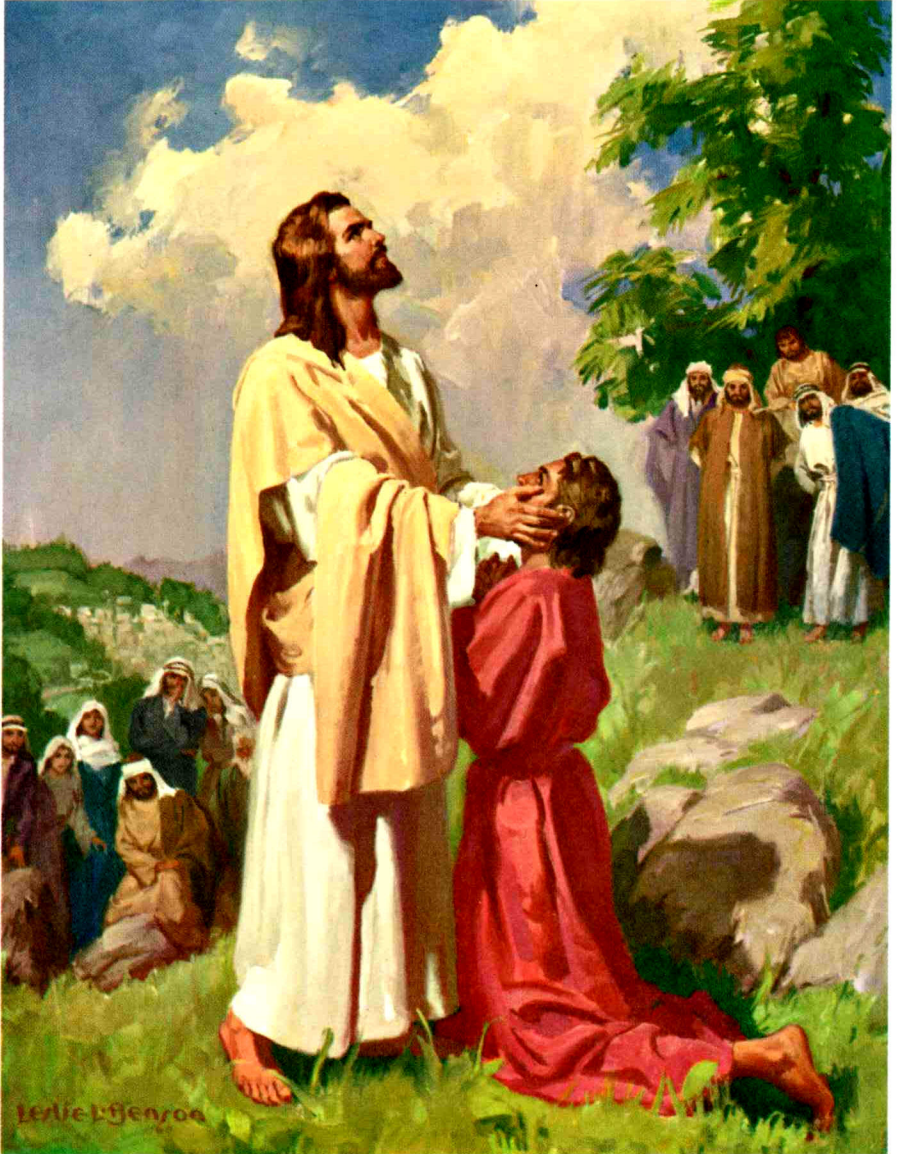




# The Deaf Lutheran



*Ephphatha, Be Opened*

DEAR READER:

We sincerely regret that due to the illness of our editor, Pastor Martin Hewitt, we are unable to bring you the usual March issue of THE DEAF LUTHERAN. However, I am sure you will find the "75th Anniversary of Deaf Work," reprint from the *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, interesting and informative. The April issue of THE DEAF LUTHERAN will reach you shortly. This will also contain articles and information on our 75th Anniversary.

HERBERT W. ROHE,  
Secretary for Deaf Missions

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### THE DEAF LUTHERAN

March 1969, Vol. 61, No. 3

Official Paper of the Board for Missions of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod

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# 75th Anniversary of Deaf Work

## Away from the Crowd: The Deaf Mission of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod

*Aug. R. Suelflow*

When is an anniversary? It depends on the special emphasis of an individual or agency. In the case of many of the member congregations in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, it is often not easy to establish a precise anniversary date. Should it be the initial, exploratory service? The date when it was officially organized? Incorporated? Joined the Synod? Under such circumstances one needs to accept a date arbitrarily and define the reasons for its selection.

To which date of deaf work was I to direct my attention in this study? Should it be the adoption of the official resolution of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod initiating deaf work in 1896? Or should it be the 74th anniversary of the first deaf service conducted by the sainted Augustus Reinke in 1894? Or should it be the establishment of the Lutheran School for the Deaf in Detroit in 1873, which, in 1968 commemorated the 95th anniversary of its founding?

One cannot simply shrug off these questions. As we look at the initiation of different kinds of work within The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, one frequently finds that there has been a time lag between the “first” and an official resolution sanctioning this work. Many aspects of the Synod’s work were

initiated either by individuals or by local associations, such as the Lutheran Immigrant Mission, Concordia Publishing House, Synodical preparatory schools, and many others.

The work among the deaf followed this pattern. In view of this, it seems, that any one of the specific three dates, namely, 1873, 1894, or 1896, could legitimately be employed as a bona fide “beginning.”

One more parallel? In 1858 the Lutherans in St. Louis established a Lutheran Hospital. In 1868 they organized the Lutheran Orphans’ Home of Des Peres, Missouri. But it was not until 1950 that the Synod established a separate Board of Social Ministry. In spite of this, the Missouri Synod observed the centennial of its social welfare services in 1968, utilizing the Des Peres Orphanage as the point of departure.

Before beginning this presentation in detail, let me pay tribute to the pioneers who initiated the deaf ministry in the Synod. Their spirit of dedication, sacrifice and zeal — now spanning a period of almost a century — leaves one not only deeply impressed and amazed, but fills one with the utmost gratitude and awe. God, truly, was at work among men in the face of most

trying inadequacies, challenges and limitations! We do not stand in awe and amazement before men, but rather before God, raising our voices in gratitude and thanksgiving in a spirit akin to those who witnessed that great miracle of Jesus healing the deaf mute on the shores of the sea of Galilee. As the first sermon in the sign language was preached by the Savior and as he spoke those eternal words "Ephphatha," all who were present "were dumbfounded" and said: "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf to hear and the dumb speak."<sup>1</sup>

What an amazing record if one would look at the cumulative totals of all people won for Christ, or the sum total of the years of services sacrificially devoted to the Gospel preaching to the deaf, or totals of the vast number of miles covered in the uncharted distances since the work was first begun. I would not be too surprised that one missionary serving the Synod could have roughly reached the moon and returned once every 10 years (240,000 miles) in miles travelled.

Glancing over the host of resources extant on deaf work and the amazingly ramified program, there is a shudder which goes through one in efforts to try to pinpoint specific areas of concentration. One could, for example, look at the account of the deaf enterprise in terms of a series of biographical sketches, or, if that would be inadequate, include the geographical expansion.

In fact, much of the historical literature pertinent to the work among the deaf has almost invariably followed this approach. In view of these considerations, I finally decided that the focal area should be on the synodical, structural aspects.

Two primary events stand out in extremely sharp focus as one spans the decades. The first is the establishment of the orphanage in Detroit in 1873 and the second the Pahl letter of 1894.

#### **Lutheran School for the Deaf, Detroit**

The school can trace its beginning to the incorporation of the Society on 31 March 1873 in Detroit.<sup>2</sup> The contemplated orphanage was to serve in a similar capacity to the one which had already been established at Des Peres, Missouri, in 1868. The needs for an institution, where children who had lost their parents could be provided for, were pressing. Epidemics, accidents, and a host of other fatalities often left fatherless children in their wake. Initially pastors and teachers often took such orphans into their own homes. But when the demands became too great, members of various congregations banded together to form societies or institutions to establish homes for orphans. Many stood on the forefront in principle and mode of operation. The idea caught on and new ones were established in Addison, Illinois, and Detroit, Michigan, both in 1873.

