

The Voice of Confessionalism and Inter-Lutheran Relations

The Influence of the Missouri Synod in the Baltic
and Ingrian Lutheran Churches, 1991–2001

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Abstract

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) had no contacts with the Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran Churches in the Soviet Union. It was virtually impossible for the Missouri Synod to make connections because of its narrow view of ecumenism, its anti-communism, and its non-membership in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which communicated to some extent with the churches of the USSR. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union made it possible for the Synod to establish totally new contacts with post-Soviet Lutherans. I examine how the Missouri Synod influenced the Baltic and Ingrian Churches between 1991 and 2001 in the context of inter-Lutheran relations.

The starting point of the study is when the Missouri Synod first made contact with the Baltic and Ingrian Lutherans. It set up initial connections in 1991 through the LCMS auxiliary organizations in cooperation with the Finnish sister organization, the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland. However, the first direct official Missourian contacts with the Lutherans in those countries were established in 1992.

The Estonian Church, being more developed, more self-sufficient and strongly supported by the Finnish Church, was not so needful of support from the Missouri Synod. Having a more liberal theological approach it had allowed women to become pastors, and continued doing so, whereas the positions of the Ingrian, Latvian and Lithuanian Churches were and continued to be more open to cooperation with the Missouri Synod. The Latvian Church, for example, which allowed the ordination of women, overruled the decision in 1993 so that the problematic question of women's ministry no longer hindered cooperation between the Latvians and the Missourians.

As a result of the cooperation and of fellowship discussions between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church, an altar and pulpit fellowship agreement was signed at the 1998 LCMS convention. Significantly, this was the very first time an existing member of the Lutheran World Federation entered into fellowship with the Missouri Synod. One could say that this fellowship became a model for the two Baltic Churches that later signed the agreement with the Missouri Synod. From the Missourian side, fellowship with the Ingrians meant that the Missouri Synod had developed a more tolerant and more open attitude towards its partner Churches and their pluralism. The end point of the study is July 2001, when the Missouri Synod's convention delegates voted to declare church fellowship with the Latvians and the Lithuanians.

Of most importance was the theological, financial and moral support the LCMS gave to the Ingrian, Latvian and Lithuanian Lutheran Churches, and to the Estonian Church to a lesser degree, and it also exerted the most significant influence in these areas.

Theological support was the top priority. The LCMS extensively supported theological education in the area for two basic reasons. First, the Missouri Synod had reaffirmed its positions on many theological questions and was not as progressive as the German and Swedish Lutherans, for instance. LCMS theology was more understandable and more similar to the post-ghetto theology of the Churches that had been under Soviet rule.

Second, the Missouri Synod had the capacity for educational cooperation with its comprehensive education system.

Financial support was given on quite a large scale. Much of it directly served the purposes of theological education, but there was also some support for diaconal work, for example. Perhaps to the surprise of many Western Lutherans, the financial support made the Baltic and Ingrian Churches more independent and less vulnerable to the threat of being cut off from funding that came from some members of the LWF.

Moral support was essential, and was usually connected with theological and financial support. At first it involved offering encouragement to the small Churches in Eastern Europe that had suffered under Communist persecution, but may have been of utmost significance in the new situation that arose when the Baltic and Ingrian Churches attracted heavy criticism and were under strong pressure from mainstream European Lutherans.

Because of the Missouri Synod's influence and the conservative nature of the Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran Churches a "Lutheran New Deal" or reallocation was made in Eastern Europe. Between mainstream and non-mainstream Lutheranism appeared the "middle ground" of the Ingrian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and to some degree Estonian Lutheran Churches, all of which were now deeply connected to both the LCMS and the LWF. In only one decade the Missouri Synod had gained a strong foothold in the Baltic and Ingrian Churches.

Tiivistelmä

Luterilainen kirkko Missouri-synodi ei ollut yhteyksissä Baltian ja Inkerin luterilaisiin kirkkoihin Neuvostoliiton aikana. Missouri-synodin oli ollut lähes mahdotonta luoda kontakteja heidän kapean ekumeniakäsityksen ja heidän antikommunistisen asenteensa vuoksi ja koska Missouri-synodi ei kuulunut Luterilaiseen maailmanliittoon, joka oli jossain määrin tekemisissä neuvostoliittolaisten kirkkojen kanssa. Neuvostoliiton romahtamisen myötä Missouri-synodille avautui täysin uusia mahdollisuuksia päästä yhteyksiin jälkineuvostoliittolaisten luterilaisten kanssa. Tutkimuksessani selvitän sitä, millä tavoin Missouri-synodi on vaikuttanut Baltian ja Inkerin luterilaisiin kirkkoihin vuodesta 1991 vuoteen 2001, myös ottaen huomioon luterilaisten keskinäiset suhteet kansainvälisellä tasolla.

Tutkimus alkaa Missouri-synodin ensimmäisistä kontakteista Baltian ja Inkerin luterilaisiin. Näitä yhteyksiä luotiin Missouri-synodin virallisten apuorganisaatioiden kautta yhteistyössä Suomen Tunnustuksellisen Luterilaisen Kirkon kanssa vuonna 1991. Ensimmäiset suorat viralliset Missouri-synodin kontaktit kyseisten maiden kirkkojen kanssa luotiin 1992.

Viron luterilainen kirkko kehittyneempänä, omavaraisempana ja Suomen kirkon tukemana ei ollut samassa määrin Missouri-synodin tuen tarpeessa. Viron kirkolla oli myös liberaalimpi teologinen lähestymistapa ja se oli hyväksynyt naispappeuden ja jatkoi naisten vihkimistä papeiksi. Inkerin, Latvian ja Liettuan positiot olivat melko hyvin yhteensopivat ja edelleen kehittivät sopivammiksi Missouri-synodin kanssa tehtävää yhteistyötä ajatellen. Esimerkiksi Latvian kirkko oli hyväksynyt naisten pappisvihkimyksen, mutta mitätöi päätöksen vuonna 1993. Tämän jälkeen ongelmallinen naispappeuskysymys ei ollut esteenä Latvian kirkon ja Missouri-synodin välisessä yhteistyössä.

Yhteistyön ja kumppanuusneuvottelujen seurauksena Missouri-synodi ja Inkerin kirkko allekirjoittivat alttari- ja saarnastuolisopimuksen Missouri-synodin konventissa 1998. On merkittävää, että ensimmäistä kertaa kirkosta, joka jo oli Luterilaisen maailmanliiton jäsen, tuli Missouri-synodin kumppani. On mahdollista sanoa, että tästä kumppanuudesta tuli malli kahdelle muulle baltialaiselle kirkolle, jotka sitten myöhemmin allekirjoittivatkin kumppanuussopimuksen Missouri-synodin kanssa. Missouri-synodille sopimus inkeriläisten kanssa tarkoitti sitä, että Missouri-synodi otti askeleen suvaitsevaisempaan ja avoimempaan suuntaan suhteessa partnerikirkkoihin ja niiden monimuotoisuuteen. Tämän tutkimuksen päätekohta on heinäkuu 2001, jolloin Missouri-synodin konventin delegaattit äänestivät kumppanuussopimuksen puolesta Latvian ja Liettuan luterilaisten kirkkojen kanssa.

Missouri-synodin tärkeimmät avustamisen muodot ja samalla merkittävimmät vaikutukset Inkerin, Latvian ja Liettuan luterilaisille kirkkoille ja vähemmässä määrin Viron kirkolle olivat teologinen, taloudellinen ja moraalinen tuki.

