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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

CALL TO EVANGELIZE SOUNDED BY DR. FRY, LCA PRESIDENT

Pittsburgh.—America's largest and most urban Lutheran body was called upon here to meet the challenge of the city and assume its "full share in the evangelization of our whole society."

What is at stake "is no less than the future character of our national life," asserted Dr. Franklin Clark Fry of New York in his first report as president of the 3,227,000-member Lutheran Church in America. He addressed the opening business session of the LCA's second biennial convention, July 2—9.

"The texture and color of every culture are determined in its cities, and ours will be no exception," Dr. Fry told the delegates. "It must not be allowed to become totally secular and pagan."

Stating that "Protestant influence, the evangelical spirit, have been in steep decline in the American megalopolis for fifty years and more," the church leader stressed that the "trend needs to be halted."

"We in the Lutheran Church in America are conscience bound to assist in doing so and, for the first time in our lives, to assume our full share in the evangelization of our whole society," he said.

In his call for renewal Dr. Fry attributed the "pitifully slow growth" of the LCA to the high percentage of its membership in cities. He said it is among the most urban denominations, particularly in the United States, "conspicuously more so, for example, than our fellow American Lutherans."

"Hundreds and hundreds of LCA congregations have been rocked by sociological earthquakes, with the once stable communities of German and Scandinavian origin in

which they have been built crumbling and collapsing around them," he added.

"In not a few city neighborhoods, the old residents have vanished altogether; only the church building and, often heroically, the ministry of the Gospel remain. Here, as clearly as can be, the summons is, Renew or die."

The church president warned the LCA members that the new-style urban work is going to be "expensive, discouraging, slow."

"We have been so used to gleaning in fertile fields, expecting rich sheaves quickly as the reward for our efforts, that we will often be tempted to become impatient," he said. "We may as well reconcile ourselves to the certainty that this new extension of our ministry will be grimmer."

Referring to the formation of the LCA in 1962, through the merger of the Augustana, American Evangelical, Suomi, and United Lutheran Churches, Dr. Fry said there was "every reason to be grateful" for the first biennium of the new denomination.

"If any other church union ever achieved as high a degree of vital, inner unity so quickly, I have yet to hear of it," he observed. And, he added, "the blending and the fusing that have already taken place have far exceeded all expectations."

He said the "best part" of the forming of the LCA was that "it not only opened up the possibility of renewal; it created a climate for it; the vital principle of renewal was consciously instilled in its inmost character."

Other sections of Dr. Fry's report dealt with the LCA's confession of faith, churchmanship, the shepherding function of the synod, the purpose of districts, theological education, parish education curriculum, worship, world missions, congregations, evangelism and stewardship, and auxiliaries.

Dr. Fry, 63, is serving a 4-year term, expiring in 1966, as the first president of the LCA.

NEW SPANISH SERVICE BOOK AND HYMNAL OFF THE PRESS

New York.—Lutherans in Spanish-speaking congregations in the western hemisphere soon will have new books of worship.

The first copy of the service book and hymnal, *Culto Cristiano*, was bound on June 11, according to Dr. William C. Arbaugh, editor and chairman of the 19-member, inter-Lutheran Spanish Hymnal Committee.

Represented on the committee are the three major Lutheran church bodies in North America — Lutheran Church in America, American Lutheran Church, and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Printing was completed early in June, Dr. Arbaugh said, and the binding and packaging operations were progressing smoothly by midmonth.

Some 25,000 copies of the 760-page, hard-cover book have been printed. As he reported "task accomplished" with the first bound volume, the editor added: "The book goes into mass production at once."

Announced simultaneously by the editor was the printing of *Ritual Cristiano*, a 160-page occasional service and altar book for pastors.

The Spanish Hymnal Committee was formed in September 1955 by church bodies which through mergers now compose the ALC and LCA, plus the Missouri Synod, and work on the two volumes began formally in February 1956.

WCC-LWF CONSULTATION STUDIES CHURCH'S HEALING MINISTRY

Tübingen, West Germany.—Deep and continuing study of the Christian concept of the healing ministry of the church was called for by a consultation convened here by the

World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation.

A statement unanimously adopted in the six-day meeting asked the two bodies to take a "new look" at the meaning of healing and particularly at the role of church-sponsored medical institutions.

The participants, the majority of whom were doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel attached to church-sponsored institutions around the world, specifically stressed the need to reexamine the concepts within the church which view Christian medical work as either primarily for the meeting of physical needs or as a tool for evangelism.

"The valid criticism by younger churches that such institutions are a burden" to them and the lack of intimate congregational involvement in medical institutions in the West point up the absence of a sufficient distinction between much Christian medical work and the service of secular agencies, the statement declared.

But "the church cannot surrender its responsibility in the field of healing to other agencies," the statement affirmed. "The Christian church has a specific task in the field of healing." It has "insights concerning the nature of health which are available only within the context of the Christian faith."

Consultation discussions were concerned with what constitutes the health and healing of the whole man—the psychological, spiritual, and mental realms—as well as the physical.

It affirmed that "all healing is of God" and that "the specific character of the Christian understanding of health and of healing arises from its place in the *whole* Christian belief about God's plan of salvation for mankind."

It added: "The Christian understanding of healing begins from its place in the ministry of Jesus. There it was a sign of the breaking into human life of the powers of the kingdom of God and of the dethroning of the

powers of evil. The health, which was its fruit, was not something static, a restored equilibrium: it was an involvement with Jesus in the victorious encounter of the kingdom of God with the powers of evil.

