder to me how the conservatives in the Union Church can tolerate the things they do....¹⁹

After serving as a teacher both in Natal, South Africa and then also teaching four years in the larger mission field in Madagascar, Christensen completed a colloquy with Missouri Synod and was recommended for work in India where the Missouri Synod had conducted work since 1894. She was commissioned by the ELS at a formal service on April 18, 1926 at Fairview Lutheran Church in Minneapolis and was referred to as "our representative" on the field when S. C. Ylvisaker wrote, "Let us remember her in our prayers, and let her work in India be a new bond connecting us the more intimately with this mission."²⁰ Within a year, George Lillegard returned from China and for the next eleven years Anena Christensen was our only foreign missionary face. The financial contributions of the synod turned toward this new field, especially during her first years there, when financial support was second only to the Synodical Conference Negro mission.

Christensen was stationed at Ambur and managed a Girls' Boarding School where many children received care. An important part of the school was instruction in the teachings of the Bible. In 1934, while on furlough, Miss Christensen visited many congregations of the synod. A result was an attempt to establish a scholarship fund for the boarding school; however, this did not materialize. Upon her return, she wrote to Mrs. G. A. Gullixson about her travel in the United States using her railroad "clergy certificate."²¹ She



¹⁸ Her obituary is printed in the *Lutheran Sentinel*, 24:2 (January 25, 1962), 29.

¹⁹ George Lillegard to S. C. Ylvisaker, 11 May 1923, quoted by Blumer, 307.

²⁰ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (23–29 June, 1926), 79.

²¹ Anena Christensen, to Mrs. Gullixson, 20 December 1934, Anena Christensen folder, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

remained in India until 1938 when she left the field due to ill health.

Financial support of the work in India began to wane after she returned to Mankato, Minnesota. When she died in 1961, the president's report to the synod convention made no mention of the death of this longest-tenured missionary in the first fifty years of our synod's history. Yet in memoriam her pastor wrote, "Miss Christensen is remembered by former students at Bethany Lutheran College for her lectures based on her mission field experiences, and for her displays of Oriental clothing, jewelry and utensils. Many remember, too, her large private library, containing among others, many well-chosen theological books."²²

Synodical Conference Years (1945–1957)

The Lord of the Church continued to open doors for mission work through the Synodical Conference which the synod rejoined in 1919. ELS representatives who served on the Missionary Board of the Synodical Conference, and reported to each subsequent ELS convention were: S. C. Ylvisaker (1920–22), J. A. Moldstad (1922–45), N. A. Madson (1945–50), E. G. Unseth (1950–51), C. Hanson (1951–52), G. A. R. Gullixson (1952–63).

Freedmen of the South

Since 1877 the Synodical Conference had been conducting mission work among the "Freedmen of the South." This was a large and important field. In 1919 this field consisted of Luther College in New Orleans, Louisiana; Immanuel College at Greensboro, North Carolina; and Alabama Lutheran Academy and College in Selma, Alabama.²³ In 1937 this mission field comprised 76 congregations and 7 preaching stations, over 10,000 souls, 5,107 communicants, 2,455 pupils in Christian Day Schools, and 4,683 in Sunday schools.²⁴ Financially this was the most highly supported field by our synod until Paul Anderson arrived in Nigeria in 1946.

A direct effort was made in this field by the ELS in Minneapolis where, under the heading of "Negro and Foreign Missions," it was reported in 1949 that a congregation had been formed in south Minneapolis. At that convention Pastor Julian Anderson, who served this congregation, appealed that the synod adopt St. Philip's Lutheran Church as their "pet-project."²⁵

Nigeria

The most substantial mission field of the ELS was in Africa as a constituent synod of the Synodical Conference. By 1930, the Synodical Conference was cautiously considering work in central Africa. Four years earlier, a resolution was passed by the Synodical Conference's General Conference of Negro mission workers asking that mission work be started in Africa. They also began to gather funds for this project.²⁶

By God's providence, the people of the Ibibio (*i-BI-bio*) tribe living in the Calabar Province in southeastern Nigeria had sent their favorite son, Jonathan Udo Ekong, to the United

²² Hugo Handberg, "In Memorium," *Lutheran Sentinel* 24:2 (January 25, 1962), 29.

²³ Luther College was closed in 1925. Immanuel College in Greensboro, North Carolina was closed in 1961. The college in Selma, Alabama was sold to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1962. After 1946, the congregations in this field were absorbed into the districts of the various synods of the Synodical Conference.

²⁴ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (10–15 June 1938), 69.

²⁵ "St. Philip's," *Convention Sentinel: Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (1949, Sunday): 1.

²⁶ The story of the work of the Synodical Conference in Africa is told by Armin W. Schuetze in *The Synodical Conference Ecumenical Endeavor* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000), 159–77.

States with the instruction to find missionaries for them. One of the requirements of such a church body was it practiced infant baptism. In 1932 Jonathan Udo Ekong read an article entitled "Africa – we ought to be there."²⁷ He writes,

I was still a student. The president of the college, President James, was very fond of me. All the members of the faculty loved me. The bishop of their church, too, liked me and would occasionally invite me to give a talk in his church. One day during this period, a great miracle happened. I was going out on a certain evening, when one of my fellow students, who was also a newspaper vendor, handed me some newspapers and said, "Please, Mr. Ekong, could you keep these papers for me? I'll pick them up when I come back." This was about five o'clock in the evening. As I got into my room to keep the papers, I glanced at the pages and stumbled on a news item, that at a certain North American Lutheran convention, the black American Lutherans had raised the sum of \$60,000 [sic] for the work of the Gospel ministry in Africa. They wanted this money to be used specifically for the Gospel outreach among their kinsmen in Africa. When I saw this news item, my heart jumped. I read it again and again to make sure I was seeing correctly. The newspaper article also indicated the survey teams were being planned for north Africa, south Africa, east Africa, and the Cameroons. I could not sleep that night. How I wished I were God, to make the night pass more quickly. I waited for the dawn; and as soon as dawn came, I collected a copy of that newspaper from that friend and went downtown to meet one of my friends. He was a member of the United Lutheran church, where I had worshipped several times before. So I went to inquire from him how I could get more information on the story I had found in the paper. He said he wasn't sure, that this was not his church but the Conference of North American Lutherans. However, he did give me the address and location of a Lutheran church downtown, where I could contact a minister for further information....²⁸

