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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES MEET

On Jan. 17, 1963, a meeting was held at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., between the executive committee of the Committee on Relations to Lutheran Churches of the American Lutheran Church and the executive committee of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, pursuant to authorization by the American Lutheran Church and The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod regarding conversations looking to the establishment of pulpit and altar fellowship.

In view of discussions authorized by the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, looking toward the possibility of forming a new association of Lutheran synods to succeed the National Lutheran Council, an association which is to make provision for continuing theological study as well as opportunities for cooperation in various areas of Christian service, it was agreed that for the present there be no such fellowship discussions between the American Lutheran Church and The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod.

However, in the interest of a continued evaluation of further steps that may be necessary to implement the desire of the American Lutheran Church and The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod regarding church fellowship discussions, the two executive committees have planned another meeting for early 1964 in the offices of the American Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.

SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAM

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., has added a special two-week term to its regular summer school program for 1963. This special term is scheduled for June 17—28.

The two regular short terms of three and one-half weeks each will meet June 6—28 and July 2—25, and the five-week term will run from July 2 through Aug. 2. Students can earn up to 14 credit hours in these summer sessions.

Over 50 graduate and undergraduate courses leading to the M.A. in Rel., B.D., S.T.M., and Th.D. degrees are being offered by a staff of local and visiting professors.

The Master of Arts in Religion program is designed for laymen, teachers, and clergymen who hold the B.A. degree.

Special sessions in elementary Hebrew, clinical pastoral training, and mission education are being scheduled for June 6 to Aug. 2, June 3—Aug. 23, and June 17 to July 19 respectively. Also available are workshops and institutes in Church Business Management (June 10—14), Institutional Chaplaincy (June 10—14), Preaching (July 8—12), Adult Education (July 15 to 19), Parish Administration (July 22 to 26), Linguistics (July 22—Aug. 2), Church Music (June 10—14), and Mass Communications (date to be announced).

Concordia Seminary is equipped with air-conditioned classrooms, dormitories, and dining halls.

A wide variety of scholarships is available, with applications accepted until May 1. For further information on curriculum, costs, and registration write to The Registrar, Concordia Seminary, 801 De Mun Ave., St. Louis 5, Mo.

BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

Jerusalem, Jordan — (LWF) — Two cornerstones for a \$350,000 Lutheran World Federation vocational training center were laid near here on Dec. 19, 1962. Some 120 Arab youths, many of them Palestinian refugees, will learn trades at the center.

A stone in Arabic was laid by the governor of the Jerusalem district, His Excellency Anwar Nuseibi. Dr. Bruno Muetzelfeldt of Geneva, director of the LWF Department of World Service (LWF/WS), who was to have taken part in the ceremony, was unable to arrive in time because of eleventh-hour air travel difficulties.

A stone in English was laid by Bengt-Ingvar Ekman of Stockholm, assistant director of the federation's Swedish National Committee. The Swedish committee is covering the capital and operating costs of the large part of the center that will be a training school for about 60 auto mechanics, a new venture launched on the committee's initiative.

Also located in the center will be the trade school for blacksmiths, carpenters, and shoemakers that LWF/WS has been conducting on the Mount of Olives here for a number of years. The new institution is situated on Ramallah Road in the village of Beit Hanina, seven kilometers (five miles) from here.

In the vast refugee assistance program that LWF/WS has been carrying on here and elsewhere during the postwar years, stress has recently been laid increasingly on vocational training for rehabilitation.

In keeping with this emphasis, Dr. Muetzelfeldt announced here that his department had granted \$500 annual scholarships to 17 Arab youths to enable them to take courses at a vocational training center operated at Kalandia by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees.

The 17 selected boys, he said, would be enrolled in the UNRWA program "for training in trades for which we have no facilities." Their courses will prepare them to be land surveyors, power linesmen, wiremen, business and office employees, or English-language secretaries.

Funds for the scholarships, the LWF/WS director explained, were contributed by Lutherans of different countries in connection

with the federation's special World Refugee Year effort. The nine-year-old Kalandia institution, oldest of nine UNRWA vocational training centers, now offers 15 courses with a total capacity of 392 trainees.

New York—The three major branches of American Lutheranism have appointed delegations to participate in the planning of a new cooperative agency intended to succeed the National Lutheran Council, it was announced at the latter's headquarters here.

