

Lutheranism in the United States
Part I: A Historical View of Lutheran Churches
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We began as an immigrant church:

German, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Finnish, Icelandic,
Hungarian, Latvian

Point #1: We should reach out to all new immigrants for that is our
ancestors experience.

Earliest Lutheran Contact with the American Continents:

1528: Welser Family of Augsburg owned a tract of land in modern
day Venezuela. Opened an economic trading post/colony. Some of the
Germans in that colony practiced the very new Lutheran Faith. Don't forget
Martin Luther posted the 95 theses on October 31, 1517.

North America: Story of Lutheran Immigration Patterns

From 1620-1790: Mostly German Immigration
From 1790-early 20th Century: Nearly All Northern European
Immigration

Most Organized Lutheran Activity was German in the early period of the US

1748 Ministerium of Pennsylvania established

1786 Ministerium of New York established

1803 North Carolina Synod established

1818 Ohio Synod established

1820 Maryland-Virginia Synod established

1820 Tennessee Synod established

Collected of German Churches in a Territory

1847: Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Established

1820: Drive to Combine under a Loose Confederation all German Lutheran
Church bodies: General Synod

1855: 2/3rds of all Lutherans in American belonged to the General
Synod

Period of Unity

Point #2: Unity is a natural drive within Lutheranism.

1855: Began of Period of Disunity

General Synod Broke up into three distinct parts: General Synod (1820), General Council (1867), Synodical Conference 1872 and many new Lutheran Churches were established

Why?

1. Increased Northern European Immigration: Non German Lutherans coming to America.
2. Definite Platform of 1855: Drive to re-write the Augsburg Confession and correct 5 errors of the Lutheran Faith. The movement upset tradition Lutherans.
3. Civil War: Slavery Issue Tore Apart Synods such as North Carolina from its Northern counterparts.

Point #3: Issues of diversity, politics and theology can quickly become divisive within the church if not handled faithfully and properly.

New Lutheran Bodies Emerge

United Lutheran Church

Established in 1918

German Roots and had its origins in the General Synod (1820)

Very open Lutheran tradition.

Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church

Established in 1860

Swedish Church as planted by the Church of Sweden

Originally apart of General Synod until the Definite Platform

Controversy

American Evangelical Lutheran Church

Renamed in 1953

Origins begin in 1872 with the Danes

Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church

Established in 1890

First Finnish Congregation established in 1876

Also known as the Suomi Synod

American Lutheran Church

Established in 1930

Germans from Iowa, Ohio, Texas and New York

United Evangelical Lutheran Church

Renamed in 1946

Established by Danes in 1896

Congregations found in Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska

Evangelical Lutheran Church

Renamed in 1946, previously known as the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. Very Conservative tradition.

Point #4: Each Tradition added to the quality of life in America: Colleges, Social Services, etc.

Movement to Unity Once again

1961 American Lutheran Church was established

American Lutheran Church

United Evangelical Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church

1963 Lutheran Church in America was established

United Lutheran Church in America

Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church

American Evangelical Lutheran Church

Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church

Missouri continued to stand alone

Experience Schism: 1979 Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches

1988 Evangelical Lutheran Church In America was established
Lutheran Church in America
American Lutheran Church
Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches

LCMS stands alone to this day

The ELCA and LCMS make up more than 95% of Lutherans in America Today.

Point #5: We are part of a very diverse and rich tradition.

But we are watching a new trend of decline

ELCA's Office of Research and Evaluation Projections

67,000 members in 2050

16,000 in worship by 2041

These Projections are based on death rates and decline.

Of course, there will be congregations and ministries that will thrive.

Leadership is facing this truth with open eyes.

We will need to experiment.

For example, we know that live streaming is here to stay at St. Paul's.

We often see 500 screens watching worship live or the recording.

If you assign 2 people per screen that 1000 people in worship.

Lutheran Identity will change.

Being Lutheran may not be about a church body in the future.

But a way of approaching scripture and faith.

Grace and love centered way of living out the faith.

Point #6 We need to be flexible and ready to change.