Very quickly, Jonathan Udo Ekong appealed to the Synodical Conference and let his people in Africa know about the possibility. In a letter written in December 1930 the Ibesikpo people pleaded for help from the Synodical Conference.²⁹ Yet, the Synodical Conference was hesitant to begin work in this particular field because of concerns of proselytizing. The Rev. J. A. Moldstad, the Norwegian Synod representative to the Synodical Conference Missionary Board, reported to the 1934 ELS convention, "Considerable time and earnest study have been given by the Mission Board to the possibility of establishing a mission among the Ibesikpo people of Nigeria, Africa. These people have for several years been urging and begging the Board to come to their assistance."³⁰

After several years of investigation, a survey committee was sent to Nigeria in 1935. Based upon the report of Pastor Immanuel Albrecht (Wisconsin Synod), Pastor Otto Boecler (Missouri Synod), and Dr. Henry Nau (president of Immanuel College at Greensboro, North

²⁷ Nyong M. Uko, *A Short History of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria, 1936–1986* (Nigeria: The Lutheran Press), 11.

²⁸ Udo Etuk, *Jonathan Udo Ekong: The Log-Bell Ringer: Memoirs of a Patriarch* (Nigeria: The Lutheran Church of Nigeria, 1997), 62–63.

²⁹ Uko, 12.

³⁰ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (6–12 June 1934), 53.

Carolina and former Missouri Synod missionary to India), the Missionary Board of the Synodical Conference resolved to begin work in Nigeria.

Ratification came from three synods of the Synodical Conference. ELS ratification was delayed for one year because the ELS convention already had met. Yet ELS President C. A. Moldstad assured the Synodical Conference president that he supported this action and had instructed our representative on the mission board to represent our interests. The following year the Rev. J. A. Moldstad again reported,

The Mission in Nigeria has been established. Dr. H.Nau and wife are temporarily at work in the field. Other experienced pastors have been called to serve in the mission; but so far none has accepted. This mission is unique in its origin, as well as in the plans for its establishment and continuation. It is hoped, that it will be about self-supporting from the beginning. Our sister Synods would naturally be pleased, if our Synod, at this convention, resolves to cooperate with them in this blessed work.

The Norwegian Synod entered this foreign mission field with the simple resolution in 1936, "Resolved that we lend our whole-hearted support to the Nigeria Mission."³¹

The following year, the report was made:

It is with great joy that we are able to report an increase in the interest of our Synod in its obligations, divinely imposed by the Great Commission of our Savior, to preach the Gospel to all nations, "unto the uttermost parts of the earth." This is evidenced chiefly by a decided increase to the contributions of our members as compared with the previous year. The totals of our four Foreign Mission treasurers show an increase of over 100% over the previous year.

The following figures from the Treasurer's report show this improvement:

For India Missions.....	\$	34.45
For China Missions		115.00
For Heathen Missions.....		100.69
For Nigeria Missions		135.72 ³²

The first resident missionary to Nigeria was Henry Nau who had taken a one-year leave of absence from Immanuel College.³³ He was soon replaced, in 1937, by the Rev. Venon Koeper (Missouri Synod), the Rev. William H. Schweppe (Wisconsin Synod),³⁴ and Miss Helen Kluck (Beaver Dam, Wisconsin). A report about this field also was made to the 1938 ELS convention:

Dr. Nau returned from Africa in December 1937. Our two young missionaries, the Rev. Wm. Schweppe and Vernon Koeper, are carrying on the work in thirty-two stations. They are overburdened and need help. In June, Jonathon [sic] Udo Ekong, a native African, will graduate from Immanuel Lutheran College,

³¹ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (5-11 June, 1936), 58.

³² Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (10-16 June 1937), 43.

³³ Missionary Henry Nau's story is told in *We move into Africa: The Story of the Planting of the Lutheran Church in Southeastern Nigeria* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1945).

³⁴ Missionary Schweppe's story is told by Ernst H. Wendland in *To Africa with Love* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1974).

Greensboro, North Carolina, and then proceed on to Africa.... Deaconess Helen Kluck, R.N., as may be expected, is devoting her entire time to the sick and to the promotion of better home conditions.... Our missionaries are still living in homes erected by the natives....³⁵

The next years were difficult for the missionaries because World War II prevented cross-Atlantic ocean travel. Missionary Schweppe had returned home on furlough in 1939 and was unable to return. But in 1945 a report was made saying,

Missionaries Schweppe and Rusch and Mrs. Rusch [Emma Anderson] finally reached Nigeria a year ago after many delays and have been exceedingly busy. Mrs. Rusch has been in charge of the girls' school besides doing much other work. It has been a great task, but the Lord has been ever present with His help and blessing.... It would be a blessing for our Norwegian Synod, as well as for the Mission, if one or more of our ministers could be spared for work in Nigeria. Pray the Lord to make it possible. ³⁶

God answered those prayers the following year when it was reported:

With regard to Africa, we are happy to report that our small staff of workers has been considerably increased. After several years of a serious undermanned staff the Lord has graciously answered our prayers and provided a group of consecrated missionaries.... Another fine group of workers is to go out this summer, namely Rev. and Mrs. Paul Anderson of the Norwegian Synod....

