



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

# Minnesota South District

*... cultivating leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God*

## A History of the Development of the Minnesota South District Office



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# Table of Contents

<b>FORWARD</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
<b>A BRIEF SKETCH OF MINNESOTA'S PLACE IN LCMS DISTRICTS</b> . . . . .	<b>2</b>
<b>THE STORY OF THE DISTRICT OFFICE OF THE LCMS IN MINNESOTA</b> . . . . .	<b>4</b>
<b>1940 – 1946</b> . . . . .	<b>6</b>
Leased space at 3006 27th Ave. S	
<b>1947 – 1949</b> . . . . .	<b>8</b>
Leased space at the Loring Medical Building	
<b>1950 – 1956</b> . . . . .	<b>10</b>
Leased space at Lutheran Student Center	
<b>1956 – 1963</b> . . . . .	<b>12</b>
Owned building at 3553 Hennepin Ave.	
<b>1963 – 1983</b> . . . . .	<b>16</b>
Leased space at the Protestant Center	
<b>1983 – PRESENT</b> . . . . .	<b>21</b>
Owned space at 14301 Grand Ave. S	
<b>AFTERWORD</b> . . . . .	<b>24</b>
<b>LIST OF DISTRICT PRESIDENTS</b> . . . . .	<b>26</b>
<b>LIST OF DISTRICTS THAT SERVED THE STATE OF MINNESOTA</b> . . . . .	<b>27</b>
<b>LIST OF DISTRICT OFFICES</b> . . . . .	<b>27</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> . . . . .	<b>28</b>

# Forward

I began work at the District office located on Grand Avenue in Burnsville on Aug. 1, 2019. I hadn't been to the District office since attending new worker orientation in the fall of 2010. When I stepped into the office on my first day of work, I immediately ran into a wall. Not a figurative wall. It wasn't a moment of, "Oh, no what have I done! I should not have taken this Call." No, it was a literal wall . . . of cubicles. It was claustrophobic. I half expected Dilbert to come around the corner and explain, "It's like a restroom stall but with lower walls."<sup>1</sup> Of course, there are many other things from the world of Dilbert that describe the unpleasant life of working in cubicles, but the thought of coming to work every day surrounded by restroom stalls—well, that was enough to make me question my new Call. Fortunately, I soon learned there was already a plan to eliminate the cubicles and open the space. The District office was about to get a much-needed face-lift, driven by the need to repair a leaky roof and a fresh idea about what makes for a great work space.

This modest but much-needed face-lift to the District office made me wonder about previous office spaces of the Minnesota South District. Where was the District office before its present location? How did the District office even come to be in the first place? I began asking around and doing some reading, and eventually, something like a story of the District office space began to take shape.

At first glance, the history of the District office space may seem insignificant. After all, who cares? And why does it matter? My research has revealed that understanding the development of the District office space reveals some significant things about the purpose and function of the District's ministry. In a very real way, the physical space

occupied by the District is a reflection of the administration of that ministry. What follows is not merely a story of moving from one building to another, but rather it is the story of the growth of an administration as it seeks to carry out the mission of the Church both at home and abroad.

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1 [dilbert.com/strip/1993-04-21](http://dilbert.com/strip/1993-04-21)

## A Brief Sketch of Minnesota's Place in LCMS Districts

The work of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in what would become the state of Minnesota begins with the missionary journey of Pastor Ferdinand Sievers to the Minnesota Territory in 1856. This missionary journey was sponsored by the Northern District of the Synod (created in 1854), which at that time included Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ontario. The goal of this missionary effort was twofold:

1. To establish a possible mission among the Chippewa Indians.
2. To see about establishing congregations among the German immigrants who were building homesteads.<sup>2</sup>

These seeds of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, planted by Pastor Sievers and by those who accompanied him—others would water, but God would make them grow. Evidence of that growth is seen in the changing place of Minnesota in the district structure of the LCMS and in the growth of the District office.

By 1875, both Wisconsin and Minnesota had become states, the Civil War had ended, and people, especially German Lutheran immigrants, were on the move again, settling into these areas of the Northern District. This increasing population density and the growth of congregations brought about the creation of the Northwestern District of the LCMS. At this time, the state of Minnesota was divided into two circuits, the southern and the northern, with the Minnesota River as the dividing line.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps it was a foreshadowing of what would one day grow into two districts, though

divided along different geographic lines.

Just seven years later, in 1882, the growth of congregations suggested yet another geographical adjustment. In this year, the Northwestern District was divided into two new districts that would put a westward focus on Synod's missions. The State of Wisconsin became the Wisconsin District while Minnesota took on the Dakota territory to become the Minnesota-Dakota District.<sup>4</sup>

In 1889, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana all achieved statehood. With statehood came more immigration to these areas, creating population centers for mission and the establishment of LCMS congregations. When the general Synod met in 1905, they authorized the creation of the South Dakota District. Just five years later, in 1910, the general Synod would again divide the Minnesota-Dakota District with an eye on missions still looking west: Minnesota became the Minnesota District while North Dakota took on Montana to become the North Dakota-Montana District.<sup>5</sup>

This brief sketch of the creation of several Midwestern LCMS districts (including our own in Minnesota) demonstrates three things:

1. The creation of LCMS districts in the upper Midwest tended to follow the western expansion of the United States in this period.
2. As the number of congregations grew, the eastern part of a district would become its own district while the

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2 The detailed account of this extraordinary journey is recorded in two important sources: *The Planting Story of the Minnesota District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States* by H. Meyer in 1932 and *Missouri in Minnesota: A Centennial History of the Minnesota South District, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod 1882-1982* by Glenn W. Offermann in 1982.

3 Offermann, 41-42.

4 Offermann, 44, 46.

5 Offermann, 68-69.

western part would incorporate the territory or state to its west, expanding its outreach.

3. The shrinking of the geography of a district actually indicated growth in the establishing of congregations and the work of the church's mission in that given place.

The work of a district then, in the LCMS, really is all about walking together to do mission work in a given geography. Over time, this developed into two areas where an LCMS district primarily does its work: the gathering of monies from district congregations for home missions (mission work within the geography of a district) and the passing on of a portion of those monies to the general Synod for missions outside one's own district.

The growth of the Minnesota District's home missions throughout the first half of the 20th century led to yet one more division. During the 1962 Synod convention in Cleveland, Ohio, permission was given to divide the Minnesota District into the Minnesota North District and the Minnesota South District. The organization of these districts took place in 1963 and is the district structure of the LCMS in Minnesota to the present time.<sup>6</sup>

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6 Offermann, 138.

# The Story of the District Office of the LCMS in Minnesota

In the work of the Minnesota District's home missions, from 1910 up to its division into Minnesota North and Minnesota South in 1963 and on to the present, we can trace its growth through the development of the District office—both in personnel and office space.

The first real move toward what we might call the modern<sup>7</sup> District office occurs in 1926 with the establishment of the Minnesota District's finance committee. In the minutes of the finance committee, we see the Minnesota District retaining a Mr. A. E. Hitzemann as the financial secretary for \$300 a year.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the finance committee is also providing monies to help pay for clerical work for the District's treasurer, Mr. J. H. Meier.<sup>9</sup> Meier was housing the financial records of the District in the vault of the office of his personal business. As the work of the District grew, the District records began using too much of this borrowed vault space. Meier then acquired a used vault, which he stored in his office space, yet it was the District's own vault. The District paid \$127 for the vault and paid Meier's business \$65 per month to use his staff for clerical help and as rent for the space occupied by the District vault.<sup>10</sup>

These highlights from the minutes of the Minnesota District's finance committee reveal the genesis of the modern District office: paid staff, the use of office space for District work, and the safekeeping of District financial records. (At this point, I'd like to remind you that during this time, the District President was not full-time and maintained his call as pastor of a congregation. He primarily did his

work out of the office of the congregation he served.)