Teologinen tuki oli tärkein avustamisen muoto. Missouri-synodi tuki laajasti alueen teologista koulutusta erityisesti kahdesta syystä. Ensinnäkin, Missouri-synodi oli uudelleen vahvistanut kantansa monissa teologisissa kysymyksissä eikä mennyt niissä

yhtä progressiivisesti eteenpäin kuin esimerkiksi saksalaiset tai ruotsalaiset luterilaiset. Näin ollen Missouri-synodin teologia oli ymmärrettävämpää postghekkoteologialle ja lähempänä sitä. Toiseksi, Missouri-synodilla oli kapasiteettia tarjota koulutuksellista yhteistyötä, koska sillä oli erittäin kattava koulutusjärjestelmä.

Taloudellista tukea annettiin monenlaisiin tarpeisiin. Tuki oli usein suoraan liitetty palvelemaan teologisen koulutuksen tarpeita, mutta tukea annettiin myös jossain määrin mm. diakoniseen työhön. Ehkä monien läntisten luterilaisten yllätykseksi Missouri-synodilta saatu taloudellinen tuki teki Baltian ja Inkerin kirkoista itsenäisempiä eivätkä ne enää olleet yhtä haavoittuvia rahoituksen lopettamiseen liittyvien uhkausten suhteen, joita heihin kohdistivat eräät Luterilaiseen maailmanliittoon kuuluvat kirkot.

Moraalinen tuki oli arvokasta ja se oli yhteydessä teologiseen ja taloudelliseen tukeen. Alkuvaiheessa kommunistisen vainon alla kärsineiden itäeurooppalaisten pienten kirkkojen tukeminen koettiin tärkeäksi. Moraalisen tuen merkitys ehkä jopa lisääntyi, kun eurooppalaisen luterilaisuuden valtavirran puolelta tuli ankaraa kritiikkiä ja painostusta Baltian ja Inkerin kirkkojen suuntaan.

Missouri-synodin vaikutuksen ja Baltian ja Inkerin luterilaisten kirkkojen konservatiivisen luonteen takia ”luterilainen uusjako” tai uudelleen asemoituminen tapahtui Itä-Euroopassa. Inkerin, Latvian ja Liettuan kirkoista ja jossain määrin myös Viron kirkosta, kasvoi ”välilimaaston” kirkkoja jotka kaikki olivat laajalti yhteydessä molempiin, sekä Luterilaiseen maailmanliittoon että Missouri-synodiin. Missouri-synodi oli saavuttanut vain yhden vuosikymmenen aikana tukevan jalansijan Baltian ja Inkerin luterilaisissa kirkoissa.

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Contents

Abstract	3
Tiivistelmä	5
Acknowledgements	7
Contents	8
I Introduction	11
1.1 Task and sources	11
1.1.1 Task and methods	11
1.1.2 Sources and earlier research	15
1.2 Background and the situation before 1991	18
1.2.1 The Missouri Synod.....	18
1.2.2 The Ingrian and Baltic Lutheran Churches.....	31
II Rushing into the post-Communist world, 1991–1995.....	44
2.1 Russia.....	44
2.1.1 First contacts.....	44
2.1.2 An expanding mission and an internationally active new bishop.....	56
2.1.3 The first fellowship talks in St. Petersburg.....	64
2.2 The Baltic countries	73
2.2.1 Estonia – cautious optimism.....	73
2.2.2 Latvia – the new archbishop welcomes cooperation	80
2.2.3 Lithuania – flattered by the approach	91
2.3 The Global Lutheran Level.....	94
2.3.1 Gateway Arch over Riga? ELCA suspicions.....	94
2.3.2 Sharing information with the LWF.....	97
2.3.3 From Antiqua to Adelaide – confessional contacts strengthened.....	101
III Balancing between doctrine and church politics, 1996–1998.....	105
3.1 Drawing the line.....	105
3.1.1 The case of the Augsburg Institute – support for the historic people’s church	105
3.1.2 The Estonians chose a different path	111
3.2 Strong support for confessional theology	115
3.2.1 Pastoral training in Latvia and the LWF Hong Kong Assembly – church-political turmoil	115
3.2.2 Participating in theological education in Russia.....	123
3.3 Breakthrough – agreement with the Ingrians.....	129
3.3.1 The road to altar and pulpit agreement.....	129

3.3.2 Agreement and reception.....	135
IV Gaining a strong foothold in theology and Church relations, 1999–2001.....	141
4.1 Arranging theological education in Russia, Latvia and Lithuania.....	141
4.1.1 Lutheran education centers in Russia	141
4.1.2 The Luther Academy in Riga and the Department for Evangelical Theology in Klaipėda	144
4.2 A complexity of relations	150
4.2.1 The CLCF – in crisis with the LCMS.....	150
4.2.2 The Siberian situation	152
4.3 Culmination – fellowship agreements	158
4.3.1 The process with Latvian Church – the German ultimatum.....	158
4.3.2 The process in the Lithuanian Church – an ecumenical landmine	172
4.3.3 The agreements with the LCMS force the LWF to take an active role	176
4.3.4 The final decision	182
V Conclusions.....	186
Abbreviations	193
Sources and literature	194
Archival sources	194
Printed sources	196
Newspapers and journals	201
Internet sources	202
Interviews.....	206
Literature.....	207
Index of Names.....	221

I Introduction

1.1 Task and sources

1.1.1 Task and methods

This study is an investigation into how The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) influenced the Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran Churches between the year 1991, when the first connections were made, and 15 July 2001 when the Missouri Synod’s convention delegates passed a church fellowship agreement with two of the Baltic Lutheran Churches.

‘Influence’ is a very fluid concept that is difficult to deal with, but it is still possible to research it in various ways. I have made my task as straightforward as possible. My approach was to identify the key actors, organizations and decisions that I considered to be the most important and that proved the influence. The focus of the research is on the top levels and the direct churchly contacts of the respective Churches, rather than on the local congregational level. The new transatlantic interaction was not an isolated phenomenon, hence the research context in this study is inter-Lutheran relations.

Other Churches in addition to the Missouri Synod, such as the second major confessional church body the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), define themselves as “confessional”, but they are not in focus here. The Missouri Synod could also be seen as the most important player in the field of confessional Lutheranism, and therefore in Lutheranism as a whole: in a sense, it represents the “voice of confessionalism”.¹

On the geographical level the main focus of the research is on the countries of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia, and the influence of the Missouri Synod in the Lutheran Churches there. More specifically, the investigation covers the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania (ELCLi)², and the Evangelical Lutheran

¹ Noll 2003, 3; Arkkila 2014, 20. Noll classifies the LCMS and the WELS together: “there are two major confessional bodies, the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), which, though they are nervous about each other, can be classified together because of a common insistence on strict adherence to the Augsburg Confession and a considerable degree of separation from other Christian groups, often especially other Lutheran groups.” Walz, Montreal & Hofrenning (2003, 143) places the WELS “to the theological and political right of the LCMS in the American Lutheran church family.” Considering the confessionalism Ruotsila (2008, 90) describes the position of the LCMS in the early twentieth-century discussions relating to the League of Nations: “Its views were particularly firmly grounded in the theology and doctrines of Lutheran confessionalism as interpreted in its own authoritative tradition and organs.” To give an example of the self-identification to Lutheran Confessionalism I refer to Nafzger’s (2003, 248) use of language in the Missouri Synod’s *Concordia Journal*: “As Confessional Lutherans, we members of the LCMS...”

² The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia and The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania are sometimes both referred to as ELCL, so just to avoid misunderstandings ELCLi is used in this research meaning the Lithuanian church.