Seven representatives each were named by the Lutheran Church in America, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and the American Lutheran Church—comprising more than 95 percent of the 8,600,000 Lutherans in the United States and Canada. The eight other Lutheran church bodies in America have also been invited to appoint similar delegations.

Signing the invitation were the presidents of the three largest denominations: Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, New York, of the newly formed 3,250,000-member LCA; Dr. Oliver R. Harms, St. Louis, of the 2,555,000-member Missouri Synod; and Dr. Fredrik A. Schiotz, Minneapolis, of the 2,445,000-member ALC. All three church leaders head their respective delegations.

The joint committee is expected to meet periodically over the next two years "to develop a constitution and, as found expedient, additional rules of procedure for the proposed association."

Purpose of the new organization will be to serve as a Lutheran interchurch agency for common theological study and Christian service.

In common theological study, the agency "is to seek theological consensus in a systematic and continuing way on the basis of the Scriptures and the witness of the Lutheran Confessions."

In Christian service, the agency "is to give participating bodies opportunity to work together in the fulfilling of their responsibility

of Christian service in functions to be specified in the constitution and by-laws of the agency."

Dr. Paul C. Empie of New York, executive director of the National Lutheran Council, and Dr. Walter F. Wolbrecht of Saint Louis, executive director of the Board of Directors of the Missouri Synod, have been appointed to serve as recorders of the committee's proceedings.

Discussion between the National Lutheran Council and the Missouri Synod over a two-year period resulted in November 1961 in agreement that sufficient doctrinal unity existed to justify further exploration toward formation of the new interchurch agency.

At conventions last year, the three major bodies approved the proposal to continue conversations on greater Lutheran cooperation. In so doing, they agreed that all Lutheran groups in the U.S. should be invited to participate "in the planning and formation of the new association."

The invitation has been extended to the 348,000-member Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 21,000-member Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, 13,600-member Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 11,800-member National Evangelical Lutheran Church, 8,000-member Church of the Lutheran Confession, 8,000-member Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church, 5,000-member Church of the Lutheran Brethren, and 1,500-member Eilsen Synod.

Named to represent the three major bodies on the joint committee are:

Lutheran Church in America—Dr. F. C. Fry, president, and Dr. Malvin H. Lundeen, secretary, both of New York; Dr. Charles M. Cooper, president of the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary at Berkeley, Calif.; Dr. Donald R. Heiges, president of Gettysburg (Pa.) Lutheran Theological Seminary; Dr. George W. Forell, a member of the faculty of the University of Iowa at Iowa City; Dr. Bernhard Hillila, dean of Hamma Divinity

School at Springfield, Ohio; and Dr. Clarence W. Sorensen, president of Augustana College at Rock Island, Ill.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod—Dr. Oliver R. Harms, president, and Dr. Roland P. Wiederaenders, full-time first vice-president, both of St. Louis, Mo.; Dr. Theo. F. Nickel, synodical second vice-president and pastor of Jehovah Lutheran Church in Chicago, Ill.; Dr. A. O. Fuerbringer, president of Concordia Seminary at St. Louis; Dr. J. A. O. Preus, president of Concordia Theological Seminary at Springfield, Ill.; Dr. Martin H. Franzmann, professor of exegetical theology, and Dr. Herbert J. A. Bouman, professor of systematic theology, at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

The American Lutheran Church—Dr. F. A. Schiotz, president, Dr. William Larsen, secretary, Dr. Raymond M. Olson, stewardship director and also president of the National Lutheran Council, and Dr. George S. Schultz, executive secretary of the Board of Trustees, all of Minneapolis, Minn.; Dr. Norman A. Menter of Berkley, Mich., vice-president of the ALC and president of its Michigan District; Dr. Edward Fendt, president of Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary at Columbus, Ohio; and Mr. Arthur Jacobson of Waukon, Ill., an attorney and a member of the Church Council.

New York—The new Lutheran Church in America—whose members represent three eighths of American Lutheranism—formally came into being Jan. 1. The LCA, which resulted from a four-way merger last June, has nearly 3,250,000 baptized members in its 31 constituent synods and more than 6,200 congregations in the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean.

The LCA is an active member of the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and the Lutheran World Federation. It also participates in two inter-Lutheran agencies—the National Lutheran

Council and the Canadian Lutheran Council. Headquarters of the new church are in New York City, but offices of some boards and agencies are located in Philadelphia, Chicago, and Minneapolis.

