

Introduction

Sent Forth by God's Blessing... Into the World to the End of the Age

In the spring of 1847, 12 pastors from 14 congregations signed a constitution to form "The German Evangelical Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States." Their vision was to preserve Lutheran doctrine and mutual support among congregations.

Could they have imagined a Synod with 6,175 congregations, 8,500 pastors, 14,822 commissioned lay teachers, and 2.6 million members? Did they imagine mission activities in more than 50 countries?

This discussion guide will lead you through the history of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. It begins with Martin Luther and the Reformation, so you get a full picture of the Synod's history. Your study will help you see God's guiding hand through over 150 years of achievements and struggles, helping you understand the heritage you share.

May the Lord bless and guide your study to the end that Jesus Christ, our Savior, is glorified.

Chapter 1

Reformation to Immigration

In this chapter, Martin Luther ignites the Reformation as he posts his 95 theses and defends his beliefs at the Diet of Worms. Philip Melanchthon writes the Augsburg Confession, a summary of what Lutherans believe. The princes of Germany confess these beliefs before Emperor Charles V. In the 18th century, Saxons and Prussians immigrate to the United States, where they can freely believe, teach and confess Biblical truths.

1. What was the key Scripture that helped Luther understand God to be gracious and loving?
2. What were Martin Luther's expectations when he posted the 95 theses?
3. Many men had attempted to reform the church. Almost all were martyred. What gave Luther the courage to stand up to the edicts and threats of Pope Leo X?
4. What role did the media of Luther's day play in advancing Lutheranism and the Reformation?
5. What are the Lutheran Confessions? And why do we regard them so highly?
6. Why is the Augsburg Confession important to Lutherans?
7. Why did German Lutheran immigrate to America?

8. Comment on these personalities:

Martin Luther

Martin Stephan

Emperor Charles V

Johann A.A. Grabau

9. Describe rationalism. Given what rationalism was, why did the German Lutheran react so strongly...leaving homes and families for an unknown land?

10. Is rationalism evident today in the church? Why or why not?

11. Who were the "Old Lutherans"?

12. If you had lived in Germany in the 1830s, would you have emigrated? Why? Why not?

Chapter 2

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Immigration to Organization

The Saxons, Franconians and Loehe men come to the United States. The Saxons settle in Perry County, MO., and experience hardship and controversy. The Franconians immigrate to the Saginaw Valley of Michigan to establish a missionary colony to Native Americans. Wilhelm Loehe trains and sends pastor and teacher candidates to serve the hundreds of thousands of German settlers on the American frontier. The three groups come together to form a confessional German Lutheran Synod.

1. What were the key doctrinal issues in the controversy involving Martin Stephan and how would this controversy later influence the Synod?
2. There were many Lutheran synods in the United States. Why did they need one more?
3. Who were the key figures in the Altenburg Debate and what was the debate about?
4. Why did the Saxons form a seminary almost as soon as they arrived in Perry County? (What was unique about the first class of students?)
5. Describe Loehe's plan for the Franconian mission communities. What was good about the plan? What didn't work? Why?
6. Talk about some of the key reasons the Franconians were drawn to the Michigan area.

7. How did Craemer and Baierlein respond to Chief Bemassikeh's request, "Teach my people the truth"?
8. What important role did *Der Lutheran* play in the formation of the synod?
9. The name chosen for the new synod was "The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States." Speculate on why this name was chosen.
10. Discuss the contributions of:
 - Carl F. W. Walther
 - Wilhelm Loehe
 - Frederick C.D. Wyneken
 - August Craemer
 - Dorothea Craemer
 - Martin Stephan
11. If anyone in the group had ancestors who were among these early immigrants, do you recall any family stories about the immigration and the early settlers?

Chapter 3

Organization to World War 1

The Synod is founded to create a doctrinally sound confessional Lutheran church in America; to train pastors and teachers; to provide worship materials, hymnals, Bible studies; and to conduct missionary work. Among others, a great challenge was the influx of German immigrants to the United States in the late 19th century. The Synod grows despite controversies with other Lutherans and turbulent times in American history. German Lutherans experience discrimination brought on by World War 1.

1. How did the Synod carry out its early goals?
2. Discuss some of the ways the Synod was able to help immigrating Lutherans get settled in their new homeland.
3. What divided Walther and Loehe?
4. Why was the use of the German language so important in the early days of the LCMS? How did this change?
5. How did Walther view the role of the congregation in the Synod?
6. Discuss these key personalities:

Johann A.A. Grabau
Stephanus Keyl
Frederick W. Richmann

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Heinrich Christian Schwan

7. Why was the English Synod formed and what became of it? What was the role of the *Lutheran Witness*?
8. How did World War 1 impact the Synod?
9. The video discusses the Americanization of the Synod. What American and German influences do you see in your congregation today? Are there other ethnic influences in your congregation? Why is this good?
10. Discuss C.F.W. Walther and Frederick Wyneken as Synod presidents.
11. Nearly 2 million Germans came to America between 1840 and 1870. Besides religious freedom, what were other possible reasons?

Chapter 4

Seminaries and the Pastoral Ministry

Against great odds, the Saxons found Concordia Seminary in a log cabin in Perry County, MO. Later, it is moved to St. Louis. Leohe founds a seminary in Fort Wayne, IN, to complete the training of pastor and teacher candidates from Germany. Both seminaries grew to become key parts of the Lutheran Synod for the training of church workers.

1. Why would the Lutheran immigrants, fighting for their very survival, take on the ambitious project of starting a seminary?
2. Why was the Fort Wayne seminary called the "practical seminary" and the St. Louis seminary called the "theoretical seminary"?
3. What was one of Loehe's key conditions when he turned over the Fort Wayne seminary to the Missouri Synod?

Optional questions

4. Why was the Fort Wayne seminary moved to St. Louis and why was it later moved to Springfield, IL?
5. Why are these people important in the history of the Synod:

Gotthold Heinrich Loeber
Wilhelm Mueller
Wilhelm Sihler

Francis Pieper

6. What do you know about the seminary presidency of August Craemer?
7. 75,000 people attended the St. Louis seminary dedication in 1926. Why? And why wouldn't this large number do so today?
8. How effective was the Fort Wayne seminary during the first 15 years?
9. What was the issue in the 1974 St. Louis seminary walkout?
10. Why is the doctrinal integrity of the seminaries so important to the faith and spiritual life of the Synod?

Chapter 6 (11)

The Crisis

In the 1960s a crisis brewed within the Synod that boiled over in 1974. Professors and students at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis defended the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation and LCMS President J.A.O. Preus 11 defended the traditional confessional stance of the Synod.

The professors and students dramatically left the seminary and formed the Seminary in Exile (Seminex) and, in effect, a new Lutheran church body. The Synod's Mission Board largely followed Seminex. Following the crisis, the Synod rebuilt.

1. Describe the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation and how it is contrary to the traditional confessional beliefs of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Why is this so important to members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod?
2. Name other controversies in the history of the LCMS and what were the key issues in each?
3. Why was the 1969 election of J.A.O. Preus 11 to the Synod's presidency so controversial?
4. What did the fact-finding panel members learn and when they interviewed seminary professors and asked what they were teaching? How were the interview conducted?

5. Describe the role of Seminary President John Tietjen in the crisis.
6. What was Seminex? What happened to Seminex?
7. Describe the public perception of the Synod and the students at the time of the walkout.
8. How did the walkout of the Synod's Mission Board members threaten LCMS world mission efforts? How did J.A.O. Preus react?
9. What were the most significant negatives of this time? What good grew out of the crisis?
10. Discuss these key personalities:

John Tietjen
J.A.O. Preus