Church of Ingria in Russia (ELCIR). I also use the respective abbreviated forms, referring to the Ingrian Church as the ELCIR, for example.³

Since the beginning of the 1990s the Missouri Synod has also been active and influential in other neighboring countries such as Belarus, Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine and some Nordic countries, but the level of activity has not been as high as in the Baltic countries and Russia. The Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran Churches are connected to each other on many levels. The former Soviet Union Lutheran Churches, or their bishops, are sometimes referred to as the “Eastern Alliance”⁴. These areas of the Baltics and Russia/Ingria constitute their own geographical scheme. The Baltic States are not identical, however, and in some ways are surprisingly different.⁵ In Russia the Missourians influenced the Ingrian Church the most, which is why other Russian Churches are not included in the core research. Siberian Lutheranism, which was only partially Ingrian, is brought into the limelight in the last main chapter (Chapter IV).

The findings of this research will be of use to each of the Churches included in it and, it is hoped, will enhance their self-understanding. They will also be of relevance to Lutherans in the Nordic countries, Germany, North America and many African countries, and in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF)⁶, which follows with interest the influence of and actions taken by the Missouri Synod. The results will have an effect on the identity and historical interpretation of Eastern European Lutheran Churches, and the research is of particular significance in the discussion inside the Lutheran world.

Historically, with its focus on the time span after 1991 my study coincides with the era following the collapse of the Soviet Union (1917–1991). The Baltic countries became independent of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s, and having gained their independence they turned towards the West and endeavored to “return to Europe”.⁷ The framework of this research, both geographically and chronologically, is the huge upheavals in Eastern Europe and in world politics. The changes in areas such as freedom of religion and the status of Lutheranism in these countries have been linked with these social upheavals.

³ As Lawrence R. Rast (FLW 2001, 9) wrote, “Lutheranism in America is like a bowl of alphabet soup: ELCA, LCMS, WELS, ELS, and others.” Similarly, this research features a lot of letter combinations, the aim being to make the definitions sufficiently clear when several different Churches are referred to.

⁴ Tighe (2002), for example, uses “Eastern Alliance” in referring to the “strongly conservative Lutheran bishops of former parts of the Soviet Union”.

⁵ See Lieven 1999, xxxv.

⁶ The Lutheran World Federation comprises (Gassmann 2001 a, 205–206): “The worldwide organization and communion of Lutheran churches. The Lutheran World Convention (LWC), founded in 1923, had strengthened the awareness of fellowship among the Lutheran churches. In 1946 the Executive Committee of the LWC decided to transform this body into a Lutheran World Federation.” One year later (1947) in Lund, Sweden, 49 Lutheran churches established the Lutheran World Federation. It has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, and the highest decision-making body is the assembly, which is normally convened every six years. Pre-1991 the assemblies were held in Lund (1947), Hannover (1952), Minneapolis (1957), Helsinki (1963), Evian (1970), Dar es Salaam (1977), Budapest (1984) and Curitiba (1990).

⁷ Lieven 1999, 374; Luukkanen 2004, 13

It can be said that the East opened up to the West in the 1990s. On the other hand the West, and Western Churches, were strongly inclined to come to Eastern Europe after the doors opened, and many people in Eastern Europe welcomed Western Churches and wanted them to be part of their lives. Their spread into Eastern Europe also meant an increase in the influence of the Missouri Synod following the break-up of the Soviet Union.

A major aim in this research is to enhance understanding of how the Missouri Synod influenced the Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran Churches after the first contacts were made. The nature and development of these contacts, and the support of the Missouri Synod, call for a deeper insight and a more precise definition.

A further aim is to find answers to many questions of interest concerning the involvement of the Missouri Synod in the Baltic and Ingrian Churches, including the degree to which this supposed support affected the decisions they took on issues such as the ordination of women, and how the support affected church relations overall. What motivated the Missouri Synod to become involved in the lives of these Baltic and Ingrian Churches – altruism, a thirst for power or something else? Why did the Baltic and Ingrian Churches want to be in contact with the Missourians and what could they possibly have gained? Could they, as many Western and Northern Lutherans have wondered, have been persuaded to change their theological positions, or were they able to stick to their own standpoints? A speculative question of utmost interest concerns the degree to which the Baltic and Ingrian Churches were able to make decisions and to practice theology independently.

Relations between the Missouri Synod and the Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran Churches have taken various forms, and the contacts have been close. I aim to identify the major milestones in this cooperation, and also to analyze the extent to which it developed differently in each case.

Lutheranism on the international level infiltrates this research. Historically there has existed a kind of rivalry between the Lutheran World Federation and the largest non-LWF Church the Missouri Synod. I will speculate on the developments that came about on the international Lutheran level because of the involvement of the Missouri Synod in the Baltic and Ingrian Churches.

It is not possible to include all LCMS activities in this study. The literature published and disseminated by the Missouri Synod's recognized service organization, the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF), has been influential in the Baltic and Ingrian areas, for example. I will focus on some of its actions, but not in much detail on its publishing activities, which would be a theme for further research.

Given that religious liberation, the general development of religiousness and the reconstruction of Churches in Russia and the Baltic countries are major background themes in my research, it is essential to understand the development of these post-Communist societies and their transition towards Western social order.

The Missouri Synod has attracted little or no interest when it comes to theological research in Finland, even less so with regard to its influence in Baltic and Ingrian

Churches after 1991. The position of this study in the research field could, in this respect, be described as ground breaking. On the level of church politics the subject is of significance and of general interest.

The research is historical, and the approach is analytical. It is based on facts, even though it is well known that this topic may arouse heated discussion both for and against. I have tried to stay as objective as possible in the spirit of ‘hospitality’ and criticality. I recognize the danger of taking sides on such burning issues: as Brockwell and Wengert (1995) state, “Perhaps the two historical areas most likely to fall victim to party spirit are religious history and political history”.⁸ My intention is not to make inter-Lutheran relations any more complex, but to increase mutual inter-Church and inter-denominational understanding of the issues, the difficulties and the misunderstandings.⁹

I will further exemplify the polarized situation. As Reverend Esko Murto points out in *Pyhäkön Lamppu* (6/2013), for some Liberals the Missouri Synod is a “crystallization” of all the things that could go wrong in American Lutheranism, and some Confessionals have a very “rosy” picture of the Missouri Synod.¹⁰ There is a real need for objective and open-minded research, which I hope I have managed to carry out.

I will now give a brief overview of the study and explain the structure. The next subchapter (1.1.2) describes the sources used and the earlier research conducted on the theme. Chapter 1.2 gives quite a comprehensive picture of the situation before 1991, and of how the background strongly influenced the research period. Chapter II, “Rushing into the post-Communist world, 1991–1995”, shows how the Missouri Synod made contact with Ingrian and Baltic Lutherans, and what methods it used in doing missionary work and exerting its influence. Churches could not remain bystanders in this post-Communist new world order with all its rapid changes. Lutherans were in touch more generally with both the Lutheran World Federation member Churches and the Missouri Synod. These new connections brought support and other good things, but also provoked new controversies.

Chapter III is entitled “Balancing between doctrine and church politics, 1996–1998”. The aim is to show how closely the Missouri Synod was linked with most of the Ingrian and Baltic Lutheran Churches. The Synod had to find a balance between its self-understanding of church fellowship and the opportunities arising from closer cooperation. One outcome of these connections was a new full altar and pulpit fellowship, which enhanced relations between the LWF member Churches and the Missouri Synod. Fairly rapid ethical and practical changes in mainstream Lutheranism, especially in the Nordic and German Churches, boosted the division between the liberal and the conservative, at least in the European region. Many Eastern European Lutherans tended to be on the conservative side. The situation also attracted the attention of Lutherans on the international level.