The new church has budgeted nearly \$28,500,000 for its first year of operation. The budget includes \$2,600,000 for Lutheran World Action, interchurch aid program of the National Lutheran Council to meet spiritual and material needs in all parts of the world.

Officers of the new church have already taken over their duties. They are Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, president; Dr. Malvin H. Lundeen, secretary, and Dr. Edmund F. Wagner, treasurer.

A prominent leader of world Protestantism, Dr. Fry was for 18 years president of the United Lutheran Church in America, largest of the four churches that merged to form the new LCA. He is president of the Lutheran World Federation and chairman of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. Dr. Lundeen was president of the Augustana Lutheran Church for the past three years. Dr. Wagner, a New York City banker, was treasurer of the United Lutheran Church.

As four streams of American Lutheranism — German, Swedish, Danish, and Finnish — united in the new church, President Fry saluted 1963 as "the year of the dawn for the Lutheran Church in America." He paid tribute to "our forefathers who have been stalwart confessors in the past," in the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, Augustana, the United Lutheran Church, and the Suomi Synod, and pledged "to keep the treasure we have inherited from them alive."

"The Lord marches ahead," Dr. Fry said, "and we happily fall in line, shoulder to shoulder, with one another, to follow Him."

For administrative purposes the Lutheran Church in America will consist of an executive council, eight boards, seven commissions,

and a foundation. Twelve clergymen and four laymen will serve as executives of these boards and agencies.

Men's, women's and youth activities will be carried out through three official auxiliaries — Lutheran Church Men, Lutheran Church Women, and the Luther League.

Philadelphia, Pa. — The first issue of the *Lutheran*, biweekly magazine of the new Lutheran Church in America, was published here under the date of Jan. 2, 1963, and mailed to more than 355,000 subscribers.

The magazine replaces four periodicals which had been issued by the church bodies that merged last June to form the LCA — the Augustana Lutheran Church's weekly *Lutheran Companion*, the American Evangelical Lutheran Church's semimonthly *Lutheran Tidings*, the Suomi Synod's semimonthly *Lutheran Counselor*, and the United Lutheran Church's weekly, the *Lutheran*. Combined circulation of the four former magazines had been 290,000.

The editor is Dr. G. Elson Ruff, who had been editor of the ULCA's the *Lutheran* since 1945. Associate editor is Dr. Albert P. Stauderman, who had been on the *Lutheran* staff since 1951. Assistant editors are Sigurd B. Hagen and Mrs. Hilda Y. Landis. Book review editor is Dr. William Lazareth of the Philadelphia seminary faculty. Art director is Bernhard Sperl.

Publisher of the magazine is the Lutheran Church in America acting through its Commission on Church Papers. The magazine is printed by Cuneo Eastern Press at Philadelphia.

Dumka, India — Efforts toward the formation of a united Lutheran church in north India were advocated here by delegates from four of the five Lutheran churches now functioning in this region. Such a church would have about 300,000 baptized members.

Action to this effect was taken at the second annual meeting of the Regional Confer-

ence of Northern Churches, a new body associated with the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India.

Delegates who voted that the five northern churches "be requested to consider and express their opinion" on the proposed union efforts came from the Gossner, Northern, Madhya Pradesh, and East Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran churches.

The fifth body constituting the regional conference, the Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church, was not represented at the meeting here, according to the conference secretary, C. B. Rao of Shahdol.

The 212,000-member Gossner Church owes its origin to work of the Gossner Mission Society of Berlin; the 42,000-member Jeypore Church to that of the Schleswig-Holstein Mission Society of Germany; the 38,000-member Northern Church to that of the (Scandinavian-American) Santal Mission; the 5,000-member Madhya Pradesh Church to that of the Evangelical National Mission Society of Sweden; and the 2,000-member East Jeypore Church to that of the Danish Missionary Society.

Except for the last-named, all these churches are autonomous members of the Lutheran World Federation.

Hong Kong—This Far Eastern British colony now has a "Lutheran village," a virgin rural community providing "the beginning of a new life" for more than 60 farmers and their families, altogether some 400 persons.

Known as the Ma Tso Lung Lutheran New Village, it was constructed with funds contributed by women of the Härnösand diocese of the Church of Sweden, acting through the Lutheran World Federation and its national committee in their country.