The next significant move toward a modern District office was the establishment of the Minnesota District's board of directors. The finance committee's minutes state the following reason:

This was for the purpose of having the needed closer association between the various Departments of the District, namely: Mission Board, Finance Committee and School Board.<sup>11</sup>

The 1936 Minnesota District convention approved the creation of the District's first board of directors. On July 8, 1936, District President John Christoph Ludwig Meyer convened the first meeting of the Minnesota District's board of directors.

The minutes of the board of directors for the first few years quickly reveal that the financial management of the District's home missions was demanding more and more time, personnel, and space. We can see this already in a resolution from the second board of directors meeting, in a rather frustrated sounding,

Whereas, The present arrangement of having our financial secretary living in St. Paul, while our treasurer lives in Minneapolis, is very inconvenient and cumbersome, making correct book-keeping and detailed financial reports very difficult (The treasurer often has to call or write the secretary, and vice versa, ever and again not finding each other home when phoning, and thus often causing a delay of a week and longer to straighten out certain records), and . . ."

The resolution resolved to have the financial

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7 "Modern" here means the District office as it is run and staffed today. No other implication is being made.

8 Financial Committee Minutes, Jan. 22, 1926; July 20, 1927.

9 Financial Committee Minutes, Feb. 21, 1928; April 25, 1928.

10 Financial Committee Minutes, Aug. 5, 1930; Oct. 21, 1930; Nov. 18, 1930.

11 Financial Committee Minutes, March 21, 1933.

secretary work out of the treasurer's office, hire the needed clerical help, and purchase the necessary office equipment.<sup>12</sup>

Just three years later, in the Aug. 9, 1939, board of directors minutes, the budget for 1940 reveals a few things that speak to the growth of the administration of the District's home missions. Under the budget for home mission, two District workers and their salaries are listed. The first is the mission director, who was budgeted \$2,400 for salary and rent expenses. The second is the director of Christian education<sup>13</sup> who was budgeted a total of \$2,550 for salary, rent, mileage, and expenses. In addition to these two positions, the treasurer's office was budgeted \$1,800 for office clerks and \$120 for rental of office space.

Heading into 1940 then, the Minnesota District had what appears to be two full-time church workers under home missions and a treasurer who needed paid clerical help and office space to accomplish the work. The board of directors minutes from Feb. 1 and May 8 indicate that the treasurer and the director of Christian education were to share office space. This apparently led to some disagreement over the utilization of the clerical help—the minutes mention,

Mr. Kuntz announced that the clerks in his office will not be able to take dictation or render other clerical service to the Director of Christian Education during the busy days when the monthly financial reports must be compiled.<sup>14</sup>

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12 BOD Minutes, Aug. 5, 1936.

13 This should not be confused with our modern use of DCE as a rostered position. This is an early title of a district's education executive.

14 BOD Minutes, Aug. 7, 1940.

## 1940 – 1946

### LEASED SPACE AT 3006 27TH AVE. S



3006 27th Ave. S as pictured in November / December 1983 *Minnesota South Lutheran*, year unknown.



3006 27th Ave. S in 2020.

By late 1940, the treasurer had rented space at **3006 27th Ave. S, Minneapolis, Minn.**, and was authorized to have a sign affixed to the door, which read, “Minnesota District (Missouri Lutheran Synod).”<sup>15, 16</sup> This rented office space on 27th Avenue South is considered the first District office building, and it served as the District headquarters (though this might be too strong a term at this time) through 1946. This office housed the treasurer, the director of Christian education (Pastor H. J. Boettcher), and the necessary clerical help.

The November 1940 edition of *Our Home Mission*<sup>17</sup> ran the following:

NOTICE *Change of Address of District Treasurer's Office* The office of the District Treasurer has been moved to 3006 27th Avenue South, in Minneapolis, Minn. Please address all mail for him to this new address. \* Pastor H. J. Boettcher also shares the same office space.<sup>18</sup>

An article in *Our Home Mission* about this first District office stated that the Minnesota District had outgrown its infant and child-

15 There is a picture of this office door with the sign in the November / December 1983 *Minnesota South Lutheran*, p. 15.  
 16 BOD Minutes, Nov. 6, 1940.  
 17 *Our Home Mission* was the official publication of the Minnesota District. Its name would later be changed to *The Minnesota Lutheran* and eventually *Minnesota South Lutheran* before being discontinued.  
 18 *Our Home Mission* November 1940, Vol. XVII, Number 11, p. 6.



hood shoes and become a full-grown man. The article described the amount of manual bookkeeping in dealing with \$235,000.00 in cash requiring over 3,000 remittances and even more in entries. These figures did not even include all of the extra bookkeeping involved in managing the Church Extension Fund's<sup>19</sup> many loans and extensive correspondence. With so much work going on, it is not hyperbole when the article related,

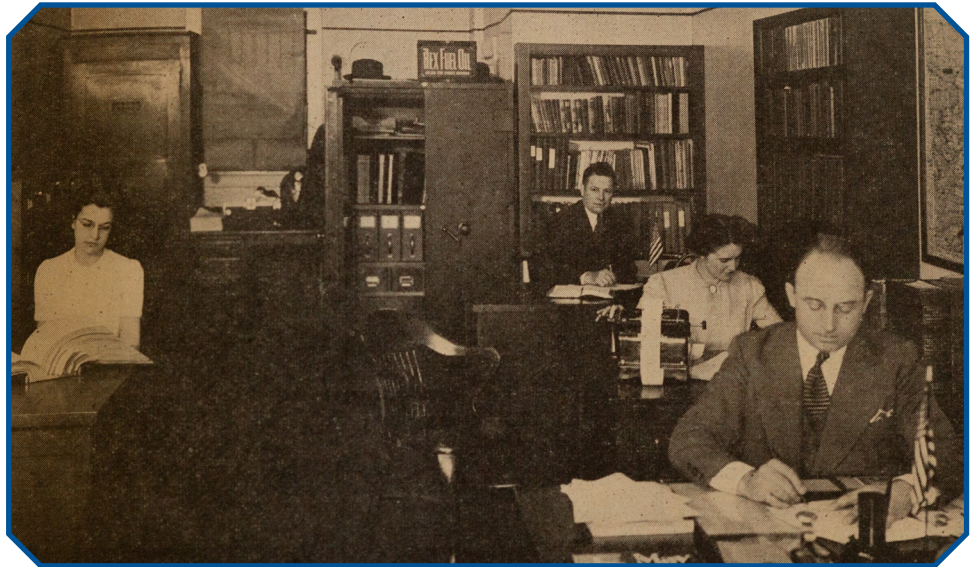
Such an office is an absolute necessity for the diversified channels through which both of our servants serve such a large District as the Minnesota District. Regardless of when you may visit these quarters you will always find these to be a bee hive of activity.

In spite such busyness, the reader is assured that whoever enters to get or give information, to seek and receive advice, will always find a hearty and sincere welcome.<sup>20</sup>

With so much work, the need for office help continued to grow. In February 1941, the director of Christian education was given an allowance of \$200 per month for secretarial help.<sup>21</sup> With growing expenses for clerical help, the board of directors approved the rental of a Dictaphone to be used by both the treasurer and the director of

Christian education.<sup>22</sup> In November 1943, the minutes reflect the addition of another telephone line to the office.<sup>23</sup>

In 1944, Dr. M. Graebner from Concordia College in St. Paul approached the board of directors with a proposal for a new library building that would provide sufficient room for an assembly hall for the board of directors and a District office. This discussion was tabled, so nothing came of the project as presented.<sup>24</sup> When the library was eventually built, it would not house the District offices. However, this proposal from Concordia College shows us that there was discussion regarding the creation of a more permanent Minnesota District headquarters.