⁸ Brockwell & Wengert 1995, 3, 16.

⁹ Justo L. González (1995, xiii) wrote: “a genuinely ecumenical church history may be one that unashamedly recognizes and proclaims its own perspective”.

¹⁰ Murto 2013, 10.

The fourth and final main chapter is entitled “Gaining a strong foothold in theology and Church relations, 1999–2001”. Connections with the Missouri Synod had borne some fruit as far as the Ingrian and Baltic Lutheran Churches were concerned. Missourian support for theological education remained strong, but overall relations between these Churches and different groups were not uncomplex. Cooperation between the Missouri Synod and some of the Lutheran Churches under study culminated in 2001. Finally, I summarize the most relevant findings and results of my research in the “Conclusions” chapter.

1.1.2 Sources and earlier research

The material used for this research consists of archive sources, interviews, websites, literature, and newspaper and magazine articles. Most of it is in the English language, although there were quite a few documents in Russian, Latvian, German, Finnish and Swedish. I have collected this extremely fragmented primary material from various places around the world.

The study is based mainly on archive sources, including the central archives of the Estonian (Tallinn), Latvian (Riga), Lithuanian (Vilnius), Ingrian (St. Petersburg) and Swedish (Uppsala) Lutheran Churches, and also of the Lutheran World Federation in Switzerland (Geneva). The most useful Missouri Synod archive was that of the Concordia Historical Institute in the USA (St. Louis). I found some materials in the archives in Finland (Helsinki), in Germany (Kiel) and I used some personal archives.

The interviews play an important role due to the lack of archival sources and literature focusing on the subject. Most of interviewees from the Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran Churches were top-level officials involved in making decisions concerning cooperation with the Missouri Synod. The Missouri Synod interviewees were among the actors who were the most actively involved in these events in Eastern Europe. I conducted 40 interviews in several countries, mostly face to face, a few also by email. The interviews were carried out in English or Finnish. However, it was not possible to interview all the actors, for various reasons. Some key persons were somewhat reluctant to say much or anything at all about the topic because they felt that their previous statements had been used wrongly, or they were afraid that relationships with the Churches in question might somehow be affected. As a theoretical model for using interviews as a source in the research I consulted the book *Haastattelumenetelmän käyttö historiantutkimuksessa* written by Pentti Virrankoski.¹¹

The Internet was an essential source of information for this research. For example, the websites of all the Churches included in the study have material in English, and it is possible to find information relatively easily. The Missouri Synod, in particular, has a comprehensive website.

¹¹ Virrankoski 1994. As stated, unfortunately not all those who were asked responded to the interview requests, one of them being Dr Juris Cālītis.

I consulted the literature mostly to obtain background information, because there is no previous research on this specific theme. My major literary sources include Eric W. Gritsch's *A Story of Lutheranism: Second Edition* (2010)¹²; on churches and religions in Eastern Europe *Kirkot ja uskonnot itäisessä Euroopassa* (2010)¹³ edited by Maija Turunen; *Lutherans Today: American Lutheran Identity in the 21st Century* (2003)¹⁴, edited by Richard Cimino; Mary Todd's *Authority Vested: A Story of Identity and Change in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod* (2000)¹⁵; *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation* (1997)¹⁶ edited by Jens Holger Schjørring, Prasanna Kumari and Norman A. Hjelm; and for more detailed information the *Historical Dictionary of Lutheranism* (2001)¹⁷ edited by Günter Gassmann with Duane H. Larson and Mark W. Oldenburg.

I also used quite a lot of newspaper and magazine articles to show reactions to and the atmosphere surrounding some of the key issues covered in the research.

Given the nature of the sources, this research assumes a certain form. There is not much material on which to base the discussion and argument. The Missouri Synod has attracted very little research interest in Finland. I will briefly review the three latest theses submitted to the Theological Faculty of the University of Helsinki.¹⁸ The first Master's thesis on the Missouri Synod was Tauno Salonen's laudatur work in the field of Practical Theology, submitted in 1962: *Luterilaisen kirkon – Missouri Synodin koulujärjestelmä*, is about the education system of the Missouri Synod.¹⁹ Matti Väisänen submitted his thesis in 1964: *Raamatun arvovalta Missouri Synodin teologiassa*. He analyzed the authority of the Bible in the theology of the Missouri Synod, which could have been good information but is no longer available.²⁰ With regard to the research subject under scrutiny, my Master's thesis submitted in 2007, *Missouri-synodin käsityksiä kirkosta, virasta ja ehtoollisesta*, in the field of Ecumenics at the Department of Systematic Theology, represents more recent and more thorough investigation into the Missouri Synod. It deals with the Synod's views on the Church, Pastoral Office and Communion.²¹

Other Finnish authors such as Docent Markku Ruotsila, Docent Mikko Ketola and Dr. Juha Meriläinen refer to the Missouri Synod in their research. Markku Ruotsila reports on one of the studies carried out on the Synod in his article *Kansainliiton tapaus Missouri-synodin tunnustuksellisessa teologiassa*, which is about the case of the League of Nations

¹² Gritsch 2010.

¹³ Turunen (ed.) 2010.

¹⁴ Cimino (ed.) 2003.

¹⁵ Todd 2000.

¹⁶ Schjørring (ed.) 1997.

¹⁷ Gassmann 2001.

¹⁸ See also Y. Wetterstén: *Missourilaisuus, Uudempana jumaluusopillisena virtauksena* (1926, Wetterstén's first name could not be found in the records), and Kalle Kuusniemi: *Luterilainen-lehti Missouri-synodin teologian ilmentäjänä 1926–1939* (2007 b).

¹⁹ Salonen 1962.

²⁰ Matti Väisänen email interview 8.2.2012.

²¹ Kuusniemi 2007 a.

in the confessional theology of the Missouri Synod (TA 2/2003),²² and gives a more detailed discussion in *The Origins of Christian Anti-Internationalism: Conservative Evangelicals and the League of Nations* (2008).²³ Mikko Ketola's article *The Baltic Churches and the Challenges of the Post-Communist World* (IJSCC August 2009) includes a few remarks on the influence of the Missouri Synod in the Baltic area.²⁴

Naturally, a lot of research on the Missouri Synod has been conducted in the USA. Reverend Jeffrey Thormodson, for example, compiled an unpublished manuscript listing the Missourian work done within the Russian Project in Siberia, namely *A Chronology of the Events in Novosibirsk* (2005). The focus is not so much on the work done in the Ingrian Church as on the mission work with the Siberian Lutheran groups.²⁵ With regard to the Cold War era, David E. Settje reports his research on Lutherans and the foreign policy of the USA in his book *Lutherans and the Longest War: Adrift on a Sea of Doubt about the Cold and Vietnam Wars, 1964–1975* (2007).²⁶

There has also been some international research touching on the Missouri Synod's activities in the Baltics and Russia. The Lithuanian researcher, Docent Darius Petkūnas wrote about the development of the Lithuanian Lutheran Church after 1989, and also touched upon the influence of the Missouri Synod on the Church in his booklet *Resurgence of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania after the Soviet Era* (2008).²⁷

Some of the terminology I use in this work requires closer definition. I use the term *Missourian* to refer to a member of the Missouri Synod. It does not refer to the residents living in the geographical area of the US state of Missouri. Nor does it, in this thesis, carry any negative historical connotations, as it has previously, referring to the fear of unionism with other Lutherans among the Saxon Lutheran group.²⁸ The terms *confessionalism* and *confessional* refer to the position or self-understanding of many Lutherans who emphasize the purity of the doctrine and the Lutheran Confessions. The words *conservative* and *liberal* are used in a very general sense: *liberalism*, for example, does not just strictly refer to Adolf Harnack's (1851–1930) liberal theological positions.²⁹ So-called *mainstream Lutheranism* is used to refer to the majority of Lutherans and Churches that share the overall positions of the Lutheran World Federation.