At the opening ceremony of the new community, the Rev. K. Ludwig Stumpf, senior representative for the LWF Department of World Service in Hong Kong, explained that the farming families now moving into its houses previously had to suffer from the

annual flooding of the Sham Chun river. The Ma Tso Lung houses "are the first solid homes that many of these villagers have ever known," he said.

Mr. Stumpf pointed out that every year, when the overflowing river brought floods up to six or seven feet deep, "they had to take refuge in the cock-lofts of their huts" and then—when the waters had subsided—perform "the thankless task of cleaning out the mud and debris and starting all over again."

The villagers have organized a Better Living Society through which they will be able to obtain guidance and help. They will pay a small monthly sum into a revolving fund which will be used for such improvements as a better access road to the village or more adequate supplies of water and electricity.

Sopron, Hungary—Prof. Karoly Pröhle (senior), the "grand old man" of Lutheran theology in this country, died on Dec. 11, 1962, at the age of 88. Dr. Pröhle before retirement was professor of dogmatics in the Evangelical Theological Faculty, which was then part of the University of Sopron.

The faculty has since been reconstituted in Budapest as a separate academy, but Professor Pröhle continued his residence here. His son, who bears the same name, is the academy's present professor of New Testament and a member of the Lutheran World Federation Commission on Theology.

In a telegram to the younger Pröhle, LWF Executive Secretary Kurt Schmidt-Clausen paid tribute to the father as one who "shared in the work of creating the Lutheran unity movement."

The elder Pröhle was active in international Christian circles before the war. He took part in meetings of the old Lutheran World Convention, which later led to the formation of the federation, and was a member of the convention's Executive Committee.

He also represented the Hungarian Lutheran Church at the Lausanne Conference

on Faith and Order in 1927. In the writing field, he was author of a Hungarian textbook on dogmatics.

Oslo — A Lutheran World Federation executive has called it "regrettable" that European mission societies tend to "forget" Latin America.

"Even though it has millions of baptized people, only a few of them are in living contact with Christ and His Church," Dr. Stewart W. Herman of New York, director of the LWF Committee on Latin America, said here in December. "It is our duty to bring them the Gospel."

Dr. Herman made his remarks on the subject during an interview published by the Oslo Christian daily *Vart Land* while he was in this city for the 1962 meeting of the Latin America committee.

Commenting on Protestant-Roman Catholic relations in that area, he reported that "a pleasant development has taken place, especially since Pope John announced the Vatican Council."

"We can talk with each other, and it is no longer possible to speak about persecution of Protestants in any of the countries of Latin America," he said.

The committee, at its sessions here early in December, decided to arrange a meeting in Finland next summer for all persons from Latin America taking part in the federation's Helsinki assembly. The delegates, official visitors, and special guests from south of the Rio Grande would gather "not far from Helsinki" on Aug. 12 and 13.

Geneva — (LWF) — Lutheran World Federation Executive Committee members visited here the site of the LWF's future headquarters and were told that the new edifice was expected to be ready "possibly at the end of 1963 or some time in the first three months of 1964." The federation's 60 offices will be in the \$2.5 million building complex that is being constructed for

the World Council of Churches near the European headquarters of the United Nations.

Lutheran churches have contributed more than \$100,000 for the building project, LWF Comptroller Roman Ritter informed the Executive Committee. A payment to the WCC of \$20,880 for this purpose was authorized here by the federation's officers.

The 250-office center will house about 180 staff members of the World Council and 100 of the LWF and other Christian organizations. They now work under crowded conditions in converted houses at the well-known address of 17 route de Malagnou, which is in a residential part of Geneva.

Explaining the layout and characteristics of the building — now halfway completed — was Director Frank Northam of the WCC Department of Finance and Administration. Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, World Council general secretary, also accompanied the federation leaders on their visit to the site.

Geneva — (LWF) — Satisfaction over the progress of preparations for the Lutheran World Federation's Helsinki assembly next summer was expressed at the six-day meeting of the LWF Executive Committee which closed here on Dec. 15, 1962.

Participants in the meeting, including its chairman, federation president Franklin Clark Fry, voiced praise for those in Helsinki and Geneva who are engaged in making and carrying out plans for the assembly, which will take place from July 30 to Aug. 11, 1963.