"A concept of health which is merely that of a restored balance, a static 'wholeness,' has no answer to the problem of human guilt or death, nor to the anxiety and the threat of meaninglessness, which are the projection upon human life of the shadow of death.

"Health, in the Christian understanding, is a continuous and victorious encounter with the powers that deny the existence and goodness of God."

With this understanding of health, the consultation statement declared, it must be seen that the congregation has "a central and responsible role" in healing and that all its members—not just the doctors, nurses, and pastors—are involved.

The congregation, it said, "by its prayer, by the love with which it surrounds each person, by the practical acts which express its concern for every man, and by the opportunities which it offers for participation in Christ's mission . . . is the primary agent of healing."

The consultation expressed concern that contemporary theological training deals so little with the relationship between healing and salvation, noting that the importance of the spiritual component in health is not generally recognized.

It recommended that pilot projects be set up in selected hospitals in which teams comprising a physician, nurse, psychiatrist, and pastoral counselor would seek "to treat the patient in the totality of his sickness."

It also favored the cooperation of church-sponsored agencies with government and secular bodies "provided this in no way compromises the expression of Christian witness."

It further called for cooperation by the churches in survey, study and planning, per-

sonnel placements, and "in some areas" the sponsorship of joint medical programs.

The report also suggested that a small consultation of theologians be held "at an early date" to discuss "health and salvation."

Participants in the consultation, which did not speak for either of the two convenor bodies, came from Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America and represented a wide range of church membership.

The report of the consultation will be available later from the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation. The study papers of the consultation are scheduled for eventual publication.

LUTHERANS IN NORTH AMERICA

TOTAL 8,870,721; GAIN 1.6%

New York.—Membership of the Lutheran Churches in North America totaled 8,870,721 adults and children at the end of 1963.

The Lutheran bodies reported 8,580,271 baptized members in the U.S. and 290,450 members for their affiliated groups in Canada, according to the annual statistical summary issued here by the National Lutheran Council. The figures were compiled by Miss Helen M. Knubel, secretary of research and statistics in the Council's Division of Public Relations.

The total represents a gain of 135,987 members, or 1.6 percent, during 1963—131,302 in the U.S. and 4,685 in Canada. The percentage of increase was the same as in 1962 and close to the advance of 1.8 percent in 1961 and 1.7 percent in 1960. In the 1950s the average gain was 3.1 percent as increases in membership over the decade ranged from 2.7 to 3.6 percent.

Forming the fourth largest denominational grouping in America, the Lutheran Churches are exceeded in numbers only by the Roman Catholics, Baptists, and Methodists.

The NLC's summary is based on statistics supplied by 10 Lutheran church bodies,

six of which recorded gains in membership while three reported no change and one suffered a loss.

In the past four years the number of churches reporting has been sharply reduced as nine bodies ended their separate existence through mergers, two of which took place in 1963.

The American Lutheran Church, formed in 1960 by union of the ALC, Evangelical Lutheran Church, and United Evangelical Lutheran Church, was joined last year by the Lutheran Free Church, and the National Evangelical Lutheran Church united with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Also in 1963 the Lutheran Church in America completed its first full year of operation. The LCA was organized in 1962 by merger of the United, Augustana, Suomi, and American Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

The gain in Lutheran baptized membership of 135,987 in 1963, distributed among the 18,427 congregations, marks an average increase of 7.3 new members per local church.

Confirmed or adult membership rose by 107,718 to a grand total of 5,993,002, a gain of 1.9 percent. This would indicate an average accession of 5.8 adult members per congregation in 1963.

Largest of the Lutheran bodies is the Lutheran Church in America with 3,227,157 members. It reported a net increase of 26,843, or 0.8 percent.

For the 19th consecutive year the highest numerical increase was made by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, second-largest Lutheran body, as it accounted for 43.8 percent of all the new members reported. Among the major bodies it also showed for the sixth year in a row the greatest gain on a percentage basis.

The Missouri Synod had a gross increase of 72,181 baptized members, or 2.8 percent,

to boost its total membership to 2,683,876, including the 12,560 members of the National Evangelical Lutheran Church, which became a part of the synod in June of last year. The net increase, however, was 59,621, or 2.3 percent, over the combined 1962 memberships of the two bodies.

Third-largest of the bodies, the American Lutheran Church, had a gross upswing of 133,640 members, or 5.5 percent, to a total of 2,544,617. Included were 88,523 members of the Lutheran Free Church, which joined the ALC in February 1963. The net increase was 45,117, or 1.8 percent, over the combined 1962 memberships of the two bodies.

The Church of the Lutheran Brethren showed the greatest percentage of gain in baptized membership, 18.2 percent, or 1,266 members, for a total of 8,204. Because of a calculating error, its membership in 1962 was reported as 4,006, necessitating an adjustment in last year's figures.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod gained 527 members, or 3.6 percent, to 14,608, and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church increased by 4,798 members, or 1.4 percent, to a total of 354,840. It is the fourth-largest Lutheran body. The Church of the Lutheran Confession, which was organized in 1961, reported a loss of 740 members, or 9 percent, reducing its total to 8,252.

The Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, with 20,464 members, the Apostolic Lutheran Church, with 7,203 members, and the Eielson Synod, with 1,500 members, remained unchanged as no census was taken in these bodies last year.

The number of ordained Lutheran pastors in the 10 reporting church bodies rose to 19,943, an increase of 313 over 1962. Of these, 14,408, or 104 more than the previous year, were serving in pastorates in 1963.