²² Ruotsila 2003.

²³ Ruotsila 2008.

²⁴ Ketola 2009, 225–239.

²⁵ Thormodson 2005; Jeffrey Thormodson interview 12.2.2011.

²⁶ Settje 2007.

²⁷ Petkūnas 2008.

²⁸ Todd 2000, 74, 87, 89.

²⁹ Talonen 2008 b, 9–10.

1.2 Background and the situation before 1991

1.2.1 The Missouri Synod

The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod plays an important role in Lutheranism, especially in North America, and its influence is evident all over the world. What makes it so significant is its profile as a champion of the pure Lutheran doctrine. It aims at spreading and supporting so-called confessional Lutheranism, and could be said to function globally in the church-political field. Although it is a Church in the USA, its roots are in Germany. The first synod³⁰ members were German immigrants who left for the New Continent in search of religious freedom.³¹

European Lutheranism was confronted with changes in all aspects of life in the 19th century. This period is referred to as the industrial revolution. It was also a time of new ideas, from Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and Charles Darwin, for example. Not all Lutherans were comfortable with these developments. The Lutheran Awakening emerged as a diverse global reaction to Enlightenment rationalism, and dominated church life throughout the 19th century.³²

King Frederick William III of Prussia suggested uniting the Lutheran and Reformed (Calvinist) Churches so as to strengthen his power as Supreme Bishop of the territory. The old Lutherans (*alt-lutherisch*) rejected the union as tyranny imposed by the King, seeing it as a violation of true Lutheran confessionalism. The King tried to keep them in the union by force, but with little success. Eventually he took back his rule and allowed the old Lutherans to form their own Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Prussia.³³

The King's unsuccessful attempt at unification prompted some Lutherans to call for a new commitment to Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. John George Hamann (1730–1788) and his *Ältervater der Erweckungsbewegung*³⁴, Claus Harms (1778–1855)³⁵ and August F.C. Vilmar (1800–1868), for example, had a big impact on the confessional awakening. Vilmar in particular called for a confessionally strict renewal of the Church.³⁶

The confessional awakening spread through Germany, centering at the University of Erlangen where there was a lot of support for conservative confessional Lutheranism.

³⁰ The word “synod” is used in American Lutheranism in three ways. Most commonly, it is used to identify the ongoing organized church body, but can also refer to an ecclesiastical meeting, and as in the ELCA to the geographical subdivisions that other church bodies call districts. (Wiederaenders 1998, vii)

³¹ Kuusniemi 2007, 3, 16.

³² Gassman 2001 b, 32; Gritsch 2010, 181. See Friedrich Wilhelm Kantzenbach: *Die Erweckungsbewegung. Studien zur Geschichte ihrer Entstehung und ersten Ausbreitung in Deutschland* (1957).

³³ Meyer 1963, 6; Schultz 1964, 55; Fredrich 2000, 9–10; Sueflow & Nelson 1980, 150; Lagerquist 1999, 71; Todd 2000, 21; Ruotsila 2008, 90; Gritsch 2010, 182.

³⁴ Kantzenbach 1957, 52.

³⁵ According to Gassmann (2001 b, 32), Claus Harms posted the *Ninety-five Theses* at the time of the 300th anniversary of the Reformation and so “began a confessional revival that gave shape to Lutheranism around the world”.

³⁶ Schultz 1964, 65; Sueflow & Nelson 1980, 151; Todd 2000, 6; Gritsch 2010, 182.

Erlangen theologians argued that the Lutheran Confessions had rediscovered the most important orthodox aspects of Christianity. Pastor Wilhelm Löhe (1808–1872) set up a parish for Neo-Lutheranism³⁷ in 1837 in a Bavarian town called Neuendettelsau. Controversially, Löhe summarized his ecclesiology as follows: “... the Lutheran Confessions are true not only “insofar” (*quatenus*) as they agree with Holy Scripture but “because” (*quia*) they do”. Neo-Lutheran theology emphasized the regeneration of the individual Christian through the Church and its means of salvation, Word and Sacrament. Löhe saw the Lutheran Church as a model among other Churches because it possessed the full truth.³⁸

In sum, it could be said that the historical roots of the Missourians are in 19th-century confessional Lutheranism, which emerged to oppose rationalism, secularism and unionism³⁹. All this eventually led to a situation in which some Lutherans felt they had better move to the New Continent. Seven hundred immigrants from Saxony in Germany settled in Perry County and St. Louis, Missouri in 1839. Most of the Lutherans who came to the New World were from Germany and Scandinavia, and their departure was usually motivated by political, economic and religious concerns.⁴⁰

The Lutheran immigrants elected Pastor Martin Stephan (1777–1846) as their bishop, promising complete submission to his rule. However, Stephan’s misbehavior almost eradicated the Lutheran colony. A big dilemma arose when he was expelled from the Church, and some group members, doubting that they still had a Christian church, urged a return to Germany. However, a new leader, a young pastor named Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (1811–1887) and a native of Saxony, educated at the University of Leipzig, set the tone for the future of the synod by calling for “a true church” loyal to the

³⁷ For more on Neo-Lutheranism, see Gassmann 2001 c, 240–242 and Forde 2002, 433. According to Nelson (1980, 507–508), the theological differences between the Old Lutheran and the Neo-Lutheran groups persisted later in the major Lutheran Church bodies in the USA, including the Missouri Synod.

³⁸ Meyer 1963, 5; Schultz 1964, 47; Beyreuther 1977, 30; Sueflow & Nelson 1980, 151; Lagerquist 1999, 92; Schuetze 2000, 22; Forde 2002, 433; Braun 2003, 23; Gritsch 2010, 182–184. Gassmann (2001 b, 32) separates two main lines: “Academically, the Lutheran Awakening in Germany found expression in two schools — “Repristinatio,” which looked to a return to 17th-century orthodoxy, and “Erlangen,” centered at the university of the same name, which took modern critical tools and Hegelian historical thought more seriously.” According to Sihvonen (1980, 121), Löhe had an organic view of the church, which with Christ is the center of the whole of world history. The Church is “God’s most beautiful flower” and it blossoms over and over again throughout history, and every time in a more beautiful way.

³⁹ At the beginning of the 20th century, for example, the Missouri Synod “insisted that there needed to be full complete agreement on all points of doctrine before there could even be fellowship between these Lutheran denominations, let alone merger. Anything that involved fellowship before full agreement was “unionism”, a dangerous erosion of Lutheran principle.” (Erling & Granquist 2008, 324) Similarly, Todd (2003, 27–28) states: “Since its founding in 1847, the synod has been wary of other Lutherans in America and has jealously guarded its doctrinal position by refusing any sort of union without first establishing full doctrinal agreement”. “No union without unity” was the motto that was to keep the synod from engaging in the dreaded “unionism.” According to Rudnick (1966, 84), “In the view of the Missouri Synod, Christians who unite without full doctrinal agreement are guilty of the sin of “unionism”. For more, see also Samuel H. Nafzger’s article *Syncretism and Unionism in Concordia Journal* (Vol. 29, July 2003, Number 3.).