The synod responded to this report saying,

The Synod is grateful to the Lord for his mercy in providing additional missionaries for the Nigerian field, among whom is a pastor of our own synod, Paul G. Anderson, who is scheduled to enter upon his new work this summer."³⁷

Paul Anderson graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri in 1945 and was assigned to the Nigerian mission. He was married the same year but passage to Nigeria was delayed until the next year. After a delay in Liberia, they finally arrived in October 1946.³⁸

Missionary Anderson's first assignment was to work with Carl Rusch, his brother-in-law, who served twenty-four congregations. He was assigned to an additional ten congregations. On one day, in October 1948, he baptized fifty-seven people at one church! He describes the three-hour service at the village of Okon.

The day came when [the teacher] announced that he had a group ready. I would come and examine them.... They came all day Friday and again Saturday and then Sunday was the big day. As I examined each one and found him ready, understanding the way to heaven and the power and essence of Baptism, I gave

³⁵ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (10–15 June 1938), 70.

³⁶ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (3–7 June 1945), 39–40.

³⁷ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (2–6 June 1946), 51.

³⁸ Missionary Paul Anderson's story is told in "Mission Work in Nigeria through the Synodical Conference," *Oak Leaves; Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society* 2: special (Annual Meeting 1998).

him a Baptism Certificate with his name on it with the instruction to bring it on Sunday. On Sunday they lined up in the aisle of the church at the time of Baptism. As each came forward for Baptism he would hand me the certificate so I could read his name, then, after Baptism, I would give the certificate back and go on to the next.³⁹

There were frequent requests for the missionaries to visit additional villages. Yet Missionary Anderson explains that the principle was that the missionaries didn't begin any work which the nationals could not continue by themselves.⁴⁰ For example he tells that one day a delegation from Okon was waiting with the request that he come and teach them. "After about an hour of Law and Gospel teaching, showing the way to heaven as clearly as I could in the time I dared to take, we turned to business. Would they provide a place for meeting for this teaching? Would they pay the salary of a teacher who would teach them daily? Would they provide a place for the teacher to live?"⁴¹

With a rapidly growing church body the need for national pastors and teachers was very important. In 1949 a seminary was opened. Two years later a Lutheran School, for teacher training, was opened near the village of Ibakachi (*i-BAK-a-chi*) with Missionary Anderson in charge of its establishment and construction. He writes,

Having never seen a teachers' college, I was ill prepared to do what was necessary to do. A very qualified African teacher was assigned to help me. Mr. E. W. Amamkpa took the lead in drawing up the curriculum and assisted in determining what buildings we would need.... I drew plans for a combination kitchen, storeroom and dining hall, two class room buildings, four dormitories and a practicing school.... The Synodical Conference Mission Board approved the building project but forgot to approve the funding for it. By the time all was built I personally owed various European businesses about \$22,000. When our first class of twenty-five students graduated in 1952 and the school was approved by the Nigerian government, the money became available and I was debt free.⁴²

The dedication of the first buildings was held on April 7, 1951.

During two furloughs to the United States, Missionary Anderson visited most of the congregations of the synod. The 1950 *Synod Report* says, "For the benefit of those who did not hear him, we would like to include in this report some comparative statistics from Africa which we believe will be of interest to everyone.

	<u>1946</u>	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>	<u>1949</u>
Churches.....	83	108	130	140
Baptized members.....	11,125	13,295	16,225	19,576
Communicants.....	4,148	4,682	5,448	6,304
Baptisms.....	1,603	2,935	3,268	3,534
Communed.....	10,395	11,893	13,627	16,464

³⁹ Paul G. Anderson, "Mission Work in Nigeria through the Synodical Conference," *Oak Leaves; Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society* 2:special (Annual Meeting 1998): 9.

⁴⁰ Paul G. Anderson, interview by author, 1 September 2011.

⁴¹ Paul G. Anderson, "Mission Work in Nigeria," 9.

⁴² Paul G. Anderson, "Mission Work in Nigeria," 12.

Confirmations	500	821	983	1,196
Schools	67	87	94	109
Pupils.....	4,657	6,201	7,430	8,851 ⁴³

Missionary Anderson returned to the United States in 1952 and was succeeded in the field by ELS Pastor Gerhard Becker who served 1953–57.

Whereas we cannot measure the interest and prayerful support of this mission field and its missionaries, the actual financial support shows a minimal involvement in the Nigerian field. Even though the missionaries received only a subsistence salary, Missionary Anderson received more than the ELS contributed. The financial support of the Synodical Conference missions was proportionate to the membership of the synod. In 1961, the proposed budget was \$324,500 and the ELS share was 0.53% of the total budget. Ten years earlier, it was reported that the budget for the Nigerian mission was \$134,900 and the ELS share was \$643.03.

At the time of the 25th anniversary of the Nigerian mission, in 1961, there were 18 missionaries, 7 teachers, 9 medical staff, and 2 lay workers on the field. By this time, the field had grown to 35,606 baptized members and 200 congregations.⁴⁴ An appeal also was received for the Synodical Conference to begin work in the nation of Ghana and a mission field was opened in 1958. Four years later, there were 2 missionaries and 2 congregations in Ghana.

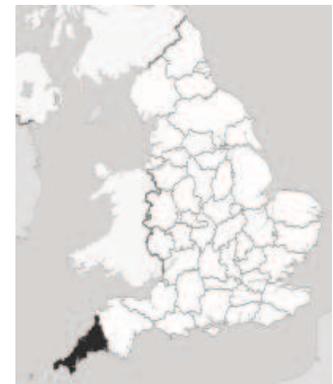
ELS foreign mission work in Africa was brought to a close with our resignation from the Synodical Conference in 1963.⁴⁵ Both the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod offered to independently assume full responsibility for the mission work in Nigeria. The Missouri Synod had provided the greatest financial support and the Wisconsin Synod had provided the longest tenured missionary in W. Schweppe. The Lutheran Church of Nigeria decided to remain affiliated with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In 1969 a group of fifteen congregations and three pastors broke away from the Lutheran Church of Nigeria for reasons of doctrine and practice. They formed their own church body, “Christ the King Lutheran Church of Nigeria.” In 1991 another group of churches also withdrew from the Lutheran Church of Nigeria. They formed “All Saints Lutheran Church of Nigeria.” Today, both of these synods are members of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC).