Pastor J. A. Huegli (1831—1904) is the father and founder of

<sup>2</sup> Lutheran School for the Deaf, Detroit, Board of Directors' Minutes, 31 March 1873.

<sup>1</sup> Mark 7:37,

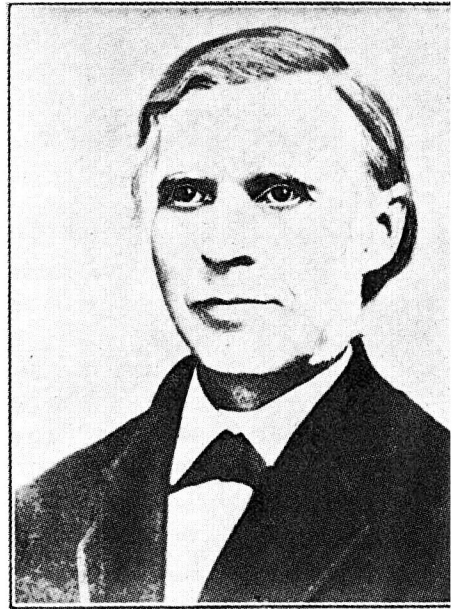


the Detroit institution. Almost since the founding of the school this immigrant served as its president. He was also president of the Northern District of the Missouri Synod.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after its founding, the Rev. George Philip Speckhard (1821—1879) was called to take charge of the orphanage. Perhaps we could digress a bit and look at Speckhard's background and see what motivated the Board of Directors to call this pastor from Sebewaing, Michigan.

#### **George Speckhard**

Born in Wersau, Hesse, Germany, he lost his father early in life. The financial circumstances of his mother did not permit him to prepare for the ministry. Shortly after his confirmation he was instructed privately by a relative who was a teacher, and thus he was prepared to enter the teachers seminary at Friedburg. After he had completed his studies and distinguished himself in his final examinations, he was placed as a teacher at the private deaf-mute institute conducted by a Dr. Roller. He served as an assistant teacher for several years; then he was elevated to a full teaching position. Unfortunately, very little is known about the institution which Dr. Roller conducted. Speckhard plunged into his work as a teacher of the deaf and attempted to supply them both with a distinguished secular and spiritual education. In fact, after he was married to Miss Sophie Schneider, he frequently took deaf



**G. Ph. Speckhard**

children into his home in order to supplement their training.

The churches in Germany were in a state of convulsion during the early teaching ministry of Speckhard. The forces of Rationalism and Liberalism seemed effectively to challenge confessional Lutheranism. As a result, small study groups became popular and Speckhard joined one of them. Through his search for certainty, he learned to know some of the confessional leaders in Germany such as Löhe, Brunn, and others. He arrived at the conviction that proposed mergers between the Reformed and Lutheran churches were detrimental. He debated his future action for quite a while, particularly since this would mean making an exit from the State Church. Friends discour-

<sup>3</sup> *Der Lutheraner*, LXI (9 May 1905), 150—51.

aged him, considering it unnecessary and foolish. When his first son was born, he determined to resign, and was advised to emigrate to America and seek affiliation with the Missouri Synod. Briefly he studied at the Seminary in Fort Wayne where he graduated in 1861 and then accepted a call to Hillsdale, Michigan, where he remained two years. After a four year ministry in Sandy Creek, near Monroe, Michigan, he accepted a call to Sebewaing. From this parish he received a call to serve the Detroit orphanage.<sup>4</sup>

At Detroit, he served as father, teacher and pastor to the orphans who were resident there. Even during the final days of his life, he worked with the poorer students on a highly personal basis. Death came suddenly on 20 November 1879.

When Speckhard accepted a call to the orphanage, he brought with him two deaf girls whose parents had asked him to take them along so that he might complete their course of confirmation instruction. Both Margarets (Graaf and Frisch) they came from Frankenmuth, Michigan.

#### Orphans or Deaf Children?

The Orphan Society had purchased 10 acres at Royal Oak and erected a small building. As word reached other parents of Speckhard's care and service to the two deaf girls, within less than a year his class had increased to 15 deaf pupils. Almost immediately, there-

fore, the Board of Directors of the Society had to reach a decision whether to continue the work of ministering to the deaf, or concentrate on their work to the orphans.

Hermann Daniel Uhlig (1847—1913), recounted in 1893:

This unexpectedly compelled the society in question either to decide on carrying out their original design of establishing an orphan asylum or to found an institution for deaf-mutes, because to conduct and sustain two benevolent institutions having entirely different ends in view was out of the question. After mature deliberation, it was decided to found a deaf-mute institution, more especially because, meanwhile, other provisions had been made for orphans by the establishment of an orphanage at Addison, Du Page County, in the adjoining state of Illinois, where also the orphans of Michigan could be accommodated, and more especially because an institution under the auspices of the Lutheran Church where deaf-mutes of the Lutheran faith could be instructed had been seriously desired for some time past.<sup>5</sup>

As early as June 1873, when the Northern District met in Milwaukee, President Huegli reported: "An institute for the deaf is also to be attached to the orphanage at Detroit."<sup>6</sup> This early reference seems to suggest that the founders of the Detroit or Royal Oak institution may originally have given thought to the possibility of doing both. However, when the number of deaf children increased so phenomenally,

<sup>5</sup> "The German Evangelical Lutheran Deaf-Mute Institution, North Detroit, Michigan, 1873 to 1893," reprinted from *History of American Schools for the Deaf*, prepared for the Volta Bureau, 1893 (Washington, D. C.: Gibson Brothers, 1893), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Missouri Synod, Northern District, *Proceedings*, 1873, p. 59.

and the resources to meet both needs were inadequate, a separation seemed to be the only solution.

According to E. C. Fackler, the Detroit institution had originally been established upon the advice of Dr. C. F. W. Walther.<sup>7</sup> When the Synodical Conference met in Pittsburgh, Pa., in 1874, Pres. Huegli and C. F. W. Walther urged that Detroit concentrate on the deaf and that the orphans be moved to the newly founded Addison institution.<sup>8</sup> So it was done. Both the pastors' and teachers' conferences of Michigan memorialized the Missouri Synod to accept the "Deaf-Mute Institute" near Detroit as a Synodical institution. At the same time there was also a memorial from the Orphan Society of Addison offering its institution as a Synodical venture. The Synod, however, declined, and then resolved, upon the wishes of the two groups, that the presidents of the two districts serve as "inspectors" for the Synod with respect to these institutions, be responsible for them, and solicit support for them.<sup>9</sup>

#### New Site

Shortly after this major decision had been made, the location and the buildings at the Royal Oak site came under serious debate. Almost providentially, a Mr. Philetus W. Norris offered the institution 20 acres of land just a few miles north

of the then city limits. The tract contained a barn, fruit trees, and a residence. The society had to assume a mortgage. This property was accepted in August 1874.<sup>10</sup>

The first building on this new site was completed in 1875 at a total cost of \$20,000.<sup>11</sup>

Director Uhlig wrote in 1893:

A transfer of the Institution from Royal Oak to Norris, as stated, occurred in February 1875, the Institution then comprising 23 pupils, together with the director, G. Speckhard and family, and Mr. H. Uhlig, who in January 1875 had been called into service as an assistant instructor from the theological seminary at St. Louis, Missouri. The ceremony of dedication took place on the following 17th day of May, and was attended by a large concourse of friends and patrons from Detroit and the vicinity. The deaf pupils on that occasion giving evidence of the results of their instruction by speaking orally in public.<sup>12</sup>

The new quarters, though extremely limited according to today's standards, must have seemed most spacious to the new occupants. The three-story brick structure, 46 by 74 feet, even boasted a belfry. The basement was used for storage purposes; the first floor had classrooms, a dining hall, and kitchen; the second floor provided the living quarters for the staff, dormitories for the girls, and an infirmary. The boys dormitory was located on the third floor, which also provided some classroom space.

<sup>7</sup> *The Lutheran Witness*, XLVIII (30 April 1929), 146.

<sup>8</sup> Lutheran School for the Deaf, Detroit, Board of Directors' Minutes, 27 July 1874.

<sup>9</sup> Missouri Synod, *Proceedings*, 1874, pp. 77—78.

<sup>10</sup> Lutheran School for the Deaf, Detroit, Board of Directors' Minutes, 31 Aug. 1874.