⁴⁰ Kieschnick 2009, 20; Fevold 1980, 255; Sueflow & Nelson 1980, 178; Lagerquist 1999, 12, 92; Kuusniemi 2007, 18–19; Schuetze 2000, 22; Gritsch 2010, 193&197. “German migration was extraordinarily strong from 1840 to the First World War, with over five million new Americans.” (Noll 2003, 13)

Lutheran Confessions. He championed the position of Luther that the means of saving grace (the preaching of the Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper) were held by baptized believers such as the Priesthood of All Believers, who themselves could put men into the ministry. According to Walther, they still had a true Church. Through his sermons, official posts, and his edited publication *Der Lutheraner* (established 1844) he challenged the orthodoxy of other Lutherans.⁴¹

The Missouri Synod was founded by three groups of German immigrants: a Saxon group led by Pastor Martin Stephan (1777–1846), a Franconian group that followed the guidance of “the father from afar”⁴², Wilhelm Löhe⁴³, and the followers of Friedrich Wyneken (1810–76). The establishment of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod goes back to the year 1847 when these Saxon and other German immigrants established a new church body in America, seeking the freedom to practice and follow confessional Lutheranism. The founding members, who were 12 pastors representing 14 congregations from Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Michigan, New York and Ohio, signed the constitution on 12 April 1847, at the First Saint Paul Lutheran Church in Chicago, Ill. The original name was The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States (*Die Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Synode von Missouri, Ohio, und andern Staaten*).⁴⁴

The two most influential theologians in the Missouri Synod were the first president C.F.W. Walther and the fourth president Francis (Franz) A. Pieper (1852–1931), who was the leading Missouri theologian after Walther. Pieper supported the position that the Bible was verbally inspired and inerrant in all matters. He even declared: “whoever contests our doctrinal position contends against the divine truth”. By 1929 it had become apparent that the Missouri Synod suspected all other Lutheran synods of false teaching. The convention referred to other synods as their opponents and voted to withdraw from all intersynodical conferences. Overall, Lutherans were divided on ethnic, cultural, and doctrinal lines, and

⁴¹ Meyer 1963, 8; Sueflow 1964 b, 177; CFWW 2011; Beyreuther 1977, 36; Sueflow & Nelson 1980, 180; Pfabe 1998, 81; Lagerquist 1999, 71& 92; Schuetze 2000, 27; Todd 2000, 51; Gritsch 2002, 197; Rosin 2004, 1972; Erling & Granquist 2008, 1.

⁴² Pless 2005, 1. Pless adds: “even though leaders of the fledgling synod would come to see him as a prodigal father.” The more positive attitude towards Löhe is a result of later developments (Pless 2005, 14): “Only in the 1950s and 60’s does a more appreciative picture of Loehe begin to emerge in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. This may, in part, come from the influence of Hermann Sasse.”

⁴³ Löhe was an important theologian of Neo-Lutheranism, but many of his supporters in North America gathered together in the Iowa Synod, and some others rejected his high view of ordination and joined other groups to found the Missouri Synod (Gassmann 2001 d, 187–188). According to Gassmann (2001 c, 241), “In North America, Neo-Lutheranism was “imported” by the great waves of migrants in the middle of the 19th century and reinforced efforts there towards a stronger confessional profile”. Of theological importance is the fact that “A more direct influence in North America was exercised by Löhe and the pastors he sent to America, and especially –though modified by a biblicism and congregationalism alien to Neo-Lutheranism – by Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther and his founding of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.”

⁴⁴ Meyer 1963, 7; Sueflow 1964, 90, 132; Sueflow & Nelson 1980, 150, 180; Wiederaenders 1998, 91; Fredrich 2000, 9; Schuetze 2000, 26; Todd 2000, 22, 77; Gassmann 2001 e, 195; HLCMS 2003; Noll 2003, 11; Todd 2003, 27. According to Pankow (1992, 138), “mission societies like Neuendettelsau had provided the first pastors to the LCMS church in the 1840s and 1850s”.

therefore negotiation between many different Lutheran traditions reflects the bigger picture of Lutheranism in America.⁴⁵

Missourian immigrants also wanted to preserve Lutheranism from Americanization. German theology, heritage and language therefore assumed an important role and were used in the worship services because the synod wanted to remain German. For them the use of English represented doctrinal laxity and liberal unionism without strict loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions.⁴⁶

The First World War (1914–1918) accelerated the use of English in the Missouri Synod, however. It had devastating consequences for Lutheranism, as German Lutherans were virtually isolated from other Lutherans, as well as from other Christians. Non-Lutherans in North America regarded American Lutherans almost as enemies. It was mostly for these reasons that the Missourians deleted “German” from the name in 1917. The “cultural isolationism” of the Synod had come to an end when the war ended in 1918, and by the beginning of the Second World War (1939–1945) English was being widely used. The Synod shortened its name to “The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod” in 1947.⁴⁷

The decades before the 1960s were a time of expansion in the Missouri Synod as its membership doubled between the 1930s and 1960, when it stood at 2.6 million. However, by the early 1960s it had become “a house divided”. Despite the internal issues however, a more open attitude was conveyed. In 1961, as an external reaction, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (founded in 1850) severed its relationship with the Missouri Synod after almost a century (1868–1961), accusing it of changing and no longer exhibiting consistency in doctrine and practice by forging closer relationships with the American Lutheran Church (ALC, 1960–1988).⁴⁸

In 1965 President Oliver R. Harms (1962–1969) of the Missouri Synod expressed support for Lutheran unity, of which, in fact, he was “a vocal advocate”. Conservative Missourians saw this as unionism, and in the same year the three largest Lutheran Churches at the time joined forces to form the Lutheran Council in the USA: the Lutheran Church in America (LCA, 1962–1988), the LCMS and the ALC. When the LCA and the ALC began to ordain women in 1970, however, cooperation became more difficult. Moreover, the leadership of the Missouri Synod changed in 1969 when the LCMS

⁴⁵ FAOP 1997; Meuser 1963, 1; Rudnick 1966, 67; Nelson 1980, 460; Lagerquist 1999, 149; Todd 2000, 94, 98; Braun 2003, 44; Erling & Granquist 2008, 1; Ruotsila 2008, 81; Gritsch 2010, 197–202; Arkkila 2014, 93, 154. Pieper was the president in 1899–1911 (FAOP 1997). As Erling & Granquist (2008, 2) describe the situation: “Lutheran history in the United States includes episode after episode of theological wrangling and confessional dispute.” Marquart (1990, 220) defines Walther and Pieper as the “Old Missouri”.

⁴⁶ Lagerquist 1999, 90; Walz, Montreal & Hofrenning 2003, 146; Gritsch 2010, 197&199.

⁴⁷ Meyer 1963, 257; Meier & Mayer 1964, 344, 374; Nafzger 2003, 241; Rudnick 1966, 83; Meuser 1980, 391; Lagerquist 1999, 116; Todd 2000, 105, 141; Kuusniemi 2007, 23; Gritsch 2010, 211. According to Meriläinen (2007, 17), the years of war strongly Americanized Lutheran Churches, and English replaced the national languages that were used earlier. As Granquist (2003, 166) describes the situation, “World War I, better economic conditions in Europe, and American controls on immigration all served to reduce this massive immigration to a trickle by 1924.”