Independent Work (1951–63)

Cornwall

Foreign mission work was not something which was sought by the ELS; rather it was placed upon us. The Lord again opened doors in England.

Lutheran mission work had been started in Cornwall county in the extreme southwest corner of England by Mr. Joseph Pedlar. He was a native of Cornwall who had immigrated to the United States where he was confirmed in a Missouri Synod congregation. He



⁴³ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (11–16 June 1950), 48.

⁴⁴ Armin W. Schuetze, *The Synodical Conference Ecumenical* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000), 169–70.

⁴⁵A complete roster of Synodical Conference mission workers in Nigeria, including their years of service, is printed in the *Proceedings of the Forty-Seventh Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America*, Chicago, Illinois, November 13–15, 1962 (St. Louis, Missouri; Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 81–84.

returned to Cornwall in 1935 and became a self-appointed lay preacher and also conducted Bible studies. The Missouri Synod also had started mission work in England under the auspices of the Atlantic District but had shown little interest in the work in Cornwall. In 1948 an appeal was received concerning work in Cornwall. This appeal reached the ELS Board of Missions who reported, "He asks any orthodox Lutheran Synod or group of Lutherans only to send a missionary who with his help may preach to the unchurched."⁴⁶

The open door in Cornwall also seems to have created at least a small vision of beginning mission work in Norway. The initial appeal from England was met with the following response:

Primarily we ought to seek to get an opening in Norway but at the present we do not seem to have any leads which will open the way for us. Pastor [Jacob] Preus will contact some sources of information in Norway, but it seems logical to begin operations in the British Isles if the opening presents itself, since it would be comparatively easy to work out from that base and across to the Scandinavian countries. When you speak of the Scottish Highlads [sic] you give some reason to hope that we might turn the tables on history and attack Norway from Scotland instead of having the marauding Vikings pounce upon Scotland from the Ports of Norway.⁴⁷

The Board for Foreign Missions recommended to the August 1949 convention that a missionary be sent to work with Mr. Pedlar for at least three months with the expenses being covered by special gifts. Rev. Joseph Petersen (then serving Pinehurst and Ascension Lutheran Churches in Eau Claire, Wisconsin) spent three months in England. Upon his return he urged the synod to send a missionary. The 1951 convention concurred with the recommendation and resolved to send a man to Cornwall, England with the caveat that the synod does not "embark upon any program of building or financing of buildings" and "That Cornwall moneys continue to remain a fund separate from the Home Mission Budget."⁴⁸

Several calls were extended by the board until Pastor Joseph Petersen accepted the call and was commissioned as a missionary at large in September 1951. The center of Missionary Petersen's work was in Redruth (*re-DRUTH*) which was the largest urban area in Cornwall. Work also was conducted at Goonhavern and Falmouth. The work progressed slowly. In part this was due to a reluctance to receive a foreign missionary. In March 1952 Missionary Petersen reported to the Mission Board:

Since active work began last October, two Bible classes have been organized and are meeting weekly.... Attendances have averaged 10 and 7 respectively.... From the very first I had been warned against making house-to-house calls or canvassing. Both Pedlar and Rev. Pearce (London) [LCMS] advised me not to do it. Contrary to their advice and opinion I went ahead doing some canvassing. I reasoned thus: How can anyone do effective mission work without making personal calls? It is very difficult work, to be sure, and at times disheartening, especially when one has to take that "gruff" from the masses. In the months of

⁴⁶ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (12-17 August 1949), 60.

⁴⁷ Unsigned letter to Pastor Webber, 7 July 1948, Cornwall folder, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

⁴⁸ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (13-19 June 1951), 61.

January and February I made 348 calls, some being social calls. What will be the result should show up when regular services are held....

Much to my regret no formal services have been conducted, but the matter is on the future agenda....

In general progress has not been spectacular, but far from discouraging, especially when one considers that Lutheranism is entirely new to these folks. We also must cope with a way of life which is quite different from our way. The Cornish are slow and reticent, not very receptive to new things. They are steeped in multiple false doctrines. John Wesley did a bad job in Cornwall with his Arminian views. How can we alter things overnight? We shall carry on with the pure Truth and trust the Head of the Church for the fruits. With patience and with careful instruction, by the Grace of God, we shall not be ashamed.⁴⁹

After eighteen months of work there still was no one in confirmation instruction and the combined average attendance at two preaching stations was twenty-four individuals. Upon urging from the missionary, it was determined in 1953 to purchase a building for use as a residence and a chapel in Redruth. Yet, the following year, the situation had not improved and Missionary Petersen reported to the 1954 convention, "I feel strongly that our church has a God-given mission in Cornwall, but we must be reconciled to the fact that it is a field for native workers."⁵⁰

Meanwhile, there was a native of Cornwall who was a student at Bethany Lutheran Seminary. Desmond Jose (pronounced *JOES*) previously had been a member of the Church of England. He had become a Lutheran under the instruction of Joseph Pedlar and enrolled in our seminary in 1951. Four years later he was ordained on Synod Sunday and commissioned by the ELS as a missionary to Cornwall. At this same time Pastor Petersen's visa expired and he returned to the United States. The synod continued to subsidize the salary for Pastor Jose.

The members of the synod provided financial support for the work in Cornwall. In 1951 the contributions were nearly double of the need. During the ten years that the "Cornwall Mission" account existed there were approximately \$22,677 in contributions and \$22,237 in disbursements.

Even with the arrival of a national pastor, the size of the Cornwall mission did not grow. Pastor Jose felt the lack of a "proper church building" was a hindrance; but the cost of a building was estimated at \$30,000 and would need to be the sole financial responsibility of the synod. An arrangement was made with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England (ELCE) to allow for a one-year vicarage for Desmond Jose under their supervision.⁵¹ At the conclusion of his vicarage, he accepted a call to serve an ELCE congregation. Our synod did not feel it was in a position to send another missionary to fill the vacancy at Cornwall and at the 1959 convention resolved that work in Cornwall be terminated. The synod also expressed its concern about the spiritual welfare of the people in Cornwall and resolved to ask the ELCE to take over the work in Cornwall.⁵² Three years later, the ELCE established a new congregation in nearby Plymouth.