Workers at the Minnesota District office featured in the July 1941 issue of *Our Home Mission*, while the office was housed at 3006 27th Ave. S in Minneapolis.

19 The Church Extension Fund at this time was managed by individual Districts. It would not become a separate entity called Lutheran Church Extension Fund until the 1980s.

20 *Our Home Mission*, July 1941, Vol. XVIII, Number 7, p. 1-2.

21 BOD Minutes, Feb. 5, 1941.

22 BOD Minutes, May 7, 1941.

23 BOD Minutes, Nov. 3, 1943.

24 BOD Minutes, April 20 and Aug. 16, 1944.

## 1947 – 1949

### LEASED SPACE AT THE LORING MEDICAL BUILDING



Loring Medical Building in 2020.

This discussion began in earnest in October 1945 when the board of directors resolved to appoint an official committee “to gather facts regarding the establishment of a centralized Minnesota District Office.”<sup>25</sup> This committee located offices that could accommodate all of the District workers. On November 20, 1946, the board of directors resolved to sign a three-year lease for two offices, **400 and 402 of the Loring Medical Building at 1409 Willow St., Minneapolis, Minn.** The cost of the lease was reported as \$130 per month.<sup>26</sup>

The District treasurer was located in the 402 office while the counselor<sup>27</sup> in parish education and the counselor in missions and stewardship were located in the 400 office.<sup>28</sup> This was now the second home for the District offices and the first one that housed all of the full-time District staff in one place.

The December 1946 edition of *The Minnesota Lutheran* ran the following notice:

ANNOUNCEMENT New District Offices, After January 1, 1947, the Minnesota District Offices will be located at 400-402 Loring Medical Build-

25 BOD Minutes, Oct. 17, 1945.

26 BOD Minutes, Nov. 20, 1946.

27 Prior to the use of the term “executive” for District positions, the term “counselor” was utilized.

28 BOD Minutes, Sept. 15, 1948.

ing, 1409 Willow, Minneapolis 4, Minnesota. Included in these are the offices of the Counselor in Missions and Stewardship, Counsellor in Parish Education and the District Treasurer. We cordially invite you to inspect our new quarters after January 1st.<sup>29</sup>

In spite of this warm invitation to inspect the new quarters, the record indicates that congregations were slow to take note of the change of address. In the February 1947 edition of *The Minnesota Lutheran*, on opposite facing pages, are two notices for treasurers to pay attention to the new District address:

**Please Note!** Our District Treasurer is not Mr. Paul Kuntz, neither is the Treasurer's office address 3006 27th Ave. S. For four months or longer, the Treasurer has been Mr. Paul C. Albrecht, and the office address is: 400 Loring Medical Bldg., 1409 Willow, Minneapolis 4, Minn. Will congregational treasurers please take notice! Correspondence and remittances are still improperly addressed, and therefore unduly delayed.

And again, in case the treasurers did not take notice, the opposite page had another:

**Treasurers, Please,** All checks sent to the District Treasurer should be made payable to Paul C. Albrecht, District Treasurer and addressed to 1409 Willow Street, Minneapolis 4, Minnesota. Remittance envelopes are available, please write for them. Also, checks sent to us by organizations within the congregation for any particular mission should not be made payable to that mission but to the District Treasurer.<sup>30</sup>



Loring Medical Building in 2020.

29 *The Minnesota Lutheran*, December 1946, Volume XXII, Number 11, p. 6.

30 *The Minnesota Lutheran*, February 1947, Volume XXIII, Number 2, p. 6-7.

## 1950 – 1956

### LEASED SPACE AT LUTHERAN STUDENT CENTER

#### Dedication of University Chapel

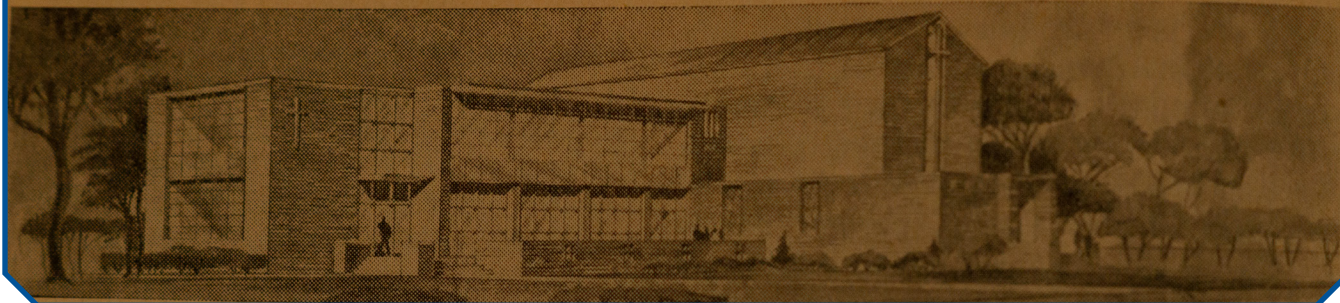


Illustration of the Lutheran Student Center / University Chapel, which was dedicated on Sunday, April 16, 1950.

One of the home missions the Minnesota District had been invested in for quite some time was the campus ministry at the University of Minnesota. One of the major projects for this unique ministry was the building of the Lutheran Student Center, which was completed in 1950. With the lease ending at the Loring Medical Building at the end of 1949, the District offices were moved into space at the newly dedicated Lutheran Student Center located at **1101 University Ave. SE, Minneapolis 14, Minn.** The District paid rent to the student center while their offices were located there.<sup>31</sup> The December 1949<sup>32</sup> edition of *The Minnesota Lutheran* carried the following, which once again asked congregation treasurers to pay particular attention to the change of address:

**Announcement, New Address of District Offices.** After January 1, 1950, the Minnesota District Offices will be located in the Lutheran Student Center, 1101 University Ave. S.E., Minneapolis

14, Minnesota. This includes the office of Dr. H. J. Boettcher, The Rev. O. H. J. Brauer and the District Treasurer, Paul C. Albrecht. The treasurers of our congregations in particular are urged to observe the above change, in order that there may be no delay in their remittances reaching the District Treasurer's office."<sup>33</sup>

This was now the third location of the Minnesota District offices. At this time, it would be appropriate to note, yet again, that the District president was still not full-time and still did not have office space at the District's address.

It appears, from a resolution made at the District convention in 1954, that the arrangement for the District offices to be housed at the Lutheran Student Center was to be temporary. The convention resolved to consider the different possibilities, and a committee was formed following the convention that would report to the next convention.<sup>34</sup> In late 1954 and early 1955, the board of directors

31 BOD Minutes, Sept. 21, 1949.

32 The official District copy notes that this edition was wrongly printed on the cover as December 1950 instead of December 1949.

33 *The Minnesota Lutheran*, December 1949, Volume 25, Number 11, p. 2.