Dr. Fry expressed belief that arrangements were farther along than they were seven or eight months before the 1957 assembly at Minneapolis.

Approval was given to a wide range of detailed plans after hearing four thorough reports on different aspects of the preparatory work. They were given by Dr. Kurt Schmidt-Clausen, LWF executive secretary;

Prof. Mikko Juva of Helsinki, assembly director; Dr. Vilmos Vajta, director of the federation's Department of Theology; and Rev. William A. Dudde, senior editor of the LWF News Bureau.

One of the most important decisions taken here respecting the assembly was to enlarge the category of official visitors from ecumenical, confessional, and other church organizations and to widen the representation in this category.

In his assembly report, Dr. Schmidt-Clausen had urged that "the theological deliberations and discussions of the forthcoming assembly ought to be planned in such a way that they combine to express the central insights of the Reformation so as to reveal clearly and unequivocally their primal and universal Christian meaning."

At the same time, he said, "it ought to become clear that our thought and consultation in Helsinki is not only a conversation 'amongst ourselves,' but is at the same time a conversation with those brethren still separate from us in the faith, and thus also with the Roman Catholic Church."

Participants in the meeting here dedicated about three full sessions to debating proposals for the restructuring of the federation, particularly with respect to the program departments and executive secretariat at the Geneva headquarters.

The proposals will be further discussed at the Helsinki assembly before final actions will be taken.

New York—Dr. Thorsten A. Gustafson of West Orange, N. J., was named here as director of the new Lutheran Church in America's Commission on Stewardship.

He will succeed Dr. Henry Endress of Staten Island, N. Y., who has resigned to become vice-president of Waterloo Lutheran University at Waterloo, Ont., Can., effective Feb. 1, 1963.

Dr. Gustafson has been president of the New York conference of the Augustana Lu-

theran Church since 1949, being elected to that office after five years as the denomination's director of stewardship.

He was a member of the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity, which negotiated the merger of Augustana, the United Lutheran Church in America, the Suomi Synod, and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church into the 3,250,000-member LCA.

After the LCA's Commission on Stewardship nominated Dr. Gustafson as its executive, Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, president of the new church, issued a statement which said:

Dr. Gustafson will bring to the office of director of our Stewardship Commission an unusual constellation of good qualities: a strong and gracious personality, the ability to win cooperation from all his colleagues, established skill in church leadership, and specific experience in stewardship education. The Lutheran Church in America is fortunate to have the prospect of having him in a key executive post.

"I rejoice equally that Dr. Gustafson will have two dedicated and capable laymen, Sam Edwins and Walter A. Jensen, as his chief associates, above all in view of the vital and unique role that we all expect the Lutheran Laymen's Movement for Stewardship to play in the stewardship life of our church."

Milwaukee, Wis.—The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod "finds it necessary most respectfully to decline" an invitation to participate in the planning of a new co-operative agency intended to succeed the National Lutheran Council.

The negative decision was contained in a letter by the synod's president, the Rev. Oscar J. Naumann of Milwaukee, addressed to the presidents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Lutheran Church in America, and the American Lutheran Church, through whom the invitation to participate had been sent to the Wisconsin Synod in mid-December.

"Since we are not ready," the letter said, "to surrender our own convictions concerning the requirements for joint worship and Church work to which we are committed in our Christian faith on the basis of Scripture, we find it necessary most respectfully to decline the invitation extended to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod."

The letter stated that the Wisconsin Synod would be willing to enter the discussions "if differences in doctrine and practice which separate the various Lutheran bodies are frankly acknowledged; if it is made the prime business of such discussions to remove the existing barriers by honestly facing the points of difference with the intention of establishing the true doctrine and practice; . . . and if until actual unity has been achieved all practice of church fellowship, all forms of joint worship, and all joint Church work, is conscientiously avoided."

The letter continued that "a careful study of the material which the [invitation] designated as pertinent for a proper understanding of the invitation . . . led to the conclusion that we would be yielding these convictions [concerning the requirements for joint worship and Church work] in accepting the invitation extended to our Synod."

The letter pointed out that "we find this invitation based on the premise that it is permissible and proper for Lutheran church bodies who have not yet achieved full doctrinal unity to form a federation for the purpose of cooperating in certain phases of actual Church work and of engaging in a measure of joint worship."