⁴⁹ Joseph Petersen to the Board for Foreign Missions, 1 March 1952, Cornwall folder, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

⁵⁰ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (21-27 June 1954), 48-49.

⁵¹ The Evangelical Lutheran Church of England (ELCE) was organized in 1954 as a sister-church of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS).

⁵² Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (23-28 June 1959), 46.

Hong Kong

The synod had no more heard the sound of the closing door in Cornwall when another open door was opened. In March 1961 Mr. Peter Chang came to Mankato, Minnesota seeking admission to the seminary. He previously had established two congregations and schools in Hong Kong.

Until the fall semester began he was privately tutored by Professor Milton Otto. He then enrolled in the seminary for the 1961-62 school year. The Wisconsin Synod urged the ELS to take over the supervision of the work in Hong Kong but the ELS did not feel this was financially possible. The ELS wanted to conduct work jointly with the WELS but the WELS did not think this was feasible.

On the basis of a call from the two congregations in Hong Kong, Peter Chang was ordained at a service conducted on May 30, 1962 at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mankato with ELS Field Secretary, the Rev. Stuart Dorr, preaching the sermon. He then was graduated from the seminary on June 1. Following his ordination and graduation, the minutes of the Mission Board noted, "We have made no commitment as to money matters, but Pastor Chang was assured of our prayers and the future consideration." It also was pointed out that "efforts on our part to keep in touch with Pastor Chen [sic] and the opportunities afforded in Hong Kong for a foreign mission field ought not to be lost."⁵³

Following his return to Hong Kong there were concerns about some of the practices in the mission. In addition, Pastor Chang contacted both the ELS and the WELS for financial support. At the 1962 ELS convention it was resolved to make appeals for the support of this mission outside of the synod budget. In September of that same year, a typhoon struck Hong Kong and the ELS made a \$1,000 emergency grant to the Christian Chinese Lutheran Church (CCLC). In an open letter, dated November 5, 1962, addressed "To all E L S pastors" the Rev. Stuart Dorr wrote on behalf of Mission Board:

...And we should like to make it very clear that the first use to which sufficient of these gifts will be put is to send a commission to Hong Kong for investigating the whole matter. Much as we would like to escape the burden and expense of such a thing, we do not believe that we can make long-range plans, can say "yes" or "no" to the idea of making this mission our own, without an on-the-spot investigation. Our proposal, then, is to send investigators, probably two men, to Hong Kong as soon as feasible after your contributions make it possible. We say this with complete awareness of the fact that this course of action puts the matter squarely up to you and the people in your spiritual care. Simply put: No receipts, no investigation, no commitment to Hong Kong.

You will note that we are seeking to proceed carefully, even cautiously, for we wish to make no beginning which we cannot hope to complete; we also wish to consult properly with brethren, etc. But if you should ask our personal feelings, they're like this: *Let's move!* Consider: We did not seek Rev. Chang and his mission; they came unsought and in a manner that would make us unfaithful stewards if we failed to investigate thoroughly the opportunity that seems to be there; we must do *that* much. Consider this, too: Rev. Chang is a man whose work has already begun; he has a great deal of "know-how"; he is a Chinese on

⁵³ Board for Missions, "Minutes ELS M.Bd.," 6 December 1962. Typewritten.

the inside, not a white man trying to find his way inside. Consider this also: Our synod has no foreign mission of its own: you cannot help being optimistic as to the probable effects on *all of our synod's work* which such a mission would have. We judge that if we do not even look through this open door to see what is there, we are unfaithful stewards. May the Lord's will be done.⁵⁴

Field Secretary Dorr and Prof. Milton Otto visited Hong Kong for two weeks in 1963 and filed a detailed report about many matters facing the mission. Before leaving Hong Kong, an agreement was made that the ELS would provide limited financial support and also send a worker to serve both as the head of the religion department of the schools and also as an advisor.

While the Board for Missions was preparing a favorable report for the synod convention, Peter Chang informed the board that the agreement was no longer acceptable. The board reported that Peter Chang

... and those associated with him cannot accept our proposal to send one man to work with him (which proposal, in fact, was originally his own proposal). He states that, as matters now are, the Synod would have to be willing to underwrite his entire budget before his group, the Christian Chinese Lutheran Mission, could accept the man whom we would send. Inasmuch as this would involve, for the current year, an expenditure of about \$36,000, our board cannot recommend this procedure. We wish to emphasize, however, that this change has been brought about, not by any change in demands or requirements on the part of our board, but solely because the people in Hong Kong who made the proposal now state that they cannot accept it.⁵⁵

With this report the ELS involvement in Hong Kong came to a conclusion. At that time the field consisted of 896 souls and 381 students in the schools.

In 1964 the WELS sent a "Friendly Counselor" to Hong Kong to assist Pastor Chang. Eight years later Pastor Chang left Hong Kong to enter private business in San Francisco. Today the South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission Limited is result of the work started by Chang and consists of 820 souls with three national pastors, two missionaries (WELS), and one teacher (WELS).