⁴⁸ Meyer 1963, 17; Meuser 1963, 16; Coates & Lueker 1964, 386; Brug 2010, 6, 8; Fredrich 2000, 198; Schuetze 2000, 375; Granquist 2003, 63; Todd 2003, 27; Albers 2004, 2016; Väkeväinen 2007, 6–7.

convention elected Jacob Aall Ottesen Preus (1969–1981) as its President, and this started a general conservative trend.⁴⁹

The situation escalated, with *Newsweek* declaring that the Missouri Synod was “easily the most polarized Protestant denomination in the United States”. As an internal reaction to the openness of the sixties, the issues of ecumenical posture, biblical authority, and biblical interpretation brought the controversy in the LCMS to a peak during the 1970s. In February 1974 most of the faculty and students walked out of the Concordia Seminary St. Louis (CSL) and formed the Christ Seminary in Exile (Seminex). During the next few years the synod suffered a schism as more than 100,000 of its members withdrew to form the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC, 1976), which soon took part in forming the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA, 1988). The Seminex controversy left an indelible mark upon the Missouri Synod. David P. Scaer, in his article *Missouri’s Identity Crisis – Rootless in America* in *LOGIA* (XII 1/2003), compared the *Coca-Cola* logo with the name of the Missouri Synod: “Similarly, “Missouri” is a logo recognized worldwide, even if at the prestigious German theological faculties the response may at times be less than positive.” He continued: ““Missouri” ranks with Southern Baptist to signify a theologically conservative church”. In the notes he wrote that the image of the Missouri Synod was “sullied by the 1974 Seminex walkout at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis”.⁵⁰

Overall “the most painful internal controversy” in the LCMS, namely the Seminary-Synodical conflict from 1969 to 1979, was decisive in terms of how the Bible has been interpreted in the Missouri Synod. At the time of the conflict its affirmed position on the Bible became clearly visible in what President Gerald B. Kieschnick (2009) wrote, that it was positive that the Missouri Synod had resisted the trend of other major churches “to drift away from understanding” the Scriptures as “the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God, and the only authoritative rule and norm of faith, life, and practice.”⁵¹

The controversy clearly affected the mission work. Pastor Herbert Meyer referred to the “golden time” of the Missouri Synod’s outreach, at home and abroad, for a quarter of a century after the end of World War II. He wrote about the negative impact of the Seminex

⁴⁹ Nelson 1980, 530; Wiederaenders 1998, 92; Todd 2000, 203; Braun 2003, 281; Granquist 2003, 63; Todd 2003, 31; Settje 2007, 9–10.

⁵⁰ Sueflow 1998, 178; Wesselschmidt 1998, 425; Lagerquist 1999, 148; Schuetze 2000, 399; Scaer 2003; Cimino 2003 b, xi; Cimino 2003 c, 85; Granquist 2003, 63; Noll 2003, 15; Todd 2003, 27, 33; Rast 2004, 1126; Erling & Granquist 2008, 3; Ruotsila 2008, 84; Kieschnick 2009, 24. Cimino (2003 b, xi) makes an interesting point: “In the case of Lutheranism, many of these movements and groups have existed longer than the denominations, particularly in the case of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), which was only formed in 1988. It is not improbable that these older movements often can elicit greater allegiance among both laity and clergy than the official denomination itself.”

⁵¹ Kieschnick 2009, 24–25, 41. For discussions regarding the Scriptures see Joersz 1998, 2–41. For further readings about the Seminex conflict and its implications see John H. Tietjen: *Memoirs in Exile: Confessional Hope and Institutional Conflict* (1990), Paul A. Zimmerman: *A Seminary in Crisis: The Inside Story of the Preus Fact Finding Committee* (2007) and James C. Burkee: *Power, Politics, and the Missouri Synod: A Conflict That Changed American Christianity* (2011).

controversy on the mission, which had been thriving but: “Then came the theological conflict in Synod and “mission outreach” was put on the back burner.”⁵²

Overall, the Seminex controversy and President J.A.O. Preus “epitomized” the Synod’s conservative thought on many theological and political topics: it re-established itself as a conservative, confessional Church.⁵³

The Seminex controversy was part of a long tradition in the Missouri Synod, which according to Mary Todd (2000) reaffirmed again and again its belief in the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Scripture. This is referred to in mainstream Lutheranism as a fundamentalist understanding of the Holy Scriptures. The Missouri Synod also shared some of the main fundamentalist views expressed in American fundamentalism discourse. The notion of authority was crucial to its identity. “In an effort to define its theology as unchanging amid the fast-moving forces of historical change” the Missouri synod “has had to continually redefine its understanding of authority – of scripture, of the ministry, of women, indeed, of the synod itself. In so doing, Missouri has redefined its own historic identity as a confessional Lutheran church body.”⁵⁴

The new or reaffirmed conservative position became clear in the 1970s when the Missouri Synod invited the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America to cooperate on the production of a new hymnal. However, when the hymnal was printed in 1978 as the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, the Missouri Synod decided not to be

⁵² ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary June 1996. Meyer described the mission before the Seminex controversy: “Whereas it took a hundred years to reach a million communicant members – a second million took only 25 years. Our “accessions from outside” numbered more than one million. There was keen interest and concern for evangelism. Abroad we entered a dozen new fields and our expatriate missionaries numbered over 350 at one point.” According to Todd (2003, 30), the number of baptized members in the LCMS nearly doubled between 1945 and 1965.

⁵³ Lagerquist 1999, 149; Schuetze 2000, 399; Walz, Montreal & Hofrenning 2003, 143; Settje 2007, 9. Settje links President Oliver R. Harms with J.A.O. Preus as an epitomizer of the Missouri’s conservative thought. According to Mary Todd (2000, 203), however, Harms was a vocal advocate of Lutheran unity and after he was elected president the conservative opposition began to gather strength. So, at least theologically, Harms was not as conservative as Preus. According to Joersz (1998, 4), the controversy over the Scripture’s authority “climaxed” when the President and Vice-Presidents published *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* (LCMS Statement 1973) in 1972. It was adopted in 1973 as a “more formal and comprehensive statement of belief.”

⁵⁴ Todd 2000, 4, 270. See also Settje 2007, 16. Todd (2000, 270) clarifies the relation between the Missouri Synod and fundamentalism: “The literature on fundamentalism, however, tends to see the Missouri Synod as an anomaly because of its confessional stance, its ethnicity, its sacramentalism, and its high regard for the ministry. The issue on which Missouri and fundamentalists converge is their agreement on a verbally inspired and inerrant scripture.” According to Ruotsila (2008, 90), “the Missouri Synod had been among the most consistent critics of what is regarded as the confessional laxity and corruption of most other forms of American Lutheranism.” For a comprehensive analysis of the relation between 20th-century fundamentalism and the Missouri Synod, see Milton L. Rudnick: *Fundamentalism & The Missouri Synod: A Historical Study of Their Interaction and Mutual Influence* (1966). Rudnick (1966, x) defines the original use of “fundamentalism”: it was “originally coined to designate a particular historical movement which arose and flourished in some sections of American Protestantism during the period of 1909–1930. A series of booklets entitled *The Fundamentals* appeared during the early part of this period and sparked a renewed effort on the part of some conservative Protestants to defend and proclaim certain foundational doctrines in the face of mounting liberal opposition.” Members of the Missouri Synod were not fundamentalists in this sense, they were “only friends of Fundamentalism” (Rudnick 1966, 78).

associated with it, preferring to release its own *Lutheran Worship* (1982). This event created some basic bitterness among Missouri's counterparts.⁵⁵

The tensions eased somewhat when the ninth president of the Missouri Synod, the moderate Ralph Bohlmann who was appointed in 1981, participated in various national inter-confessional and inter-Lutheran dialogues. Despite his more open attitude towards other Lutherans, the Missouri Synod, the only American Lutheran synod never to merge with others, stood out against "the rest of the Lutherans" after 1988 when the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was formed through a merger of church bodies. As a result of the merger about 95 percent of American Lutherans belonged to the ELCA or the LCMS. All in all, relations among Lutherans in North America were not close, even though many of them were engaged in the cooperative organ, namely the Committee for Lutheran Cooperation, which was established in 1988. This Committee monitored existing cooperative activities in areas such as Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, military and other cooperative chaplaincy programs, and Lutheran social-service agencies.⁵⁶