<sup>11</sup> See also *The Deaf Lutheran*, XIV (Feb. 1922), 10.

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<sup>12</sup> Huegli, p. 5. See footnote 5.



When Speckhard died on 20 November 1879, Uhlig succeeded him. He resigned in 1899, the same year Augustus Reinke died.<sup>13</sup> The peak enrollment during the early years occurred in 1889, when a total of 47 students were present, 21 boys and 26 girls. Thereafter the number declined somewhat.<sup>14</sup>

Over the course of years, the original modest beginnings became too antiquated and limited. While the enrollment had fluctuated, reaching additional heights in 1938 of 74 pupils (considered overcrowded), agitation began for the construction of new buildings. The maximum capacity was a mere 50 and hence the reporter wrote, "For

<sup>13</sup> *Der Lutheraner*, LXIX (16 Sept. 1913), 301.

<sup>14</sup> Huegli, p. 7. See footnote 5.



**J. A. Huegli**

the first time in our history we have a waiting list."<sup>15</sup> The Board of Directors decided to proceed with erection of a new building. Funds were solicited, and it was reported:

The cost of all new buildings was set at \$225,195.40. Contributions from all parts of the United States and Canada on Feb. 16, 1940, amounted to \$217,026.79, leaving a balance to still be raised of \$8,178.61. The school is equipped with every modern device for teaching deaf children, we may take a just pride in having an institution of this type within the confines of our church.<sup>16</sup>

Pentecost Sunday, 12 May 1940, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon the new imposing and beautiful complex of buildings was dedicated in the service of the Lord. According to the report 10,000 people including about 100 deaf children and 200 deaf adults from Detroit and elsewhere had arrived for the festivities.<sup>17</sup> In spite of the deficit announced in February, the entire project, costing \$230,000, was entirely debt free at the time of the dedication.

Directors, superintendents or executive directors of the Institution have been:

George Philip Speckhardt,  
1873—1879

H. D. Uhlig, 1879—1899

H. A. Bentrup, 1900—1902

William Gielow, 1902—1914

John A. Klein, 1914—1962

Walter Bellhorn, 1962—

<sup>15</sup> *The Lutheran Witness*, LVII (14 June 1938), 207.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, LIX (2 April 1940), 114.

<sup>17</sup> *The Deaf Lutheran*, XXXII (July 1940), 25—26.

### Deaf Services

The 60th pupil to be enrolled at the Detroit Institute was a student from Michigan City, Indiana, who, together with 12 others, had enrolled in 1879. At that time he was 13 years old. Cause of his deafness was an unknown illness. He graduated in 1884 and took up the trade of cigar maker. His name? Edward Pahl!

Presumably after his graduation, he returned to the place of his birth at Michigan City, where he remained quietly for approximately 10 years. At the age of 30, in 1894, the restlessness of being unable to worship with his fellow believers must have gotten the best of him. There was at that time no Missouri Synod congregation in Michigan City, and hence he consulted his former teacher, Uhlig, at Detroit. Unfortunately the original letter which he wrote no longer seems to be extant. The Rev. Theodore DeLaney, several years ago made an extensive study of the letter and the various German and English versions which have appeared, the first since 1896. He reached the conclusion that the version submitted by the Rev. Augustus Reinke<sup>18</sup> is perhaps the most faithful to the original. After making the strenuous appeal to the Synod to initiate work among the deaf, Pastor Reinke quoted the letter and introduced it by saying:

Some two years ago a deaf-mute from Michigan City wrote: "Jesus says: Preach the Gospel to all

creatures, teach all people. But who preaches to the deaf-mutes? Are they to remain without the Word of God? Are they to be directed only to the Methodists and Baptists to hear a sermon in a sectarian church? Wouldn't a pastor be available, particularly in the larger cities, who could serve the poor deaf-mutes with God's Word?"<sup>19</sup>

The 1902 German version is totally different:

Other denominations follow after the deaf-mutes. But our Missouri Synod does not. Certainly Christ has given the command also to our Missouri Synod: "Preach the Gospel to all creatures." But no one from the Missouri Synod preaches to us deaf-mutes who are Lutheran and intend to remain so. Why not? We want it so badly.<sup>20</sup>

Mr. Pahl addressed his request to Director Herman Daniel Uhlig whom he learned to know while a student at Detroit for six years. Uhlig then wrote to Reinke in Chicago and enclosed Pahl's letter. Reinke already had some deaf in his congregation, and because he lived closest to Michigan City, he would more easily be able to reach the writer.<sup>21</sup>

What complicates the matter of the Pahl letter to the point of frustration is the fact that both the Pahl and Uhlig letters seem to have disappeared. The son of the Director Uhlig, Missionary N. P. Uhlig, discussed this matter at great length, indicating that he had made a copy of his father's letter to Reinke which revealed that he was forwarding the

19 *Ibid.* Translation by A. R. S.

20 Missouri Synod, *Proceedings*, 1902, p. 106. Translation by A. R. S. DeLaney cites this version as the Uhlig text.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>18</sup> *Der Lutheraner*, LII (21 April 1896), 70—71.

letter from Mr. Edward J. Pahl with the plea that it be returned to him.<sup>22</sup> Apparently it wasn't, and editor Uhlig surmises:

We know that Rev. Reinke made great use of the letter, and it was probably literally "used up" as it was not found with the draft among the valuable papers which father had preserved with the notations, and he certainly would have kept Pahl's letter.<sup>23</sup>

How easy it would have been prior to November 1945 to check with the original writer of the 1894 letter! Unfortunately, Mr. Pahl died in November 1945.<sup>24</sup>

Director Uhlig's letter to Reinke was dated Wednesday, 14 February 1894. Just 18 days later, namely on 4 March, Pastor Reinke stood before 16 deaf and signed his first sermon on the text "God is Love." Thus the date of 4 March 1894 becomes an extremely important one in the history of the Missouri Synod deaf work! Edward L. Arndt preached his first sermon in the Chinese language in Hankow three months after his arrival in 1913 — powerful testimony to the applications and abilities of our forefathers!

But equally amazing as the ability to preach in the sign language in two weeks time are the statistics of Reinke's congregation which he served. It was at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Chicago which had experienced a phenomenal growth through German immigra-

tion; at that time it counted over 3,000 communicants and some 5,500 souls. Only the year before, Reinke's son Edwin joined him as his assistant.



Augustus H. Reinke

Because of the unique roll played by the Rev. Augustus H. Reinke, Sr., (1841—1899), we shall mention the fact that he was almost 53 years old at the time deaf work was impressed upon his conscience. Born in Winsen, Hanover, Germany, on 29 September 1841, and having immigrated at age seven, he graduated from the St. Louis seminary in 1864. That same year he was installed at the Grove Street Lutheran Church at Blue Island, Illinois, and remained there until he was called to Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Chicago, where he was in-

<sup>22</sup> *The Deaf Lutheran*, XLVI (August 1954), 92.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *The Deaf Lutheran*, XXXVIII (Feb. 1946), 5, took cognizance of his death by printing an English version of his letter and a photograph.

stalled on 1 October 1871. Reinke was married, the father of four sons, all of whom entered the ministry. Two served their Lord in deaf work. On 18 November 1899 the Lord called this "Father of Deaf Work" to Himself at the age of 58 years. His beloved deaf referred to him as their "Deaf-Mute Friend."<sup>25</sup> A short life by today's standards, but one which was spent in the service of his Lord.

Immediately after receiving the Uhlig-Pahl correspondence, Reinke undertook to prepare a sermon in the sign-language and thus it was, at 2:30 p. m. on 4 March 1894, that the first Lutheran service in the sign language was conducted in the school room of Bethlehem congregation.