Conclusion

As we approach the centennial of the ELS and look back at the first half-century of the synod, we can see God's blessings regarding foreign mission work. There were only eleven years when the ELS did not have a foreign mission presence. The ELS never sought a foreign mission field by saying, "Where shall we go with the gospel?" but the Lord opened many doors and thrust the fields upon us. We did not have the personnel but God sent the missionaries. The ELS could not independently have sent workers to China, India, or Nigeria but the Lord provided the resources through our sister synods. He trained us as He opened a door in

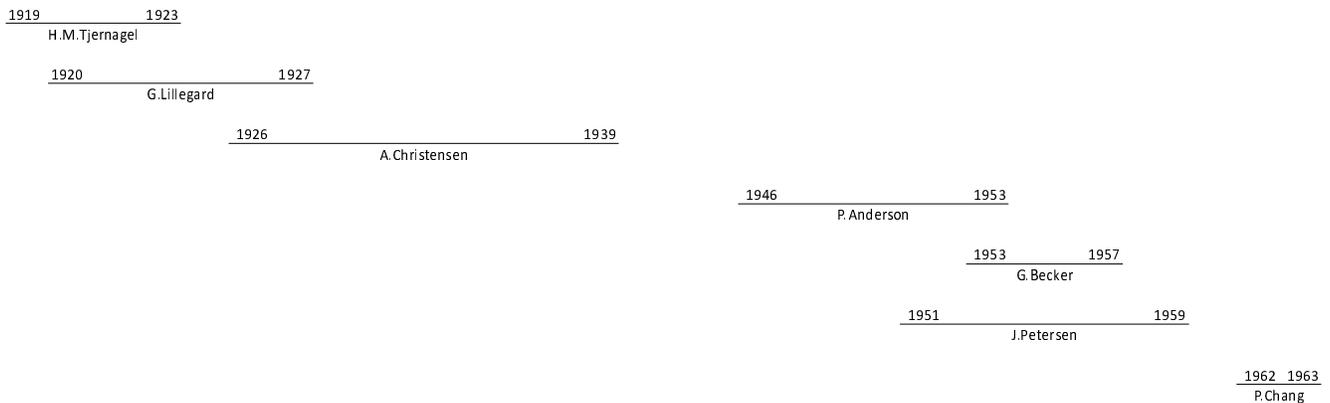
⁵⁴ Stuart Dorr, to "all E L S pastors," 5 November 1962, Hong Kong folder, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (emphasis in original).

⁵⁵ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (14-19 August 1962), 51.

England. He matured us through an open door in Hong Kong. Oh the mystery of the grace and the knowledge of God!

Yet, in the years approaching 1968, the synod was still asking the questions: Must a church body conduct foreign mission work in order to be faithful to the Lord and fulfill the Great Commission? Does the Evangelical Lutheran Synod have the sufficient size and resources to support a world-mission field?

As mission involvement ended in Hong Kong, a 1963 convention resolution authorized the Mission Board to begin work in Hong Kong according to the original proposal if circumstances made it possible. A resolution also was passed stating, "RESOLVED, That at the same time the Mission Board be instructed to investigate the possibility of working in other foreign fields and report its findings and recommendations to the subsequent conventions of the Synod."⁵⁶ With that resolution the door was opened to other fields and to the establishment of an independent ELS foreign mission field in the second-half of the first century of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.



Appendix A: China

Christian mission work began, in earnest, in China in the mid-nineteenth century. The Norwegian Missionary Society (Stavanger, Norway) began work in China in 1847 but, concentrating their efforts on Africa, withdrew from the field until 1889 when letters were published in both Norway and America describing the field in China. One of the letters was published in *Lutheraneren* and this prompted the first Norwegian-American to go to China. In 1890 the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran China Mission Society of America was established. Although this society was organized within the Hauge Synod, it was considered to be a mission society for all Norwegian Lutheran churches in America.⁵⁷ A brother and sister from the Hauge Synod were sent to China as the first missionaries.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Report of the Convention* (14–19 August 1962), 56.

⁵⁷ J. C. K. Preus, ed., *Norsemen Found a Church* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1953), 358.

⁵⁸ Board of Foreign Missions, *White unto Harvest in China; A Survey of the Lutheran United Mission the China Mission of the N.L.C.A., 1890–1934* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934), 9–10.

The Norwegian Synod's first direct involvement in this field came through Miss Oline Hermanson from Norseland, Minnesota who went to China in 1892 and served under the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran China Mission Society of America. Her presence is significant because she was the Norwegian Synod's first missionary in the field and also was one of the first two women who were foreign missionaries from among Norwegian-American Lutherans. She eventually married Missionary Sigvald Netland and, remaining in China after her husband's death, served there until 1927.

The Norwegian Synod directly entered the mission field in China with her first ordained missionary in 1912.⁵⁹ The previous year, the Student Missionary Society at Luther Seminary (St. Paul, Minnesota) offered to pay the salary of a missionary in a location to be determined by the Synod.⁶⁰ The Synod took immediate action and decided to open a field in China. Calls were extended to two men but only one accepted; George Lillegard arrived in China in December 1912, only nine months after the fall of the last Chinese dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China. The field centered in the Honan (today, Henan) province with Kwangchow (today, Huangchuan) as the location of the headquarters. This field was known as the Lutheran Synod Mission.

Slightly over one year later, it was reported:

The Lutheran Synod Mission, representing the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod of America which is the oldest of the Norwegian church bodies in America, has just begun its work in China The first missionary [George Lillegard] arrived in December, 1912, and will not be in a position to begin active work till towards the end of this year. Eight more workers have come out since the fall of 1913. As soon as these have had their allotted time for language study, the work will be opened in the three cities chosen for our field to begin with. These cities are Kwangchow [today, Huangchuan], Kwangshan, and Sihsien.... Kwangchow, the largest city in southern Honan, which for a number of years has been without any resident foreign missionary, was considered open territory, and the first pastor of the mission is stationed there now. He is in the "North City," while the non-denominational China Mission [formed in Britain in 1865, by Hudson Taylor], which now has stationed a foreign missionary in the long-unoccupied city has its station and the bulk of its work in "South City," across the river.⁶¹

In 1907 it was reported that there were twenty-five different Lutheran organizations conducting mission work in China. This proliferation of bodies led to a union movement which culminated with the formation of the Lutheran United Mission in 1917. In 1915 Missionary Lillegard expressed concerns about the proposed merger both in the China mission field and also of the Norwegian Lutheran synods in the United States. He wrote:

⁵⁹ The story of Norwegian Synod mission work in China, along with a chronological list of missionaries, is found in *White unto Harvest in China; A Survey of the Lutheran United Mission the China Mission of the N.L.C.A., 1890-1934*, written by the missionaries, published by The Board of Foreign Missions (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934).