34 "Overture J, DISTRICT OFFICES, WHEREAS, the use of the rooms in the Lutheran University Center as Minnesota District Offices was to be only temporary until the needed office space became available in the Lutheran Memorial Center; and WHEREAS, The Lutheran Memorial Center is not completed but for financial reasons no space was made available for such offices as originally planned; therefore be it RESOLVED, That the Minne-

minutes reveal that there was continued discussion about the future location of the District offices as the committee on District offices continued to make progress reports. It can be inferred that the possibilities included expanding the space at the Lutheran Student Center or a separate office space all together. This committee then reported to the 1955 District convention.<sup>35</sup>

At the 1955 District convention, the committee offered a report with five observations that were all favorable to maintaining the offices at the university center building<sup>36</sup> because of financial advantages to the university center and the fact that all involved seemed favorable to remaining at the current location. The report then offered two options:

- A. Purchase property and build new.
- B. Improve the present space by building.

The committee recommended the second option as the best permanent arrangement for District office space. That recommendation was then put into a formal resolution for the convention to adopt. But the convention voted the resolution down and instead put forth a resolution for the first option, which was then adopted by the convention with a plan to pay for it.<sup>37</sup>

The first WHEREAS of the initial resolution that was voted down says, “The Need for permanent District Offices has been the serious concern of the Minnesota District for a number of years.”<sup>38</sup> The sources do not seem to directly indicate what the “serious concern” was; however, this telling phrase indicates, at least, that the previous two office spaces and the present one were not adequate for the Minnesota District to administer its home mission efforts and its commitments to the general Synod.



Off-campus student apartments near the University of Minnesota in 2020, where the Lutheran Student Center previously stood.

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sota District in convention assembled determine whether or not it be desirable for the Minnesota District Offices to remain in the University Center.” (*The Minnesota Lutheran*, July 1954, Volume 30, Number 7, p. 6.)

35 BOD Minutes, Oct. 19, 1954; Dec. 14, 1954; Feb. 15, 1955; May 10, 1955; June 21, 1955.

36 You will notice that the name of this building is fluid in the sources: University Lutheran Center, Lutheran Student Center, University Center Building, The Lutheran Memorial Center, University Chapel. It is all the same building. I think the varied use is due to informal speaking rather than official name changes.

37 The full committee report and resolution is found in *The Minnesota Lutheran*, October 1955, Volume 31, Number 9, p. 31-32.

38 *The Minnesota Lutheran*, October 1955, Volume 31, Number 9, p. 32.

## 1956 – 1963

### OWNED BUILDING AT 3553 HENNEPIN AVE.



3553 Hennepin Ave. as pictured in the October 1956 *Minnesota South Lutheran*.



3553 Hennepin Ave. in 2020.

Following the 1955 convention, the board of directors through the District's stewardship committee created a District office committee. This committee then set to work identifying properties that would be suitable to serve as the Minnesota District office. The committee researched both existing properties and the possibility of a new building. One of the new building options considered was building on the campus of Concordia University, St. Paul.<sup>39</sup>

The board of directors seemed ready, at least twice, to purchase properties when another option would come up and defer the decision. In May 1955, the board of directors approved purchase of a property on East River Boulevard and Pelham subject to examination and approval by the architect. Yet just a month later, in June, the board was suddenly hustling to consider a property on Hennepin Avenue and 36th Street that apparently was too good to pass up. The board even suggested that members who had not yet seen the property do so during the break before the

afternoon session, after which the decision to purchase would be made. That afternoon, the board of directors adopted the following recommendation of the District office committee and the executive committee:

We recommend that the Board purchase the property on the corner of Hennepin Avenue and W. 36th Street, being offered to us under the following provisions: \$37,500 for the building itself including the Real Estate 75x75; \$6,000 for an additional 63 feet on Hennepin Avenue, north of the building, for possible future expansion; \$1500 for a parking lot in the rear, 83x58; this entire property is zoned for Commercial use. The building consists of 4 offices, plus 1 room for work space and storage. The property is readily accessible and provides adequate work space for the present use of our District. The building was completed in November of 1955, possession will be given on September 1.<sup>40</sup>

With that resolution, the fourth location—but the first owned property—for the Minnesota District office was made official. The July 1956 edition of *The Minnesota Lutheran* announced the news:

39 BOD Minutes, Sept. 20, 1955; Oct. 18, 1955; Nov. 15, 1955; Dec. 13, 1955; Jan. 16, 1956; Feb. 21, 1956; April 17, 1956; May 15, 1956

40 BOD Minutes, June 12, 1956.

**The Board of Directors Meet**, Every Board meeting has a special item of interest. This time it was the buying of an office building to house the District offices. It is located on Hennepin Avenue and 36th St. West in Minneapolis. It includes an extra lot for expansion and also a considerable area for parking. All three were purchased for \$45,000. Possession will be taken September 1.<sup>41</sup>

In the July meeting, the board approved the purchase of furniture for the new office not to exceed \$2,500, appointed the treasurer as custodian of the property, and voted to hire another secretary. The committee on District offices was dismissed with a vote of thanks for their services.<sup>42</sup> The October 1956 edition of *The Minnesota Lutheran* carried a notice in bold: “**New Address of District Office. 3553 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis 8, Minn. Telephone: Regent 2640.**”<sup>43</sup>

This building would serve as the headquarters for the Minnesota District for the next eight years. What is unclear in the sources is whether or not this new space had an office for the District president. The District president at this time was still not full-time, but it seems plausible that the new space would have allowed for him to occupy a space to do his District work. However, *The Lutheran Annual* still lists a different address for the District president than that of the District office. There were offices for the full-time District staff.

Throughout the remainder of 1956 and 1957, the usual sorts of improvements were being made to make the new space more usable. Things like adding signage and improving the parking lots and replacing windows were all noted.<sup>44</sup> And yet, in the midst of what

is routine for property management, a very different discussion began in January 1958. The board of directors approved the following recommendation regarding the District office building:

Resolved to recommend the Board appoint a committee which is to look into the matter of disposing of the present office building because it does not provide enough space, and also because another location might be more suitable. Said Committee should also seek to secure a more suitable building.<sup>45</sup>

Evidently, the District had quickly outgrown its newly purchased property and already felt the pressing need for more space to accomplish the administration of its home missions and commitments to the general Synod.

In February 1958, the executive committee reported to the board of directors that they had appointed a custodial committee to study the relocation of the District offices. In the meantime, a few changes needed to be made to the current building to create space for another District counselor position.<sup>46</sup> This fact highlights the point that more space was definitely needed to accommodate the growing District staff.

The work of the custodial committee from its formation in February 1958 until the District would move its offices in December 1963 is a story that could be viewed in two ways. First, it could be viewed as a story of the frustrating inefficiency of committee work to get a task accomplished in a timely way—as is illustrated in the board of directors minutes from August 1959:

Because of an emergency existing at the Office

41 *The Minnesota Lutheran*, July 1956, Volume 32, Number 7, p. 2.

42 BOD Minutes, July 17, 1956.

43 *The Minnesota Lutheran*, October 1956, Volume 32, Number 9, p. 4.

44 BOD Minutes, Nov. 20, 1956; Dec. 18, 1956; Aug. 12, 1956; Oct. 22, 1957.

45 BOD Minutes, Jan. 28, 1958.

46 BOD Minutes, Feb. 18, 1958; March 18, 1958.

of the District, the emergency being lack of space for the ever increasing amount of work to be done at the District Office, the Board resolved that the Custodial Committee continue its study with a view to providing more space in one form or another and report to the Board as soon as possible.<sup>47</sup>

The fact that this situation regarding space was called an emergency reveals frustration, most likely at the pace of the work. It had been a year-and-a-half, and little progress toward resolution had been made. In the meantime, the work of the office was being carried on in cramped quarters. What else could be done but get emergency into the record so people would understand it was time to get this thing done?

However, it could not have been that much of an emergency since this note comes at the end of the minutes under "MISCELLANA." This hardly seems the place to discuss a real emergency. Nonetheless, anyone who has had to work on a project like this through committees and boards can certainly relate to the frustration that calls up strong words like emergency to try to get things moving.