In preparation for this event, Mr. Pahl assisted and instructed Pastor Reinke in every way possible. It should be noted that at this time the German oral method of communication was employed at the Detroit School. It wasn't until later, when a Miss Thompson was secured as a teacher, that the regular sign language was introduced as a part of the curriculum.<sup>26</sup>

From there the work branched out. Already in April 1896 Reinke reported:

The undersigned felt his heart glowing for the deaf-mute fellow redeemed to render service to them, even if of a very minimal character. Thus compelled, I have served the deaf via the sign language by God's grace in Cincinnati, Louisville, Monroe, Elkhart,

Fort Wayne, Peoria, Galesburg, Lincoln, Sheboygan once or more often and in Chicago and Milwaukee on a monthly basis and in St. Louis every two months. (The deaf) came both in the intensest summer heat and in the midst of the violent thunder storms from a distance of ten to fifteen miles. Their age span was from 15 to 75 years.<sup>27</sup>

A master of the descriptive, Reinke continued his appeal to the Synod:

Truly spellbinding is such a service, conducted in the sign language for these pitiful people. Not one word is audible. A deathly stillness prevails in the assembly. With fixed eyes they are glued to all the movements of the fingers, hands and arms as the sign language demands. The deaf-mute do not miss the minutest sign as we who read do not miss a word. His eyes are often much sharper than those of the people who can hear. If only the ears of the hearers of the Word would be as attentive on the sermon as the eyes of the deaf-mute!<sup>28</sup>

Reinke then directed an appeal to the Synod to establish a mission among the deaf, commenting that the spoken language, such as the German, English, Swedish, Norwegian, Polish, Bohemian, Slovak and French do not pose any hinderance if the deaf knows the sign language.<sup>29</sup>

#### A Synodical Program

From the accounts and reports extant, it is certainly most difficult

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, LII (21 April 1896), 70. Translation by A. R. S.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71. Translated by A. R. S.

<sup>29</sup> See also *ibid.*, L (4 Dec. 1894), 215, where Ludwig Fuerbringer described Reinke's deaf service in St. Louis. This service was conducted by Reinke in Immanuel Lutheran Church where 30 deaf, mostly "Americans," were present. See also the description by Reinke, *ibid.*, L (13 March 1894), 50. Reinke promised to conduct another service on Easter Sunday.

<sup>25</sup> Missouri Synod, *Proceedings*, 1902, p. 107.

<sup>26</sup> *Der Lutheraner*, L (13 March 1894), 50.

to ascertain whether it was evangelical or scholastic confessionalism which motivated Speckhard, Reinkke, or the entire Missouri Synod in 1896. This much, however, is clear. The Synod created a sixth specialized "Mission Commission" in 1896 in order to carry out its "Great Commission."

In reading over the accounts and reports of these missionaries, so readily available both in the pages of *Der Lutheraner* and the triennial reports in the Synodical *Proceedings*, one detects a fervor and conservation which we would do well to emulate. The young Synod knew no hindrances, no obstacles and no imitations other than those which plagued it for countless decades, namely a shortage of men and money.

Incidentally, only three years earlier, in 1893, the Synod had established a separate foreign mission program in India. The needs of the frontier were beginning to decline, and the horizons could be expanded to include Jewish and English missions in the decade of the 80's and now deaf and foreign tongue missions just prior to the turn of the century.

Because of the intense importance to this presentation, I shall incorporate the document in its entirety by which the Synod adopted its deaf mission program:

The undersigned (Pastor A. Reinkke) permits himself with all respect to direct the honorable Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, through its delegates assembled at Fort Wayne, Indiana,

in the year 1896 to a missionary enterprise, which the honorable Synod hitherto has not conducted, but which is of such importance that it ought rightly to be a part of its work. This is the mission to the poor deaf-mutes.

The number of deaf-mutes in our land is estimated at more than 40,000. In St. Louis there are 300 adult deaf-mutes, in Chicago 1,000, in Milwaukee, 240. One may easily expect to find one deaf-mute for every 2,000 inhabitants of almost any sized city, large or small.

These poor, spiritually neglected people have in some of the larger cities only the services of sectarian preachers available to them for the preaching of the Word. A minimal number belong to them. The majority of these poor people are without spiritual care.

Approximately two years ago the undersigned was requested to take care of the Lutheran deaf in Chicago, who had prayed for the preaching of the Gospel. The wish was fulfilled. Soon it became pronounced that a vast mission should be carried out among these neglected poor people. During the last two years we preached one or more times in the following cities: Cincinnati, Louisville, Fort Wayne, Monroe, Elkhart, Peoria, Lincoln, Galesburg, Sheboygan; while we preached regularly for a longer period of time in Chicago, Saint Louis, and Milwaukee. Repeatedly these people have given evidence of great joy that the Word of Life should be declared to them also. Often they pleaded that the pastor return quickly and often. A single announcement in the newspaper in the larger cities is always sufficient to ensure an attendance at a divine service of 30 to 50 deaf-mutes.

In view of this, the honorable Synod is petitioned to begin this important, God-willed task in His name, because of *Christ's command* that the Gospel be preached



to all creatures, because of *the spiritual neglect of the poor deaf-mutes*, and because of *their desire for the Word*. God grant it!<sup>30</sup>

The floor committee then presented the following resolution:

The undersigned committee recommends that the general Synod utilize this compelling opportunity and carry on this task in its name and under its supervision since there can be no doubt that it is God-pleasing and will benefit the poor, lamentable fellow humans to their temporal and eternal blessing.—Since God Himself has opened the door for good, we ought to utilize this given opportunity. Most assuredly, God will give His blessing and increase on this work.<sup>31</sup>

Thereupon it was *Resolved*:

That the Synod assume and pursue the deaf mission begun by Pastor A. Reinke;

That, for the conduct of this mission, a standing commission of five persons (see "Elections"), of whom Pastor A. Reinke shall be one, and whose base of operations is Chicago, formulate a plan for the conduct of this mission and thereafter place it into operation.<sup>32</sup>

The Deaf Mission Commission consisted of Pastor Augustus Reinke, Pastor Ludwig Lochner, Pastor W. Bartling, Mr. H. C. Zuttermeyer, and Mr. Sigismund W. Sievers.<sup>33</sup>

It certainly is interesting to ob-

<sup>30</sup> Missouri Synod, *Proceedings*, 1896, pp. 95—96. Translation by A. R. S. Italics in the original.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96. Translation by A. R. S.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

Dean Lueking, *Mission in the Making* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), is in error when he states, pp. 190—91: "With three pastors in the work, the Synod resolved officially to oversee the mission to the deaf . . ." Only Reinke was in deaf work at the time the Synod assumed deaf missions as its own. The two additional missionaries were called after the work was adopted by the Synod.

<sup>33</sup> Missouri Synod, *Proceedings*, 1896, p. 137.

serve that the Mr. Sievers, elected to this new Board, was the only lay son of Pastor Friedrich Sievers who has the distinction of being the "Father of Foreign Missions" in the Missouri Synod. The new board met within two months of its election. It fixed the salaries of missionaries at \$50.00 per month, which remained fairly standard until increased in 1920 to \$100.00 per month.<sup>34</sup> Most interesting, in this connection, in our day of centralization is the fact that no regulations, not even simple guidelines were adopted at this convention for the new Commission. These were not to come until the major Synodical Handbook revisions of 1947.

Another item which certainly is of interest in this connection is the over-whelming evidence which is presented in the reports at the turn of the century pertinent to the type of people who were to be served. Lueking is incorrect when he writes:

The policy of ministering exclusively to Lutheran deaf-mutes was extended to the parish scene, as the first Lutheran deaf-mute congregation was formed in Chicago in 1896. Reports from many towns in the Midwest carried urgent appeals for the deaf mission leaders to send out pastors to reach the *Lutheran deaf*.<sup>35</sup>

The use of the term *Taubstummen* never is modified in these accounts by either "German" or by "Lutheran." In fact, the opposite is true, as the Reinke appeal quoted above indicates, namely, that the deaf of whatever language who have

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 1920, p. 58.

<sup>35</sup> Lueking, p. 189. Italics added.

mastered the sign language find no language barrier whatever.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps this is also the place where we should refer to the advice Dr. C. F. W. Walther gave Pastor J. A. Huegli of the Detroit Board as early as 1874, namely, "that instructions in the English language be begun in order that English speaking people might also become interested in the Institute."<sup>37</sup>

What happened after the Synod took over the work? With almost unbelievable rapidity, the new commission called two candidates of theology into the work, namely, Herman A. Bentrup and Traugott Wangerin. The former was called to Louisville, Ky., and the latter to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The following year, in 1897, the newly established First Evangelical Lutheran Deaf Church of Our Savior of Chicago called the son of the pioneer deaf missionary, Arthur L. Reinke. Both Wangerin in Milwaukee and Reinke in Chicago in a short time confirmed their first classes. In addition, it was reported, young Reinke, in Chicago was attracting a host of nationalities in addition to Protestants, Catholics, and Jews.