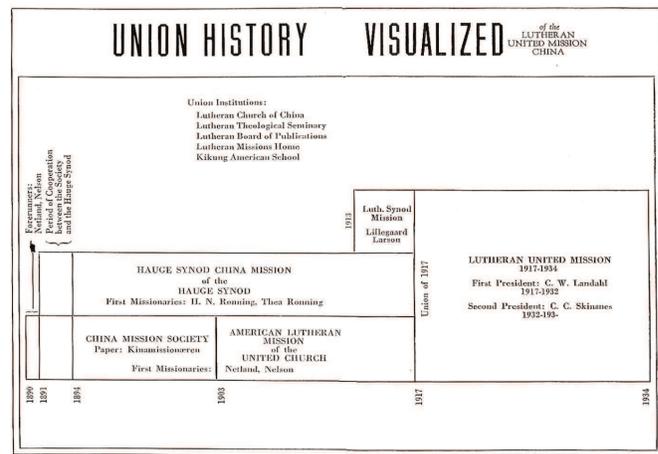
⁶⁰ *White Unto Harvest in China*, 25.

⁶¹ The Lutheran Synod Mission, 22 January 1914, quoted by Blumer, 44.

I am becoming more and more certain as the days pass that it would be best for all concerned if I could part company with the rest of our present forces.... it looks to me as though there is pretty sure to be a split in our church. I believe that the minority will grow with the years, according as some of this unreasoning enthusiasm for union that has possessed so many of the lay people subsides. Now it depends much, of course, upon what turn matters take at home. But I should think it would be possible for the minority to keep at least some of the property belonging to our synod. Luther College and the congregations in that vicinity are quite consistently minority, as I understand it. Our seminary in St. Paul and some of the Twin City congregations likewise.... But if there is a split and enough of the synod remains to support a small mission in China, then please fight for Kwangchow The principal reason I wanted to go home this summer was to feel around a little as to what prospects there were for getting the minority interested in mission work out here in case there should be a split in our synod. But now you can take care of that. I fear that the committee would not have let me go home, even if you had not gone. They were too afraid that I would hurt the union cause.⁶²

Union Lutheran Theological Seminary was established by six Scandinavian mission organizations in 1913. The first president was the Rev. Oscar R. Wold, who was born at Norwegian Grove in Sibley County, Minnesota and served as a missionary of the Hauge Synod Mission, was elected as the first president. Already in 1915, the Temporary Committee of the Lutheran Church of China was formed and took up the task of establishing a single national Lutheran Church.

In 1915 Missionary Lillegard requested to return to the United States due to his father's illness. Following his father's death the following year, he felt it was impossible to return to China immediately and wished to remain in the United States until after the "Synod Meeting." As a result, the Board of Foreign Missions felt he had severed his relations with the mission. He remained in the United States and was able to attend both the 1917 Norwegian Synod convention and also the 1918 reorganizing convention at Lime Creek, Iowa.



White Unto Harvest in China, pages 28-29.

Appendix B: Bethany Indian Mission at Wittenberg, Wisconsin

A Norwegian Synod Indian mission was privately started by several pastors in Shawano County, Wisconsin in 1884 and three years later the property was deeded to the Norwegian

⁶² George Lillegard to Gynt, 28 June 1915, quoted by Blumer, 63-65.

Synod. The work consisted primarily of an elementary school which was subsidized by the government. When the government subsidy ended, in 1895, donations were not able to sustain the school and it was sold to the government in 1900. The mission then was relocated to a farm located in nearby Ingersoll. In 1918 the Government Indian School was closed and the property was repurchased by the mission. The boarding school closed in 1933, yet the Bethany Indian Mission continued its evangelization in widely scattered sites until 1955. The remaining buildings were razed in 1962.

Thirty miles away, near Gresham, Wisconsin, the Missouri Synod started an Indian mission among the Stockbridge Indians in 1899. The mission was known as "Red Springs." In 1918, there were slightly more than 100 pupils enrolled in the eight-grade boarding school. The boarding school closed in 1933 and continued as a Christian Day School until 1958. The church, parsonage and school building remain in use by the Mohican Immanuel Lutheran Congregation.

Appendix C: India

Missouri Synod's first venture into a foreign mission field began in 1894 when two men were commissioned to serve as missionaries for the Missouri Evangelical Lutheran India Mission (MELIM). They previously had served under the Leipzig Mission Society which had been working in India since 1836. The two men left the society because of doctrinal differences. In 1896 mission work began in Ambur and land was purchased for the construction of a school and other buildings.

In 1947 the government forced all missionaries to leave the country. Today this synodical body is known as the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC). Along with the Missouri Synod, it is a member of the International Lutheran Council and numbers 55,000 members.

Appendix D: Nigeria

Christian mission work began in Nigeria, Africa in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1887 an independent mission station was established among the Ibibio tribe at the mouth of the Qua Iboe River, east of Calabar.⁶³ As other missionaries arrived this became known as the Qua Iboe Mission. Eventually the interdenominational Qua Iboe Society was formed in support of this work. This group received considerable support from Presbyterian Christians in Ireland who instructed them concerning infant baptism. By 1925 the Qua Iboe Mission included sixty congregations.⁶⁴

⁶³ The missionary was Samuel A. Bill (1864-1942) who was born in Belfast, Ireland. While attending school in London, a letter was received from Scottish missionaries working in Calabar with an appeal for help from people farther to the east in the Niger Delta. Samuel Bill offered his service.

⁶⁴ The history of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria is told in *A Short History of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria, 1936-1986*, published by The Golden Jubilee History Sub-Committee, Nyong M. Uko, et. al., eds. (Obit Idim, Nigeria: The Lutheran Press, 1986).