Second, we can view the story of this committee's work through the lens of our own time and place, from the advantage of hindsight's 20/20: that we would rather see the hand of God's providence in their work that ultimately led to the offices moving to a new and larger space that was not even an option when their work had begun. We could also say that God in His providence used the inefficiency of committee work to bring about the blessed end of this part of the story.

This part of the story begins with the earliest recommendation of the custodial committee, adopted by the board of directors, which was to keep the present office building on Hennepin and expand it.<sup>48</sup> The plans for

expansion included expanding the present building rather than acting on a chance to purchase the building immediately to the north. This was not considered since the staff believed they needed to be in one building working together.

While the expansion was being considered, District President Stahlke received an objection. The substance of the objection can be inferred to not wanting the District to spend the money and the District not having the authority to spend the money on the District office building. President Stahlke answered the objections by showing that the 1954 and 1955 conventions gave the District board of directors the authority to do what needed to be done to the existing property. In the meantime, the custodial committee was also tasked with renting additional office space until the expansion could be completed.<sup>49</sup>

Throughout 1960, the plans for expansion were being formalized. However, already in January a sense of fatigue over these plans was evident, "Once again the expansion of our office building was thoroughly aired by the members of the Board of Directors."<sup>50</sup> In the same meeting, President Stahlke stated that the same protests had arisen again at the recent circuit counselors meeting. President Stahlke, however, announced that a majority of the circuit counselors expressed themselves in favor of expanding.

The minutes of the circuit counselors meeting would suggest that while President Stahlke was being truthful, the vote was nonetheless the thinnest majority possible. A look at the record is telling. The motion was actually that the office expansion be postponed. The fact that the motion was put forward in the negative indicates that this motion most likely came from the opposition.

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47 BOD Minutes, Aug. 18, 1959.

48 BOD Minutes, July 15, 1958; March 16, 1958; May 16, 1958.

49 BOD Minutes, Sept. 15, 1959, Oct. 20, 1959; Nov. 17, 1959.

50 BOD Minutes, Jan. 19, 1960.



The motion was defeated by a vote of 14-12, revealing a majority in favor of proceeding.<sup>51</sup> However, this certainly is not an overwhelming majority nor is it anything close to consensus. Feeling the possibility of growing opposition to the project, the board approved the recommendation of the custodial committee to proceed *at once* with the proposed addition. As a vote of solidarity, in the face of the discussed opposition, the minutes reflect that the motion “was adopted by a strong majority.”<sup>52</sup> However, the numbers are not given, so we are left to wonder about how strong the majority really was.

The custodial committee for the next four months prepared an extensive report and recommendation to be given to the August 1960 District convention by reviewing the history of the District office’s present location through convention proceedings and board of directors’ minutes.<sup>53</sup> This report was presented to the board of directors in March and approved for presentation to the August District convention.<sup>54</sup> The custodial committee gave its report and recommendation to the convention as approved by the board to move forward with expanding the present building. However, in the weeks leading up to the convention, another possibility came about that would lead the work of the custodial committee in a very different direction. A convention surprise!

In “The Convention Proceedings,” as reported in *The Minnesota Lutheran*, the REPORT OF COMMITTEE NO. 10—DISTRICT OFFICE BUILDING is included. In the seventh WHEREAS, this new possibility suddenly occurs in the record,

WHEREAS, in recent weeks the Minnesota

Council of Churches has approached our District Officials and offered them adequate office and storage space as well as adequate meeting rooms for committees in their new building to be erected at 122 W. Franklin in Minneapolis, for a very reasonable cost.

In spite of all of the hard work of the custodial committee and its clear and thorough report regarding moving forward on expansion, the convention went with this new direction, resolving the following three things:

1. It authorized the board of directors to enter into an agreement with the Minnesota Council of Churches to lease the appropriate amount of space.
2. It resolved to hold the present office expansion plans in abeyance.
3. It resolved that the board of directors had the discretion to decide whether to lease or sell the present Hennepin office building.<sup>55</sup>

Just that quickly, in a matter of weeks, years of hard work of trying to resolve the problem of adequate office space for the District were led in a radically new direction. And yet it would still be another three years before this new direction was realized.

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51 Minutes of the “College of Circuit Counselors,” Jan. 11-12, 1960, contained in the BOD Bound Minutes, 1960-61.

52 BOD Minutes, Jan. 19, 1960.

53 Evidence of this report being researched is seen in the BOD Minutes. Penciled-in check marks are on all references to the office and all those referenced are in the report.

54 BOD Minutes, March 15, 1960.

55 *The Minnesota Lutheran*, November 1960, Volume 36, number 10, p. 59-60.

## 1963 – 1983

### LEASED SPACE AT THE PROTESTANT CENTER



Protestant Center as pictured in the October 1963 *Minnesota South Lutheran*.



Protestant Center (now the Minnesota Church Center) in 2020.

As the story is told in the board of directors minutes, things were quietly progressing through 1961 and 1962 while construction proceeded on the Protestant Center. However, it is clear that sometime in the summer or early fall of 1962, doubts began to form about whether or not the Protestant Center was going to be completed. In the Nov. 20, 1962, board of directors meeting, the custodial committee, having lost faith in the project, recommended a complete reversal to be presented to the January 1963 District convention.<sup>56</sup>

The custodial committee recommended that the District withdraw its agreement because the Protestant Center had not been able to carry out its commitment with respect to an occupancy date or even assurance that the building would actually be built. The committee further recommended that it return to the plans for enlarging the current

District office building on Hennepin.<sup>57</sup> Just a month later, the board of directors approved recommending to the January convention a specific plan for expansion, including cost, to be adopted.<sup>58</sup> The reversal seemed to be a go.

However, the reversal was ultimately reversed (yes, again!), as reported in the first convention proceedings of the newly formed Minnesota South District:

**Offices in Protestant Center**—A contract to rent office space in the Protestant Center in Minneapolis had been brought up for reconsideration at the January convention, at which time the matter was tabled. This matter was again before the convention. However, since January the construction has gone forward to be completed within the next month, and certain partitions have been installed for the space assigned to us involving some expenses for which the District felt morally responsible. At the present time it seemed inadvisable to attempt to withdraw from the contract and the convention voted to continue the agreement. This means that the District

56 This was a one-time special convention whose main task was to finalize the separation of the Minnesota District into two districts, Minnesota North and Minnesota South.

57 BOD Minutes, Nov. 20, 1962.

58 BOD Minutes, Dec. 18, 1962.

offices will move into these new quarters in the Protestant Center in Minneapolis on about Oct. 1.<sup>59</sup>

Now things started moving quickly. In September 1963, the board of directors moved to sell the District office at 3553 Hennepin Ave.<sup>60</sup> A purchase agreement was made in November with the Hennepin County Division of the Minnesota Education Association with transfer of ownership taking place in February of 1964.<sup>61</sup> On Dec. 9, 1963, the District moved its offices into the Minnesota Protestant Center at **122 W Franklin Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.**<sup>62</sup> The board of directors noted in its final minutes for 1963 that their January meeting would be at the Protestant Center on Jan. 21 at 9:00 a.m.<sup>63</sup> The announced emergency need for more space in 1959 seemed to be resolved.

Or was it?

Not so fast. Already in 1964, the board of directors were asked to empower the custodial committee to rent more space in the Protestant Center when it became available.<sup>64</sup> Seriously? Still not enough space? In July 1965, the space became available and would finally serve as adequate space for the next 20 years.<sup>65</sup> This was now the fifth location of the District office for Minnesota, but also the first for the newly formed Minnesota South District.