With regard to the fruitfulness of doctrinal discussions within the proposed agency, the letter maintained that "it could hardly be expected . . . that the Lutheran Church in America had in mind reopening discussions with us on its recently formulated position concerning the Word of God in order to reach doctrinal agreement.

"Yet the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran

Synod continues to uphold the verbal plenary inspiration and inerrancy of the entire Holy Scripture and considers this position to be a basic element in the doctrinal unity required for all joint worship and joint Church work."

"The Lutheran Church in America . . . was formed this summer (1962) on the basis of a doctrinal statement which can only be understood as a disavowal of the verbal, plenary inspiration and inerrancy of the entire Holy Scriptures," the letter asserted.

The letter further declared it "unnatural to assume" that the American Lutheran Church "as a responsible church body had in mind reviewing the conviction it had just asserted, that it is permissible to engage in a measure of joint worship and joint Church work in a federation whose members have not achieved full doctrinal unity."

The reference was to the action of the October convention of the American Lutheran Church, which after two years of intensive study reaffirmed its membership in the World Council of Churches.

The letter explained that "in refusing to engage in any joint worship and Church work with Lutheran churches whose confessional position we do not find to be in full agreement with the Holy Scriptures, we are not passing judgement on the personal Christian faith of the individual members of these churches. We are rather endeavoring to follow the Lord's bidding to preserve His precious Word for ourselves and all others, His Word as it centers in His saving grace in Christ Jesus, His Word which He has given to us sinners as the bread of life."

President Naumann, in an interview at synodical headquarters here, said that "it has always been the objective of our synod . . . to strive for the true unity in doctrine and practice among Lutheran church bodies.

"We are not convinced, however, that this great cause can best be served by joint worship and work prior to attaining a God-pleas-

ing unity in doctrine and practice or by reducing certain areas of theology to an ambiguous blending of 'yes and no.'"

Mr. Naumann stated that the Wisconsin Synod is "fully committed" to such attempts toward unity being carried on through the use of "free conferences." Free conferences, he said, are meetings across synodical lines which do not involve joint prayers and worship and whose purpose is the discussion and resolution of doctrinal differences, not the establishment of a cooperative agency. "This will naturally follow," he said, "when full unity in doctrine and practice has been attained."

New York—An invitation to participate in talks on the proposed formation of a new Lutheran cooperative agency has been declined by the president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), formerly the Norwegian Synod.

The declination was announced by the Rev. Theodore A. Aaberg of Scarville, Iowa, head of the 13,600-member denomination, and followed similar action by the 348,000-member Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Earlier the invitation was accepted by the 21,000-member Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, formerly the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church. Five other bodies, whose membership ranges from 1,500 to 12,000, had not responded to the invitation as of Jan. 5, by which date replies were requested.

In declining the invitation in behalf of the ELS, Mr. Aaberg said he did so "with the understanding that your invitation and my answer to it will be presented to our Synod at its convention in the summer of 1963 for approval or disapproval."

"We find it impossible," he said, "to go along in the planning and erection of this proposed new Lutheran structure, and once

it is built, we would find it impossible to dwell in it. . . ."

Mr. Aaberg pointed out that the ELS is committed to the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod in its declaration that "all Christians are required by God . . . to have church fellowship only with orthodox church bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church bodies, to leave them. . . ."

The ELS, he added, is also committed to the Synodical Conference's definition of unionism that "all joint ecclesiastical efforts for religious work . . . and particularly joint worship and mixed (promiscuous) prayer among those who confess the truth and those who deny any part of it, is sinful unionism."

"Most of you at least will readily agree that a church body which sincerely wishes to stand on the above quoted principles really cannot accept your invitation," he said.

Mr. Aaberg further stated that the ELS would be willing to take part in a "truly free conference to be held among the rank and file of the church bodies," but that the invitation "is to work for the establishment of an organization committed to the recognition of one another as brethren in the faith even though doctrinal unity does not exist."

"This is the same unionistic basis on which the National Lutheran Council was founded, and to which we of the Synodical Conference have consistently objected," he said. "We cannot, and will not, take what God has not given."

Since the invitation to all Lutheran church bodies in the U. S. "is of tremendous significance to Lutherans everywhere," Mr. Aaberg said he intended to send copies of his letter to all pastors and male teachers of the ELS, to the proper officials of the Synodical Conference and its constituent members, and to the overseas churches affiliated with the conference.