Beginning in 1926 a rift occurred among the congregations in this field when the congregations in Afaha were denied the establishment of a local school at Obid Idim, Ibesikpo. The congregations also requested that a native be trained as a pastor but the Qua Iboe mission declined immediate action.

The congregations already were making plans to send forty-five year old Jonathan Udo Ekong to the United States to receive a seminary education.⁶⁵ Jonathan was the eldest surviving son of Chief Udo Ekong Nedem Ekpung of Afaha in the Ibesikpo clan. Qua Iboe missionary J. W. Westgarth wrote about him, "Jonathan was one of our first converts and for many years worked with me in an intimate and personal way as an Evangelist, and was a most trustworthy worker."⁶⁶

Jonathan spent eleven years in the United States. He attended Price Elementary and High School, Livingston College, Agricultural and Technical College, and Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary all located in Salisbury, North Carolina. He was ordained on July 3, 1936 at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Chicago, Illinois.

In the meantime, the sixteen Ibesikpo congregations had withdrawn from the Qua Iboe Mission. In 1933 Jonathan responded with a short cablegram saying, "The Lutherans Will Come."⁶⁷

Appendix E: Cornwall

In urging the ELS to begin a mission in Cornwall, England, Missouri Synod Pastor F. R. Webber wrote:

... Please do not get the wrong idea. There is no organized congregation there, and not even a chapel. I have been urging the matter for over ten years, but with no results. When I came back in 1938, after having spent some time in Cornwall in 1937 and in 1938, I went before the mission board of the Atlantic District [LCMS], gave them an account of the field and the work there, but one man summed up the general statement by saying, "Sheep stealing!"

This is not the case. Mr. Pedlar has made no attempt to make Lutherans out of Methodists. He will borrow a chapel that is not otherwise being used, or else a school house. He will announce his coming, and the people will come. They told me, "The people come because they have learned that the Lutheraneans [sic] always give us God's Word."

Mr. Pedlar works just as we do when we open up a in a new town. He announces his coming, and his service is open to any who cares to come. He asks nobody and urges nobody to stay away from the Methodist chapels and come to his. It's entirely up to them.

For over thirteen years he has been going from village to village, as he says "sowing the seed" which he has hoped others may come to harvest. He

⁶⁵ The story of Jonathan Udo Ekong is told by Udo Etuk in the biography *Jonathan Udo Ekong: The Log-Bell Ringer: Memoirs of a Patriarch* (Nigeria: The Lutheran Church of Nigeria, n.p., 1997).

⁶⁶ Nyong M. Uko, et. al., eds., *A Short History of the Lutheran Church of Nigeria, 1936-1986* (Obid Idim, Nigeria: The Lutheran Press, 1986), 3.

⁶⁷ Uko, 7.

preaches simple Law and Gospel, and the people who seem to have a genuine Gospel-hunger, know that he has something worth while to offer them....

Mission boards in this country seem to resent it when I tell them that my acquaintance with Cornwall has convinced me that our American system would only confuse the people. They have their own methods, which are quite like those of Scotland and Wales. If we rush in, try to organize right away and expect big results, it will frighten them.

Their method is that of Mr. Pedlar: seed sowing. A man goes from place to place, preaches to the people, gets acquainted with them, and they gradually gain confidence in him and become convinced of the truth of his teachings. It would prove fatal to rush in, as they do in the Atlantic District, make at least 100 calls a day, and organize a congregation inside of 30 days. The Cornishman would merely stay away, for he isn't accustomed to such mad haste. I very much fear that this is one reason why our boards are not interested. They want quick results....

Mr. Pedlar was a thoroughly conservative man when I knew him, and I have every reason to think he is yet. He has received shameful treatment at our hands – and yet it may be the great wisdom of the Lord, Who may have kept the field from falling into unfaithful hands, so that the faithful men might do the work that is to be done there... in spite of all the eloquent pleas of Mr. Pedlar, whose constant request has been: not support for himself, but just an ordained man to work with him.⁶⁸

Appendix F: Hong Kong

In 1950 a young Buddhist man by the name of Peter Chang, who had fled from China, was brought to the Christian faith in Hong Kong through the work of a Missouri Synod mission. He was determined to bring the gospel to his fellow Chinese refugees and, in 1956, started a school in a refugee village. In 1957 a rift occurred between Peter Chang and the Missouri Synod Hong Kong Conference.

Soon the Christian Chinese Lutheran Mission (CCLM) was established by Peter Chang. He graduated from Canton College. He then attended Lok-Yuk Theological Seminary and the Concordia Bible School, both in Hong Kong. In 1960 he came to the United States and enrolled at the Lutheran Bible Institute in Seattle, Washington. After four-months, he enrolled in Augsburg Seminary (Minneapolis, Minnesota) but, because its impending merger with The American Lutheran Church, he sought out Bethany Lutheran Seminary.

Earlier, while he was a student at the Lutheran Bible Institute, Peter Chang had circulated a letter among the pastors of the Wisconsin Synod seeking financial support. At that time WELS President Naumann published a notice in the *Northwestern Lutheran* stating that, since they had not been able to dissuade Peter Chang from attending the Lutheran Bible Institute, the mission could not be recommended for support by the WELS.⁶⁹ Later President Naumann wrote, "Had he been studying at Bethany instead of the Bible Institute at Seattle, I

⁶⁸ F. R. Webber, to Pastor Theiste, 18 June 1948, Cornwall folder, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

⁶⁹ *Northwestern Lutheran*, 48:5 (February 26, 1961): 78.

think I would not have inserted the notice in the church paper." He also stated that "Mr. Chang's mission might prove to be the first place in which the Wisconsin Synod can expand its world mission program."⁷⁰

⁷⁰ G. O. Lillegard, Milton H. Otto, and B. W. Teigen, "Peter Chang and Bethany," 5 October 1962, Hong Kong folder, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, page 6. Photocopied.