This move and expansion of District office space was clearly much more complicated and onerous than the previous ones. Internally, there were no surprises, even if there were difficulties. Once space was occupied, it seldom seemed to be enough. As the District

expanded its work, the office needed more workers, and with more workers comes the need for more space. It made sense to expand or move, and the board of directors responded to those urgings. Externally, this move had opposition that the other moves did not have. There was for the first time in the sources those who begin to question the necessity of the growing administration of the District in order to accomplish its work. And this, in spite of the fact that the District president still was not full-time. Though this would not remain so for long.

With this move, it is not clear if the District president initially even had an office space at the Protestant Center. *The Lutheran Annual* still lists President Stahlke's address as distinct from the District office address. However, when Rev. Martin Lieske was elected District president in 1966, *The Lutheran Annual* had his address as the Protestant Center address. President Lieske was also the first full-time District president, so it would make sense that he would have an office space in the Protestant Center.

It is plausible that President Stahlke chose not to move into an office in the new building because he knew he was not going to serve again and preferred to complete his term using his church office. It is also plausible that the reason for the needed extra space mentioned in 1964 and 1965 was in anticipation of the District president becoming full-time and therefore needing the extra office space starting in 1966. However, the sources used in this paper cannot confirm this theory.

Yet it seems reasonable to conclude that

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59 *The Minnesota Lutheran*, October 1963, Volume 1, Number 7, p. 8.

60 BOD Minutes, Sept. 17, 1963.

61 Proceedings of the Minnesota South District Convention, Aug. 17-20, 1964, p. 45.

62 Proceedings of the Minnesota South District Convention, Aug. 17-20, 1964, p. 45.

63 BOD Minutes, Dec. 17, 1963.

64 BOD Minutes, Oct. 15, 1964.

65 BOD Minutes, Jan. 19, 1965; July 20, 1965.

1966 is the year that the genesis of a modern District office, begun in 1926, had reached its maturity. Now, there was a fresh, spacious office and a full-time District president included in the office personnel.<sup>66</sup>

Throughout the next two decades, other signs of continuing modernity are evident. When the District moved its offices into the Protestant Center, there were three full-time District counselors: one for missions, one for stewardship, and one for education.<sup>67</sup> When President Lieske was elected as the first full-time District president in 1966, there was a brief meeting with the board of directors at the convention at which time it was noted that he would receive all his mail at the Protestant Center.<sup>68</sup> In other words, he would no longer, as previous presidents had, do his professional business through his home address. In addition to this change of address, this brief meeting also discussed how the various committees would organize themselves and that the vice-presidents would not automatically become the chairmen of their respective committees.<sup>69</sup> These initial, minor organizational changes are a signal of what would become a major organizational change led by President Lieske.

In November 1968, the board adopted, at the recommendation of the coordinating council and the vice-presidents, that committees now be called “departments.” This restructuring established a new department of youth ministry and a full-time youth counselor at the District office.<sup>70</sup> However, this did not create a fourth full-time counselor. The

job descriptions were shuffled to accommodate the older areas while incorporating the work of the youth counselor. This restructuring led to six departments: “administration, parish education, missions and stewardship, finance (new), social ministry, and youth ministry.”<sup>71</sup>

In 1970, the District convention restructured the board of directors, reducing it from 34 to 21. This reduction balanced the lay-clergy ratio as well. In addition, the restructuring called for presidential appointment of the standing committees and the appointment of the three full-time assistants. There would be seven standing committees that were chaired by the members of the board of directors. All members of the committees were to be appointed by the president and ratified by the board. The president was authorized to write the job descriptions of the three assistants and re-assign duties as necessary.<sup>72,73</sup>

Following this restructuring of the board of directors, the conversation continued into the 1970s regarding the structure of the District. There is clearly a growth of committees and subcommittees under President Lieske throughout all of this restructuring. The most telling sign of this ever-widening bureaucracy is indicated merely by this title from the SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS in the April 15, 1974, board of director minutes, “COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES.”<sup>74</sup> It is safe to suggest that once you have a committee on committees, you have created more than a few levels of administration.

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66 Another, unfortunate sign of modernity, is the burden of the modern pastor. President Lieske mentions in passing in his report to the Board in 1967, “that psychiatric care is becoming necessary for more pastors.” BOD Minutes, May 16, 1967.

67 BOD Minutes, Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes, May 19, 1964.

68 BOD Minutes, Aug. 18, 1966.

69 BOD Minutes, Aug. 18, 1966.

70 BOD Minutes, Nov. 15, 1968.

71 Offermann, 149.

72 Offermann, 149.

73 BOD Minutes, March 17, 1970.

74 BOD Minutes, April 15, 1974.

At a board of directors retreat held in November 1974, a lot of time was spent on the function of the District's board of directors. At the same time, the mission administration committee began discussing the decentralization of the District's mission. It seems, in tracking this discussion, that the growth of committees and subcommittees outpaced a clear purpose and a sound organizational rationale. This discussion would continue through the election of the next District president, O.H. Cloeter, in 1978 with a process called, "Enterprise Objectives," that would lead to a deeper discussion of District structure and recommendations to the District convention in 1980.<sup>75</sup> The District convention resolved to table the recommendations as further study was needed.<sup>76</sup> This seems mostly due to the fact that the Synod was also considering some changes at its upcoming convention in 1982 that could affect any direction the District convention would decide to go. In spite of this work being tabled, one thing that came out of this "Enterprise Objectives" process was a clearly stated purpose of the District's ministry:

The overarching purpose of the church is to make disciples of all people and to gather them into fellowship of believers so that they may be nurtured for their own faith and may be equipped for a life of service.

The Minnesota South District exists as a servant structure to unite in a corporate body congregations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod located within the territorial limits of the corporation, for the purpose of assisting these congregations in carrying out the purpose of the church.

We understand this service and assistance to be in two forms: first, that the congregations may do together what none can do effectively alone; secondly, that the congregations may receive

helps and resources for those activities which it carries on locally.<sup>77</sup>

With this purpose in mind, the District structure committee would present a report at the beginning of 1980 that would clarify the roles of staff and committees and how they reported to one another, with the addition of specific policy written for every level of administration. Included as well was a flow chart illustrating the relationships of the staff to the board and its committees.<sup>78</sup> While this model was still administratively heavy, the results seemed to streamline the effectiveness of the District office in its decision making.

In the midst of these very important discussions about the most effective ways for the District office to accomplish its ministry goals, Cross View Lutheran Church of Edina reached out to the District with an interesting proposal. This proposal would ultimately lead to the construction of the present District office building on Grand Avenue in Burnsville, Minn. The resolution came from the congregation's church council and was an invitation to create a joint task force between the congregation and the District's board of directors for developing dual facilities on the Cross View property. The reasons cited discussed the difficulty of parking at the Church Center, higher visibility for a District office in its own facility, cheaper cost over time, and an ideal location for easy access from anywhere in the District. Plus, Cross View was considering an expansion and thought a joint study might prove a win-win for both the congregation and the District. The resolution was adopted, and the joint task force was formed.<sup>79</sup> In August, after doing the actual numbers, it was reported that it would be cheaper for both the congregation and the District if the offic-

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75 BOD Minutes, March 15, 1979.