Bentrup had branched out from Louisville to Cincinnati, Dayton, Indianapolis, and Evansville. Unfortunately, because of his physical weaknesses, he did not remain in the service long, accepting a call to a hearing congregation. Thereafter he served the Detroit school as di-

rector from 1900 to 1902 and once more hearing congregations until 1946 when he returned to deaf work and served until his death, 29 October 1948.

A deaf congregation had been established in Milwaukee with 17 voting members. Wangerin, with Milwaukee as his base, branched out to Sheboygan, Racine, and Oshkosh.

From Chicago, Reinke served Fort Wayne and St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota. In fact, a special invitation was issued by the secretary of the "Deaf Mute Association" in Minneapolis for him to return as frequently as possible. Another man, the Board reported, ought to be sent to the Twin Cities as soon as possible.<sup>38</sup> John Salvner was sent in 1901.

In its financial report, the commission reported an income for the triennium of \$4,174.56 and expenditures of \$3,804.12, closing the books with a balance, as of 15 April 1899, of \$370.44. The mission according to this report, cost the Synod approximately \$1,400 per year for its first year of operation.

Two resolutions of note were passed:

*Resolved*, That the Synod empower the Commission to engage the necessary workers for this mission field;

*Resolved*, That the Synod's collective delegates seek to encourage the congregations which are represented by them with all diligence to support this mission heartily by transmitting generous offerings received at mission festivals, at

<sup>36</sup> See footnote 29 above.

<sup>37</sup> Lutheran School for the Deaf, Detroit, Board of Directors' Minutes, 27 July 1874.

<sup>38</sup> Missouri Synod, *Proceedings*, 1899, pp. 82-95. Translation by A. R. S.

church services, and other occasions.<sup>39</sup>

The Commission's report to the 1902 convention was filled both with joy and sadness. First, it brought the news of the premature death of Augustus Reinke, Chairman of the Commission, on 21 November 1899. Its profound joys were expressed in the report when the Commission emphasized that after it began its work there had been only three workers among the deaf; now this number had been increased to seven, serving a host of stations. Those reported were:

1. *Chicago* — Arthur Reinke

2. *Milwaukee* — T. Wangerin (including also Racine, Oshkosh, Sheboygan and Neenah, Wisconsin, Saginaw, Michigan, and Winona, Minnesota)

3. *Louisville, Ky.* — Arthur Boll (serving also Dayton, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Indianapolis, Indiana)

4. *South Bend, Indiana* — Theodore Claus, who served this station in addition to his hearing congregation, taught school, and served in addition deaf congregations in South Bend, Indiana, and Toledo, Ohio.

5. *St. Louis* — H. Hallerberg, who also (probably since 1901) taught the sign language to the students at Concordia Seminary. In addition he served Quincy, Jacksonville, and Springfield, Illinois, and Hannibal, Missouri. In May 1902 he made a mission

trip through Kansas and preached to the deaf in various cities.

6. *Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota* — John Salvner, who wanted to begin missions also in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, Rochester, Mankato, New Ulm, and Fari-bault, Minnesota.

7. *Englewood (Chicago)* — W. Gielow, partially replacing Arthur Reinke, who has accepted the call as assistant pastor at Bethlehem as successor to his father. Reinke had already made exploratory tours in Cleveland, Ohio, Buffalo, New York, and even Denver, Colorado.<sup>40</sup>

Truly an amazing record *six years* after Synod officially adopted the work!

Perhaps some of the statistics reported may also be of interest. The missionaries preached to more than 1,500 deaf in all sections of the country, communed 792, married 23 deaf-mute couples, confirmed 55 adults, baptized nine, and buried five.<sup>41</sup>

And the price tag for this work? The total income for the triennium was \$7,296.14. Total expenditures were \$7,256.56, leaving a balance in the treasury of \$39.58. The cost of operations had increased to approximately \$2,400 per year!<sup>42</sup>

Although both the deaf and the missionaries had requested a periodical of their own, the Commission encouraged *The Lutheran Pioneer*, published by the Missionary

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 1902, pp. 107—8.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

Board of the Synodical Conference, to allocate space for the work among the deaf.<sup>43</sup> This was done. It is interesting to note that Edwin Reinke, son of the founder, was elected to the Commission in place of his sainted father.<sup>44</sup>

After its initial enthusiastic spurt, the Mission endeavor settled on a plateau. By 1908 there were only five called and salaried missionaries, but three part-time workers. Services were conducted at approximately 40 larger and smaller cities, including nine state schools for the deaf, serving a total of approximately 5,000 deaf people.<sup>45</sup>

#### The Board for Deaf Missions

Permit me to inject just a few references to the Board structure at this point. The number of missionaries and preaching stations increased mathematically over the years. When in 1923 literature for the blind was contemplated, the Synod referred this additional responsibility to the Board of Missions to the Deaf.<sup>46</sup> In 1926 the Board reported that there were 103 blind persons in the Synod which added this work to the Board's agenda.<sup>47</sup> Work among the blind was officially initiated in 1927 when the Rev. A. H. Kuntz was installed on 2 October 1927 as the first worker among the blind. It was reported:

He is the first missionary to the blind in the history of the American Lutheran church and the LU-

TERAN MESSENGER TO THE BLIND, which he edits, is the only protestant religious periodical for the blind in the world. . . . The first copy was published in January of this year. [1927]<sup>48</sup>

It first appeared in an edition of 100 copies, but quickly had to be increased to 500.<sup>49</sup> Much additional literature was issued subsequently.<sup>50</sup>



O. C. Schroeder

With the addition of the Rev. O. C. Schroeder serving both the blind and the deaf (he had served the deaf since June 1911 and entered the service of the blind in 1928), a library for the blind was established in his parsonage, whose primary purpose was "to magnify the name of the Lord Jesus, to edify the saints, and to save precious souls."<sup>51</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 1908, p. 99.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 1923, p. 39.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 1926, Engl. ed., p. 118.

<sup>48</sup> *The Deaf Lutheran*, XIX (July 1927), 95.

<sup>49</sup> *Der Lutheraner*, LXXXIII (2 Aug. 1927), 266; see also *ibid.*, LXXXIII (20 Dec. 1927), 450.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, LXXXV (1 Jan. 1929), 5-7.

<sup>51</sup> *The Deaf Lutheran*, XXXV (July 1943), 25.

In 1953 this library was moved to St. Louis.

Missionary Schroeder retired from his arduous labors after almost 52 years of service in January 1963.<sup>52</sup> He died 10 May 1967, at the age of 81.

His dedication to his Lord Jesus is also revealed in his statement on a travel-expense voucher that he sent to the Board in 1924. He tells that he was forced to pay \$5.00 a month out of his pocket to meet his rental payments on an apartment, and then concluded by saying "yet I would be willing to work just as diligently for the deaf if I would receive not one dime in salary or rental allowance."<sup>53</sup>

In 1947 a separate Board for the Blind was established,<sup>54</sup> and since then there is only one additional major change in the administration to be reported, namely, the merger in 1965 of all the Synodical mission boards into a single board.<sup>55</sup> This combined six of the existing boards into one.

All told, the Synod has had some 20 different mission boards for various specialties at one time or another in its 121-year history. With the formation of a single mission board, one phase of the Synodical missions to the blind undoubtedly has come to an end.

Two laymen, particularly, have had a unique period of service on the Board, one for 40 years and the other for 28. Mr. John P. Miller served on the Board from 1920 to 1959, and as an honorary member

until the time of his death on 28 August 1962, at the age of 81. Undoubtedly, with him died a vast number of experiences.<sup>56</sup>

Mr. G. F. Kruse, who died at the age of 80 on 2 May 1959, had served on the Board for 28 years and as its treasurer for 26 years. At the time of his 25th anniversary on the Board he stated:

Every phase of the work has been interesting, and most of all satisfying is the knowledge that it has been a great privilege to serve my Lord in His vineyard, and as a humble servant under His guidance to do everything to the honor and glory of His Holy name decently and in order.<sup>57</sup>

#### Executive Secretary

As the demands upon the Board members continued to increase with an expanding missionary staff and innumerable fields, the Board created the office of field secretary or "Administrative Assistant to the Board" and in February 1943 appointed the Rev. John L. Salvner to this office. The original designation of this office undoubtedly revealed a basic antipathy evident elsewhere in the Missouri Synod to a top-heavy officialdom. In 1947 it became the position of Executive Secretary. His responsibilities included supervision of all deaf missions, providing liaison between the Board and the missionaries, serving as counselor to the missionaries and advisee to the Board, coordinating the work, promoting unity and har-

52 *Ibid.*, LV (March 1963), 35.

53 *Ibid.*, LIX (Aug. 1967), 118.

54 Missouri Synod, *Proceedings*, 1947, p. 412.

55 *Ibid.*, 1965, p. 82.

56 *The Deaf Lutheran*, LIV (Nov. 1962), 166—67; *The Lutheran Witness*, LXXVIII (2 April 1959), 70.

57 *The Deaf Lutheran*, XLVIII (April 1956), 52.



mony, and as a liaison between the Board of Missions to the Deaf and the Synodical Board of Directors.<sup>58</sup>

One can simply not resist the temptation to digress a moment here and to expand on the work of

### John L. Salvner

Born in Saginaw, Michigan, 17 October 1876, he attended Concordia College, Milwaukee, and graduated from the St. Louis seminary in 1901. While a student he was informed by his doctor that he had no more than six months to live — and he lived to the ripe old age of 84 years, having served in the deaf ministry for 59 of them! While at the Seminary, he studied the sign language under Pastor H. Hallerberg — which also, incidentally, helps us date the teaching of the sign language perhaps to the year 1900 or, at the latest, 1901. In an autobiographical sketch Salvner relates that the vast majority of the Seminarians were afraid to study the sign language, thinking that they would automatically receive a call into a deaf mission. Let him tell the story:

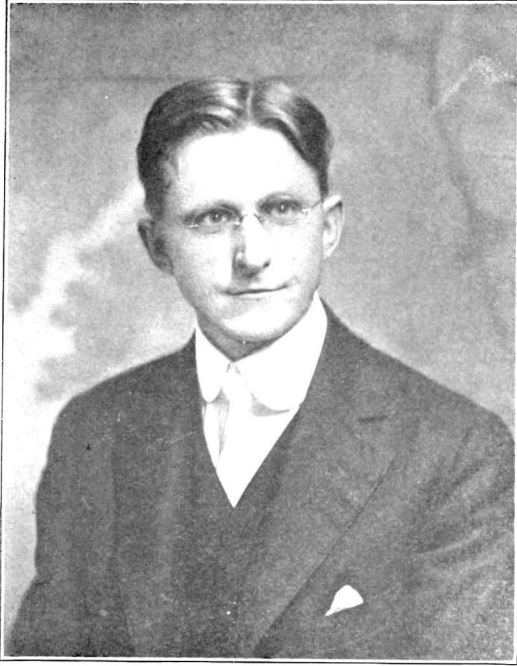
During the last year at the Sem Pastor Wangerin, our first missionary to the deaf, wrote to Dr. [L.] Fuerbringer urging him to ask for volunteers for our mission. A man was needed in the twin cities for he and pastor Arthur Reinke of Chicago had repeatedly ministered to the deaf in these cities and had good attendances. They thought it a good field to place a man. Dr. Fuerbringer complied with the request, but not one of our class of 63 volunteered. We had heard

but little about this work, and we thought it but small work. Thereupon the sainted Pastor Hallerberg, then missionary in St. Louis, addressed our class and impressed it upon us that learning the sign language does not mean to be called into this work, but it surely would be of great help if we had deaf in our parish or community. About 20 of the class took up study of the sign language, one lesson a week, beginning with February. With the course of time, the class dwindled down to two, Buch and myself. However, neither of us wanted to enter the work, but preferred hearing work which is but natural. We both feared that one of us very likely would receive a call to the Twin Cities. The calls had been allotted and it was announced to which place each one of us had been assigned. No one had received the call into deaf work. Of course, Buch and I rejoiced. I received a call to Dix and Durango, California, to serve two congregations and to be my own organist.<sup>59</sup>

Salvner seemed relieved temporarily, but then a direct call for a missionary was issued to the faculty at St. Louis. After some “juggling” Salvner was induced to accept the call and in the midst of 30 deaf and a few hearing people he was ordained and installed on 25 August 1901 into one of the most blessed and fruitful ministries the Missouri Synod has witnessed. In fact, somewhat frail of body, like St. Paul, Salvner became an inveterate traveling missionary. But not until 19 March 1905 did he confirm his first class! Then came the period of expansion, beginning work in Stillwater, La Crosse, and Wi-

<sup>59</sup> John L. Salvner, “He Leadeth Me,” undated manuscript in the files of the Deaf Mission Board at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, No. 1120, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> See the 1964 edition of the *Deaf Missions Handbook*.



**Dr. J. L. Salvner**

nona — and from there into North and South Dakota: Devils Lake, Fargo, Grand Forks, Sioux Falls, Mitchell, Aberdeen, and elsewhere. He remembered:

During those days there were no stream-lined, air-conditioned trains. In hot weather passengers opened the windows, and dust covered everything. Also your hands and face. No diners those days, so we took our lunch with us. And we lived through it all, and enjoyed doing it for the Lord.<sup>60</sup>

In 1918 his field was divided when Candidate John Schumacher joined him. Pastor Waldemar Ferber took over another part of the field in 1923 and Pastor Arthur Jonas still another in 1938.

Arthur Dahms commented in 1927 on the subject's signing abilities:

This came through constant associating and mingling with the deaf. Not a couple of months' study under a hearing man, but long years of direct association with the deaf themselves bring that easy familiarity with the sign, that clearness of expression, and that beauty of execution which has endeared this missionary to so many deaf, even beyond the confines of the state in which he labored.<sup>61</sup>

Salvner himself gave us a clue on how he acquired his impressive ability:

I knew very little of the sign language when I came to the Twin Cities. There was no book of signs and I had no brother to teach me. I had to learn it the hard way. As much as possible I mingled with the deaf making many calls. Then there was a literary society here in Minneapolis which I attended regularly. They had debates, lectures, recitations and, of course, I understand but little of it. All I was after was to catch new signs. My sermon was ready every Friday morning and in the evening I went to a deaf man, a graduate of Gallaudet, with a list of words and sentences for which I had no signs and Saturday morning I stood before the mirror and preached the sermon to myself two or three times. The deaf were very patient with me and very helpful.<sup>62</sup>

But one more incident from the life of this sainted pioneer and executive. Salvner also had his first deaf-blind catechumen on 27 April 1913. The event is described:

This man learned to read the

<sup>61</sup> *The Deaf Lutheran*, XIX (March 1927), 20.

<sup>62</sup> Salvner, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

American Braille type for the blind, and our missionary (Salvner) was also obliged to study this method of writing out his lessons for the blind; direct personal instruction was given, like the confirmation, by spelling into the hand of the man, who by feeling of the missionary's hand understood what was said to him. Instructing this man was a slow and laborious process, but we have divine assurance that the angels rejoice over every single sinner who confesses his faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ, and surely the angels sang their heavenly praise to the Lord when this man was confirmed. And three such deaf-blind have been confirmed by our Minneapolis missionary!<sup>63</sup>

This beloved and loving missionary, who spent his entire life serving the blind and deaf, who frustrated medical men, was recognized for his outstanding abilities and services by his Alma Mater when it conferred on him the Doctorate of Divinity in 1944. He was also the first recipient of the John of Beverly Award in 1959 for "outstanding achievement and service on behalf of the deaf."<sup>64</sup>

The end of an era for the Synodical deaf work came in 1958 when Salvner retired in his 82nd year, having completed 57 years of deaf service, 15 as Executive Secretary.<sup>65</sup> Almost simultaneously Mr. G. F. Kruse, treasurer of the Board for 28 years, also resigned in his 82nd year.<sup>66</sup> When Mr. J. P. Miller resigned from the Board in 1959 after four decades of service, an era came

to an end. At age 84 veteran Salvner died on 19 November 1960.<sup>67</sup>

A new era for deaf missions was inaugurated when an octogenarian was succeeded by a 30-year-old Executive Secretary, the Rev. Wm. F. Reinking. He was commissioned to his new office on 23 August 1958.<sup>68</sup> Foreign work among the deaf was initiated during his tenure which undoubtedly contributed towards the termination of his work as Executive Secretary. Five years and three days after his installation, he received a call from the Board of World Missions to become a new Mission Counselor for work among the deaf in the Far East.<sup>69</sup> His successor was the Rev. Herbert W. Rohe who officially began his work on 1 June 1964.