76 Minnesota South District of the LCMS, Convention Proceedings, 1980.

77 BOD Minutes, June 4, 1979.

78 BOD Minutes, Feb. 5, 1980.

79 BOD Minutes, April 5, 1979.

es were to remain at the Church Center, so the committee disbanded.<sup>80</sup>

In December 1979, the Church Center notified the District that rent would likely substantially increase soon. This, coupled with the fact that the District had a surplus of \$170,000 from the sale of property in Eden Prairie, moved the board to reconvene the committee to examine the possibility of an alternate District office and set these monies aside for such a project.<sup>81</sup>

The next opportunity for a new location of the District office was to lease office space at Edina East High School. This, however, was contingent upon Minneapolis Lutheran High School contracting a lease in the same building.<sup>82</sup> In October 1980, the board moved to delay signing the lease with Edina East High School and to study other sites for locating the District office that included avenues to construct a permanent, District-owned office building that could be presented to the 1982 District convention.<sup>83</sup>

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80 BOD Minutes, Aug. 7, 1979.

81 BOD Minutes, Dec. 4, 1979.

82 BOD Minutes, March 4, 1980. These minutes also included a lease price comparison to the Church Center and a schematic of the office space at Edina East High School.

83 BOD Minutes, Oct. 7, 1980. The minutes include a site selection worksheet with seven possibilities. The present Burnsville site scored highest.

## 1983 – present

### OWNED SPACE AT 14301 GRAND AVE. S



14301 Grand Ave. S as it neared completion in July 1983, as pictured in the October / November 1983 *Minnesota South Lutheran*.



14301 Grand Ave. S in 2021.

After the committee had done its research, they recommended that the best site would be the property in Burnsville adjacent to Redeemer Lutheran Church.<sup>84,85</sup> In April 1981, the board was moving to hire an architect to prepare a model for the proposed office.<sup>86</sup> In October, the purchase of the parcel of property adjacent to Redeemer was moving forward; a new committee to work with the architect on space needs, site evaluation, and preliminary drawings was created; and it was moved that drawings and costs be prepared and approved by the board to submit to the 1982 District convention for final approval.<sup>87</sup> By June 1982, the purchase agreement with Redeemer was being finalized, and the final plans were being approved and moving into construction drawings, with financing being decided in August right before the convention.<sup>88</sup>

The plan and resolution were put before

the 1982 District convention. The resolution was adopted to begin immediate construction of the new office building on the proposed Burnsville site with the following qualifications: The cost was not to exceed \$750,000, and the District board of directors would determine the financing prior to the beginning of construction. The September / October edition of the *Minnesota South Lutheran* had a large layout of the new District office to be built, including floor plans and a lengthy article explaining the rationale and history of the project, the convention resolution, the financial details, and what the building would contain. The cover featured the exterior elevation of the south side of the building.<sup>89</sup>

An examination of the convention proceedings reveals that there was significant time spent on this resolution. Discussion of the resolution extended from the second session into the fourth. After the resolution

84 Redeemer would later do a property swap with the Wisconsin Synod congregation Good Shepherd, which answers the question, “Why is the District office next to a Wisconsin Synod congregation?” Redeemer would ultimately close.

85 BOD Minutes, February 3, 1981.

86 BOD Minutes, April 7, 1981.

87 BOD Minutes, October 9-10, 1981.

88 BOD Minutes, June 11-13, 1982.

89 *Minnesota South Lutheran*, September/October, 1982, Volume 11, Number 6, p. 4-6 and cover.

was voted on and approved, a division of the house was requested, revealing that the audible “yay” and “nay” was close. The decision of the convention chair, however, was upheld by a vote of 192-122.<sup>90</sup>

As with the purchase of the Hennepin building, there clearly was some opposition to this project, but this should not be a surprise. In the history of the LCMS, there has always been that voice that objects to an increase in administration and the spending of money on that administration at the district and Synod level. Voices like these are always a reminder to those who are entrusted with the administration of a District to always be mindful of faithful stewardship.

Following the convention, the next board of directors meeting was held at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Burnsville.<sup>91</sup> This was held in conjunction with the groundbreaking ceremony. At the ceremony, District President Cloeter had the honor of turning the first shovel of dirt. Another very important honoree given a spade to take a turn was Mr. Linus Ulbricht. He made a deferred gift of over \$500,000 to be used to pay for the new office building. The gift was given in honor of his father Emil, who had served as a pastor in the District for nearly 40 years. When you walk into the District office today, there is a plaque immediately to the right in the entryway as a commemoration of his generosity. This significant gift allowed construction to move forward without the necessity of any major District-wide capital campaign.<sup>92</sup>

Construction moved at a rapid pace on the heels of the groundbreaking. At the December board meeting, it was reported that the walls had been poured, and the bricks were on site in the storage room.<sup>93</sup> Two months later at the February 1983 board meeting, it was reported that the building was to be completed no later than August 1, 1983.<sup>94</sup> In April, the board again met at Redeemer in Burnsville, no doubt to get a look at the soon-to-be-completed building. At this meeting, the timeline for completion was moved up to mid-June.<sup>95</sup> At the July board of directors meeting (again at Redeemer in Burnsville), the building committee reported that the building would not exceed the mandated \$750,000, the staff would move in on July 23, and the committee



Mr. Ulbricht and Pastor Cloeter at the groundbreaking ceremony, as featured in the 1982 November / December *Minnesota South Lutheran*.

90 Minnesota South District LCMS, Convention Proceedings, 1982, p. 7, 10, 40.

91 BOD Minutes, Oct. 5, 1982. The Minutes include a summary of cost with a total of \$745,890.05, revealing that the budget was within the mandates of the District Convention.

92 *Minnesota South Lutheran*, November / December 1982, Volume 11, Number 7, p. 16-17. There are several pictures of the day including an image of Pastor Cloeter and Mr. Ulbricht taking their turn with the shovel.

93 BOD Minutes, Dec. 14, 1982.

94 BOD Minutes, Feb. 1, 1983.

95 BOD Minutes, April 5, 1983.



had finished its task.<sup>96</sup> At the same meeting, the board adopted a simple resolution regarding the completion of the new District office:

Moved and seconded that **14301 Grand Avenue South, Burnsville, Minnesota 55337** shall be the Corporate Headquarters of the Minnesota South District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.<sup>97</sup>

The Service of Dedication was celebrated on September 18, 1983.<sup>98</sup> The celebration began with the worshipers gathered in the sanctuary of Redeemer Lutheran Church. They then processed to the new office, and the building was formally dedicated by District President O. H. Cloeter with these fitting words and powerful prayer:

P. We set apart and dedicate this building as a place of service to the people and congregations of the Minnesota South District of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, so that through the work carried on here our Lord's Kingdom may be advanced to the glory and honor of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

C. Amen.

P. O Almighty and eternal God, You have granted us the grace to erect this building to Your praise and glory. We give You what is Your own that it may be consecrated to Your name. Come, Lord, take possession of this building that it may be a workshop of Your Spirit where Your Word holds sway, where our Savior Jesus Christ is exalted, and where your people are served; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C. Amen<sup>99</sup>

Many times, the completion of a building gives an organization a sense of accomplishment that leads to stagnation. The building

symbolizes to the organization that they have made it and therefore can take it easy for a while—or maybe forever. As this part of the story of the Minnesota South District office comes to its conclusion, it is refreshing to see that this was not the case when the staff moved in at Grand Avenue.

As 1983 drew to a close, the board of directors was given a presentation by the “Master Plan Task Force.” This plan had a very specific schedule of actions and events. It included 10 tasks to be carried out with an overall goal of defining the purpose of ministry in the District and the objectives of the District's areas of ministry in carrying out that purpose. This purpose was somewhat shortened from the work done by the “Enterprise Objectives” process in 1979, but the spirit is the same:

The Church of Jesus Christ exists to make disciples of all nations. As an arm of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Minnesota South District is a servant structure to its member congregations in carrying out this purpose.<sup>100</sup>

The District office building dedicated in 1983 continues to be a blessed space that serves this blessed purpose of serving our member congregations as they go about the work of making disciples of all nations.