#### **Ephphatha Conference**

The question has been raised when the first Ephphatha Conference was conducted. Dahms, in his series of articles on the history of deaf work in the 1920s, stated:

The exact date of organization of Ephphatha Conference seems to be somewhat clouded by lack of definite records rather than by antiquity. Brother Salvner of Minneapolis entered our mission for the deaf in 1901, and he is of the opinion that "conference was in existence before my time." Rev. H. Hallerberg was secretary at the time. We have before us the official minutes of those early years over the signature of Rev. Hallerberg. The title page of this book bears this inscription: "Book of Minutes of the Lutheran Ephphatha

<sup>63</sup> *The Deaf Lutheran*, XIX (May 1927), 36.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, LI (Aug. 1959), 121.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, L (July 1958), 99.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, L (Oct. 1958), 147.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, LIII (Feb. 1961), 19—20.

<sup>68</sup> *The Lutheran Witness*, LXXXVIII (23 Sept. 1958), 454.

<sup>69</sup> Board of Missions to the Deaf Minutes, 27 Aug. 1963, p. 3.

**Ephphatha  
Conference,  
Omaha, Nebr.,  
1924**



tha Conference, Organized at Chicago, Illinois, May 13, 1903.” We believe that this is official and correct. Missionaries among the deaf may have met before that time without being formally organized, and the formal organization of these men as Ephphatha Conference was effective May 13, 1903. The first minutes on record are of the meeting held in Chicago, May 3—4, 1904. The first paper was Rev. A. L. Reinke’s paper on signs for the Catechism, and the minutes show a record of the version for signing the first commandment.<sup>70</sup>

A note by Missionary N. F. Jensen reporting on the Conference which had been held in Milwaukee, 2 and 3 May 1905, reveals that the conference had been established in Chicago two years earlier.<sup>71</sup> This corroborates the Dahms statement.

Gradually the wives of the missionaries joined their husbands, which motivated the Conference in 1963 to petition the Board of Missions to the Deaf to consider a budgetary provision every four years so that the spouses could also attend.<sup>72</sup>

I must admit that my eyes popped out when I read the report of the

1960 Ephphatha Conference where the subtitle appeared towards the end of the report: “THANKS TO LSD.” Naturally, it soon became apparent that the Conference expressed its special gratitude to the LUTHERAN SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF which had hosted the Conference that year.<sup>73</sup>

#### **Geographical Expansion**

Space will not allow tracing the expansion of the work geographically. Suffice it to say that between 1896 and 1904 thirty preaching stations had been set up across the United States, expanding the work from the initial centers of Milwaukee, Chicago, and Louisville. Today one can see a magnificent spread throughout the United States and Canada.

Initially, as in the general home mission program of the Synod, it had been hoped that the deaf missionaries could be attached to hearing congregations as assistant pastors and thus receive some of their financial support from the congregations. The plan, however, was soon abandoned. The “leapfrog”

<sup>70</sup> *The Deaf Lutheran*, XX (Oct. 1928), 75.  
<sup>71</sup> *Der Lutheraner*, LXI (23 May 1905), 167.

<sup>72</sup> Ephphatha Conference Minutes, 1963, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> *The Deaf Lutheran*, LII (Oct. 1960), 150.

mission approach can be detected. One thing, however, is absolutely certain. There would have been no progress without the deep sacrifices of the missionaries and their families.

Within recent years, apparent by 1964, a tendency developed to integrate deaf Sunday School children into hearing congregations. It was felt that the desires and wishes of most of the parents could thus be met more easily.<sup>74</sup> There were in Milwaukee alone five Lutheran hearing congregations with special Sunday School classes. The seven teachers involved had taken special training for that purpose.<sup>75</sup>

#### Mission Personnel

No new men were called into the field between 1924—1930 because of the difficulties in finding the right men. The first deaf person to study for the ministry was the Rev. Wm. Ludwig who graduated from the Springfield seminary in 1959. Additional parish workers have increasingly entered the field within recent years.<sup>76</sup> In reviewing the records of the past, one certainly notices the predominance of certain family names in the mission: Reinke, Uhlig, Ferber, Huchthausen, and others.

The longevity of so many missionaries, particularly in their arduous service to the deaf is another amazing sign of God's magnificent blessings. The cumulative total of

the number of man years devoted to the work by a comparatively small number of workers would indeed be overwhelming.

Because there are fewer deaf congregations than hearing and because of the isolation of the deaf, the problem of transferring members from one region to the next has been difficult. The Ephphatha Conference, for the past several years, has directed its attentions to this problem and has even established a "Diaspora Committee." The difficulty exists where the deaf have moved without leaving a forwarding address.

#### Work Among Foreign Deaf

Forty-seven years ago, Missouri's pioneer missionary in China commenting at the 25th anniversary of the work among the deaf wrote:

. . . Oh, that one other wish of mine might be fulfilled in the next quarter century! That something might be done for the poor deaf of China and India. I have seen so many of them here in China without being in any way able to help them, because to labor among the hearing was so great and heavy.<sup>77</sup>

The writer of the article, quoting Arndt, then indicates that consideration was given by Miss Marie Oelschlaeger to begin work among the deaf in China where it was estimated that some 400,000 deaf were living. Agitation continued for the opening of work among the Chinese deaf and *The Deaf Lutheran* reported that \$78 had been received.<sup>78</sup> It is interesting to observe

<sup>74</sup> Board of Missions to the Deaf Minutes, 20 Sept. 1964, p. 4.

<sup>75</sup> *The Deaf Lutheran*, LX (Feb. 1968), 27.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, LVII (March 1965), 43.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII (Sept. 1930), 104—5.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII (Jan. 1931), 5.



that writers in *The Deaf Lutheran* towards the end of 1930 and the beginning of 1931 continuously agitate for the beginning of deaf work in China. On an organized basis, however, this was not to come into being at all because of the internal conditions in that country.

One of the primary factors in establishing work among the deaf in foreign countries was the organization of the "Lutheran Deaf Mission Society" which had been established by the deaf on the East Coast in 1951. The Ephphatha Conference, the following year adopted the Constitution and recommended it for approval to the Board of Missions to the Deaf.<sup>79</sup> Founders of this Society were Pastor George Kraus and Pastor Floyd Possehl. Even though there were some objections expressed to the Society initially because it was felt that the deaf should support their own churches and help them become self-sustaining, others contended that good stewardship also meant looking beyond one's locality. The Missouri Synod Convention in 1953 encouraged initiation of foreign deaf work through the Society.<sup>80</sup>

The objectives of the Society include:

1. To promote the establishment and operation of foreign mission work among the deaf and to support mission surveys and mission projects among the deaf in foreign countries;
2. To support Lutheran mis-

sions to the deaf with loans. The society, perhaps more than any other organization, board or individual was responsible for the initiation of work among the deaf in foreign countries. Executive Secretary Reinking's exploratory trip to the Orient in the spring of 1960 sharpened the needs.<sup>81</sup> As a result, work was initiated in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Nigeria, and elsewhere.

### The Deaf Lutheran

The initial request of the deaf to publish their own periodical came as early as 1902. The Board, in concurrence with the Synodical Convention, however, felt that the time was not yet ripe for a separate publication. Instead, *The Lutheran Pioneer* was used for dissemination of information. A separate publication was urged because the deaf were unable to read the German *Der Lutheraner*.<sup>82</sup> From 1902 until 1908 *The Pioneer*, as of course, *Der Lutheraner* and *The Lutheran Witness* kept the special interests of the deaf in mind. A farewell editorial in *The Lutheran Pioneer* indicates:

This number will likely be the last issue of this extra edition of the LUTHERAN PIONEER with "Among the Deaf" appended, since it is proposed from January the first next to publish a new paper under the name of DEAF LUTHERAN for the direct benefit of our deaf throughout our various missions. Such a paper has become a necessity for various reasons, and we hope that all who have hitherto subscribed to this

<sup>81</sup> *The Deaf Lutheran*, LII (Feb. 1960), 19—21.

<sup>82</sup> Missouri Synod, *Proceedings*, 1902, pp. 105 ff.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, XLIV (Oct. 1952), 62.

<sup>80</sup> Missouri Synod, *Proceedings*, 1953, p. 440.

extra edition of PIONEER would now become subscribers to the DEAF LUTHERAN. The new publication is, however, in no way to crowd out the PIONEER in its original form, but we hope that, since both follow different lines, readers of the one will be and remain readers also of the other.<sup>83</sup>

In January 1909 *The Deaf Lutheran* made its appearance, edited from 1711 Meinecke Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As you might surmise, T. Wangerin served as the first editor. The publication was launched as a four-page monthly, 10½ × 7½ inches, and remained in that form until the revisions in January 1954, its present format.

Editors have been:

1. Traugott Wangerin, 1909 to 1914
2. N. P. Uhlig, June 1915 to February 1918
3. E. G. Nachtsheim, March 1918 to September 1918
4. J. L. Salvner, October 1918 to January 1926
5. O. C. Schroeder, February 1926 to January 1951
6. Francis Gyle and M. Kosche, February 1951 to August 1953
7. N. P. Uhlig, September 1953 to December 1958
8. Harry W. Hoemann, January 1959 to September 1964
9. Martin Hewitt, October 1964 to the present.

Initially the magazine cost only 25¢ per year; in January 1921 it was raised to 35¢ and in 1923 to

50¢ per year. During the depression the price was reduced to 25¢ per year (July 1933) and in December 1950 restored to 50¢. Another increase occurred in January 1959 to \$1.00 per year, and in 1967 the price was increased to \$2.00.<sup>84</sup>

In reading the 60 volumes of *The Deaf Lutheran*, one is simply amazed at the very few errors or flukes that have been made by the editors. There is one, however, which gave me a chuckle as I read the headline: "Vicars Gehrs and Fleischauer are to be married." The article continued: "Vicars Fred Gehrs and Harold Fleischauer have become engaged to be married." Obviously, elaboration followed that these two gentlemen were marrying members of the opposite sex.<sup>85</sup>

Already in the first editorial, Editor Wangerin announced the purposes of the publication. We regret that Volume I was not available for this study, since it is not filed at Concordia Historical Institute. We quote from the Dahms series:

In the name of God we launch on the sea of enterprise a new periodical which is to be published monthly in the interests of the deaf of our various missions and will be known as the DEAF LUTHERAN. . . . It is to contain articles for the spiritual and moral betterment of its readers as well as news items from the various Lutheran deaf circles, thus keeping its readers in touch and sympathy with each other. It proposes to clear away misunder-

<sup>83</sup> *The Lutheran Pioneer*, XXX, 12 (Dec. 1908), 95. [Issue for the deaf]

<sup>84</sup> *The Deaf Lutheran*, LX (Jan. 1968), 9.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, LV (June 1963), 92.

standings and wrong notions as to Lutheranism. It will show what true Lutheranism stands for, what it believes, teaches and confesses in word and deed. It is to be a Christian herald, a Lutheran instructor with the object of enlarging and improving the religious and spiritual knowledge of its readers.<sup>86</sup>

Quite a venture when you consider that at the time the first issue appeared, only seven workers were in the service.

Even though there had been very few changes made in the appearance of *The Deaf Lutheran* over the course of half a century, one finds the first use of color, namely silver, on the cover of the 25th anniversary issue. At the time of the 50th anniversary gold was introduced on the cover. When Francis Gyle became editor he introduced colored ink in February 1951, but, perhaps because it was too difficult to read, it was discontinued.

Financial problems, in view of the low subscription rates, continued to plague the publication. In the summer of 1951 it was reported that an edition of 7,500 copies was mailed free of charge to the deaf.<sup>87</sup> This service was rendered at a cost of \$250 a month or \$3,000 per year to the Board. Editor Hoemann characteristically brought things to a head at the Ephphatha Conference in 1964, when he tossed in the "bombshell" recommending that publication be suspended. The Conference, however, resolved to

continue its publication with a new editor.<sup>88</sup>

### Postscript

The work among the deaf has entered a noticeable new phase which began perhaps in the late 1950s or early 1960s. There are transitions which become apparent, not only because of the changing personnel — these have occurred before for three generations — but because of the new techniques and methodology, administration, communications, transportation, and other factors. Besides the number of deaf or hard of hearing in the United States is vastly larger today than it has ever been before, the number being estimated at fifteen million adults and three million children. This, in spite of the fact that better medical care is available. But it says something to us with respect to this work when we are recording for 1967 a total attendance of 177,357 people.

In surveying this work which has now been carried on for 95 years within the structure of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, I see a reverse Tower of Babel. At that time the pride and ambition of man compelled him to band together to build a tower which would allow them to step into heaven. But God scattered them and provided language barriers so that they could no longer communicate. No one ever used the grand stairway to heaven! The story of the deaf missions in

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, XX (Nov. 1928), 83—85.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, XLIII (July 1951), 56.

<sup>88</sup> Ephphatha Conference Minutes, 1964 p. 13; see also *The Deaf Lutheran*, LVI (Nov. 1964), 171.

the Missouri Synod reverses that account. The sign language has united those who were unable to communicate. The deaf have been united through the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit into an intimate fellowship. In addition to this union, built upon the prophets and the apostles with Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, there is a new building, a new Tower, fitly

framed together, whose very point reaches into heaven.

Much more miraculous than the invention of the telegraph by Samuel F. B. Morse in 1837, we exclaim with him: "What hath God wrought!" Not a "Tower of Babel" — but "Sanctuaries of Silence!"

*The Rev. Aug. R. Suelflow, S. T. M., D. D., is director of Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis. He is a frequent contributor to the QUARTERLY and author of The Heart of Missouri (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954).*



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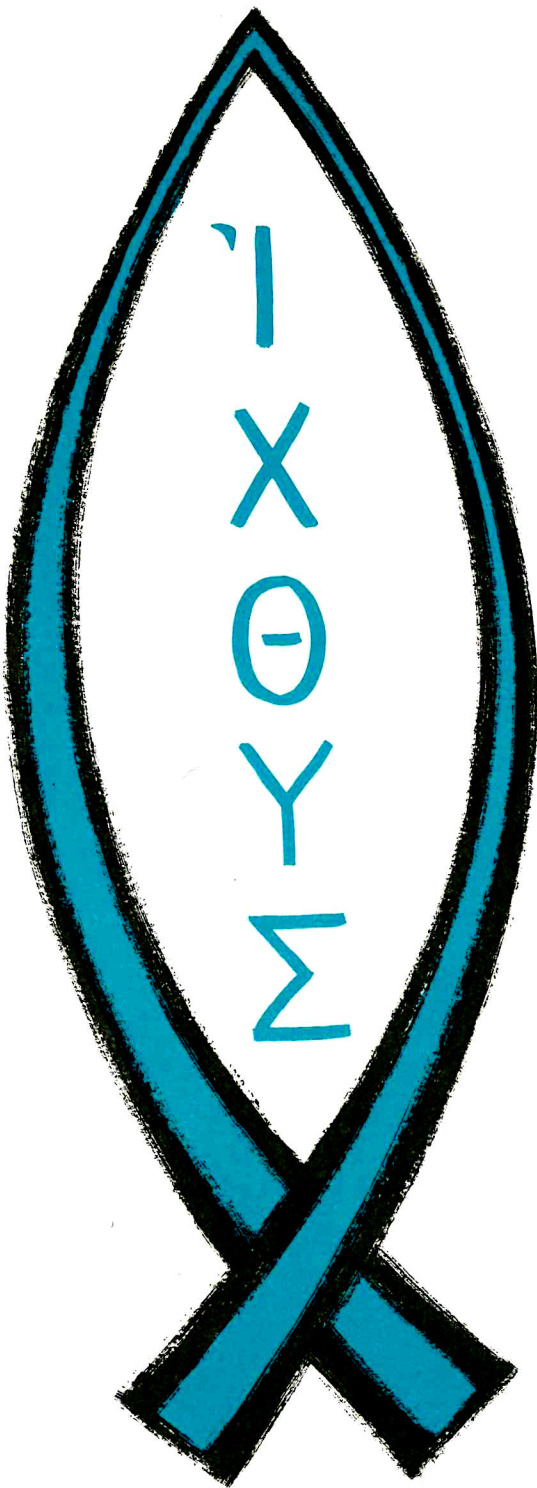
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