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96 BOD Minutes, July 19, 1983.

97 BOD Minutes, July 19, 1983.

98 *Minnesota South Lutheran*, November / December 1983, Volume 12, Number 6, p. 14-16.

99 Service Bulletin, Dedication of the Office Building of the Minnesota South District, The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Sept. 18, 1983. (The service included the singing of a hymn written for the Minnesota South District Centennial titled, “In Common Faith We Celebrate.” The text was by Rev. Dr. Dean Nadasdy, who himself became District president in 2012.)

100 BOD Minutes, Dec. 13, 1983, Attachment #2, Exhibit C.

## Afterword

On Jan. 20, 1970, the Minnesota South District board of directors had a guest in attendance by the name of Dr. W. Kohn. He was there as the representative of the Synod president to speak on the “Mission of the Church” in connection with the Synod finance program. He challenged the board with this thought, “The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is not really a mission-minded church.” Dr. Kohn’s strong presentation clearly connected mission with dollars. The minutes report that he gave had examples of how the Synod convention would adopt resolutions to add additional dollars to the budget and then Districts would refuse to accept these additional commitments. Dr. Kohn’s conclusion was that since the Districts would not ante up the money to Synod, the LCMS was not really mission-minded.<sup>101</sup>

I cannot be sure how the board of directors responded to Dr. Kohn’s accusation, but based on everything I have read in researching this little paper, I can say they should have been offended. The Minnesota South District has been a leader in its financial commitments to Synod. Throughout the time period researched in this project, the District gave anywhere between 60-70 percent of all dollars collected to the work of the general Synod. Why a Synod representative would make such a presentation to one of its best givers seems unwise at best.

However, the content of his report does provide a starting point for some general observations about the development of the District office. Dr. Kohn’s report links two things that are the substance of the work of a District in the LCMS: mission and money. The District’s mission focus is both inward (home missions that are local to the District) and outward (Synod missions that the general

Synod carries out over and above the local district). The District collects and allocates monies from its member congregations to support both of these missions.

The District office as it is today—a group of full-time church workers, including the District president, working out of a specific location—actually grows out of the office of the treasurer and not the office of the District president. As this little history demonstrates, the District president was actually the last one to come on board and occupy space in the District office.

As the financial resources grew through the generosity of the District’s member congregations, it took more people, time, and space to appropriate these dollars to home missions and the work of the general Synod. So, in 1926, the financial committee was established. After 10 years (in 1936), the District was managing so many missions, including the acquisition of properties, that it needed a board of directors. And then in 1940, the District financial people needed space for their work, so an office was rented. From there, the personnel and office space of the District have continued to grow in response to the growth of income and missions. More money meant more missions meant more office space and people to manage it all.

Another observation involves the staffing of the District with full-time personnel. From 1926-1983, the time covered by this history, the District would increase its full-time personnel from zero to five. The five would be the District president, three assistants to the president, and the treasurer. The observation is this: No matter the number or the titles, missions, stewardship, and education have always been the focus. Missions is always first, with stewardship and education ultimately

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101 BOD Minutes, Jan. 20, 1970.

-serving the future of missions in the District. Even today, these three elements continue to be major focus areas assigned to the assistants of the District president even as other responsibilities have been added.

Finally, from 1926-1983 the Minnesota District and later Minnesota South District and its member congregations had a very strong understanding of Synod and its financial commitments. Today, that idea is often challenged as new ideas of how best to spend dollars toward growing the kingdom are spent at the congregational and District levels.

In 1970, Dr. Kohn was already recognizing a trend away from financial commitments to general Synod when he said the LCMS is not a mission-minded church. And that was before the Purple Palace<sup>102</sup> was built! However, Dr. Kohn, in my estimation, drew the wrong conclusion, at least in part. I do not believe the money was drying up merely because the LCMS was not mission-minded. This was not a change in being mission-minded but a change in what it means to be a part of Synod and whether or not it is in the best interest of that mission to spend the dollars locally, nationally, or internationally.

As things stand today, the Minnesota South District still has a lot of that old Missouri Synod commitment as part of its ethos. The District convention commits 50 percent of all undesignated dollars received to go to the work of the general Synod. The District office today under its mission statement, "Cultivating leaders intentionally engaged in the mission of God," is fostering mission, stewardship, and education in its member congregations.

The questions moving forward are not new. And one of those questions is not, "Are we or are we not mission-minded?" We are. The questions are, from the District perspec-

tive:

- How do we encourage giving by our congregations to support the mission?
- How do we responsibly and boldly spend those resources for the mission?
- How does the Synod organize itself, both at the District level and nationally, to best accomplish that mission?

The future might demand that the church be bold and creative in its new answers to these standing questions.

H. Meyer, in *The Planting Story*, summed up the adventurous mission work of Pastor Sievers and those that sent him:

Here we have a Christian Synod filled with genuine mission spirit and here we have her messengers, who, actuated by this spirit, follow spiritually destitute brethren of the faith to preserve them for the Kingdom of God, and seek out depraved heathens to save them into the kingdom of God. This spirit was transmitted from this Synod upon our missionaries in the Minnesota District, and has here animated our congregations for decades. God grant that this spirit may continue among us fresh and full of power.<sup>103</sup>

May the same spirit of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ continue to animate our "walking together" today in mission, fresh and full of power!

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102 "The Purple Palace," is the nickname given to the present Synod headquarters in St. Louis.

103 Meyer, 14-15.

## List of District Presidents

Ernest Ottomar Cloeter	Minnesota-Dakota District President	1882 – 1885
Friedrich Sievers	Minnesota-Dakota District President	1885 – 1891
Friedrich Pfothenhauer	Minnesota-Dakota District President	1891 – 1908
Heinrich August Schulz	Minnesota-Dakota District President Minnesota District President	1908 – 1910 1910 – 1912
F.R. (Robert) Koehler	Minnesota District President	1912 – 1918
J. Herman W. Meyer	Minnesota District President	1918 – 1930
Henry J. Bouman	Minnesota District President	1930 – 1933
John Christoph Ludwig Meyer	Minnesota District President	1933 – 1942
Robert G. Heyne	Minnesota District President	1942 – 1948
Hugo A. Gamber	Minnesota District President	1948 – 1957
Ernst L. Stahlke	Minnesota District President Minnesota South District President	1957 – 1962 1963 – 1966
Martin Lieske	Minnesota South District President	1966 – 1978
Ottomar H. Cloeter	Minnesota South District President	1978 – 1991
Lane Seitz	Minnesota South District President	1991 – 2012
Dean Nadasdy	Minnesota South District President	2012 – 2018
Lucas Woodford	Minnesota South District President	2018 – present

## List of Districts that served the State of Minnesota

Northern District	1854 – 1875
Northwestern District	1875 – 1882
Minnesota-Dakota District	1882 – 1910
Minnesota District	1910 – 1963
Minnesota South District	1963 – present

## List of District Offices

1940 – 1946	3006 27th Ave. S, Minneapolis	Leased
1947 – 1949	Suites 400 & 402, Loring Medical Building, 1409 Willow St., Minneapolis	Leased
1950 – 1956	Lutheran Student Center, 1101 University Ave. SE, Minneapolis	Leased
1956 – 1963	3553 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis	Owned
1963 – 1983	The Minnesota Protestant Center, 122 W Franklin Ave., Minneapolis	Leased
1983 – present	14301 Grand Ave. S, Burnsville	Own

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