The Missouri Synod's relations with the Lutheran World Federation

The complex international commitment of the Missouri Synod deserves some explanation. Its relationship with the Lutheran World Federation has been quite complicated. When the Federation was founded in 1947 the Missourians did not want to be part of such an ecumenical organization. At that time American Lutheranism was characterized by strongly conservative movements, which resulted in serious internal tension regarding the definition of confessional integrity. As the official LWF history *From Federation to Communion* (1997) describes it: "There were many who adhered to a rigorously orthodox if not outright fundamentalist view of the Bible and to a vigorous opposition to liberal interpretations of the creeds", and "This tendency manifested itself in extreme hesitancy regarding ecumenical fellowship".⁵⁷

Questions relating to LWF membership drove the discussion in the Lutheran world from 1952 until the late 1960s. One matter of interest was the non-membership of a small number of Lutheran Churches, the most important of which was the Missouri Synod. Other American Lutherans in particular wanted to bring the Synod into the wider Lutheran fellowship, both nationally and globally. Some non-Americans also felt that the LWF would be incomplete if these Churches did not join the federation.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Sueflow 1998, 218–219, 226–230; Risto Lehtonen interview 17.3.2011; Lagerquist 1999, 145; Gassmann 2001 g, 151; Cimino 2003 c, 84. D. Richard Stuckwisch (2003, 43) describes the situation thus: "The harsher interpretation has been that it was really a more of an abortion: that the Synod intentionally killed the offspring of its own decisions and actions." According to Lagerquist (1999, 145), the impetus from the LCMS to form the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship came as early as the mid-1960s.

⁵⁶ RAB 1998; Wiederaenders 1998, vii; Pfabe 1998, 131; Schuetze 2000, 397; Todd 2000, 1, 236; Granquist 2003, 62; Todd 2003, 26, 34; Erling & Granquist 2008, 318, 343.

⁵⁷ Malkavaara 1993, 182; Schjørring 1997a, 8; Lagerquist 1999, 132. See also Pfabe 1998, 131–132.

⁵⁸ Root 1997, 218–219.

Despite these attempts to bring the two closer together, in 1956 the LCMS voted to remain outside the LWF. Its reason for not joining was that the Lutheran World Federation both formally and factually lacked true consensus on the gospel but still carried out ecclesial activities that presupposed such a consensus.⁵⁹

As the 1963 Helsinki Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation drew near the question of the Missouri Synod's membership remained unresolved. It was a question that was of great interest to LWF President Franklin Clark Fry and Executive Secretary Carl E. Lund-Quist, both of them Americans. There were two different and even mutually opposing aspects. On the one hand, any attempt to bring the Missouri Synod and its affiliated Churches into the LWF would require a clear statement about the nature of the federation as a free association, whereas on the other, given its work in the Theology Commission, the LWF was moving further away from its status as a free association. It was a decisive moment when the latter received more support from the Helsinki Assembly, and therefore the Missouri Synod stayed outside the LWF.⁶⁰

If the consequence of the discussions that culminated in Helsinki had been the inclusion of the Missouri Synod and its affiliated Churches in the LWF, then the LWF would have comprised all except a tiny minority of Churches identifying themselves as Lutheran. This was not to be, however. The stronger conservatism trend that emanated from the 1969 LCMS Denver convention meant that the Missouri Synod clearly rejected LWF membership.⁶¹

The undefined relationship between the LWF and the Missouri Synod determined much of the discussion about self-understanding. There was a tendency "to avoid statements and positions that could have the effect of giving offence to the Missouri Lutherans." Even the constitution adopted in Lund in 1947 was formulated to make it possible for the LWF to give "such a broad platform that even the conservative North American Missouri Synod could seek membership." All this slowed down the ecclesiological reflection in the LWF, until, it was finally accepted at the beginning of the 1970s, that membership of the Missouri Synod was no longer a relevant question.⁶²

There were some efforts in the 1980s to develop relations between the Missouri Synod and the Lutheran World Federation. The General Secretary of the LWF, Dr. Gunnar Stålsett (1985–1994), continuously expressed concern about establishing contact with the Missouri Synod, suggesting to LCMS President Bohlmann in 1986 "that some sort of a forum for talks with Missouri Synod-related churches could be established". Bohlmann answered thus: "I welcome that suggestion and the high priority you have given it". Executive Secretary Samuel Nafzger of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church

⁵⁹ Root 1997, 219–220. The Missouri Synod's view was that the LWF was a "union in spiritual matters" and did not need doctrinal unity (Marquart 1990, 91).

⁶⁰ Marquart 1990, 92–93; Root 1997, 225–226; Lagerquist 1999, 12; Erling & Granquist 2008, 296, 314. On the doctrine of the church in the LWF Helsinki Assembly see Eero Vilkmán, *Kirkko-oppia Luterilaisen maailmanliiton neljännessä yleiskokouksessa, sen valmisteluissa ja jälkiarvioinneissa* (1964).

⁶¹ Nelson 1980, 514, 530; Root 1997, 227. The 1969 LCMS Denver convention also refused to consider membership in the WCC (Nelson 1980, 514).

⁶² Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011; Risto Lehtonen interview 17.3.2011; Nordstokke 1992, 482.

Relations (CTCR, established in 1962, with Nazfger as Executive Secretary from 1974 to 2008)⁶³ met General Secretary Stålsett and two other LWF staff members in Geneva in June 1987. The first forum meeting was set for December 1987 in Geneva. President Bohlmann attended this meeting.⁶⁴

Lutheran World Federation representatives met with five non-LWF church bodies, including the then 2.7-million-member Missouri Synod, in December 1988. The meeting was held at the headquarters of the LCMS in St. Louis, known as the International Center of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. It was the second round of talks in two years. The LCMS President Ralph Bohlmann made the proposal to participate. LWF General Secretary Gunnar Stålsett commented on the situation:

I have felt that as the LWF carries on dialogue with the Reformed, Methodists, Anglicans, etc. the least we could do with non-member Lutheran churches is to come together to provide a basis of contact.⁶⁵

Bohlmann had expressed a general readiness among the Missouri Synod to continue to work with the Lutheran World Federation as far as its theological position would allow, adding that the Synod “must give the strongest possible witness worldwide to our understanding of confessional Lutheranism”.⁶⁶

After this second meeting, however, there was just “dead silence”. There were no official contacts at the highest level of leadership, although informal contacts were still maintained.⁶⁷

The importance, at least in numbers, of the Missouri Synod and other non-LWF Churches in the Lutheran family was stronger at the end of the 1980s than in later years. The LWF had 105 member churches with a total of 56 million members in 1988/1989, against the roughly eight million members of non-member church bodies.⁶⁸ In other words, its membership accounted for about 87.5 percent of all Lutherans. This percentage was on the rise.

⁶³ Meyer 1963, 29; Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011; Sueflow 1998, 219–220; Todd 2000, 184; Todd 2003, 31. The CTCR was established “to deal with theological questions that had formerly been sent to seminary faculties for an opinion.” (Todd 2003, 31)

⁶⁴ ALWF LCMS 1986–1990 Bohlman to Stålsett 2.12.1986; ALWF LCMS 1986–1990 Eugene L. Brand, 17.6.1987. Memo: Meeting with Sam Nafzger; KKA Böttcher 2005, 3; Stålsett 2005, viii. According to Böttcher (KKA Böttcher 2005, 3), Stålsett established connections with a number of non-member Lutheran churches, notably the Lutheran Church of Australia, The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil, the Missouri Synod, and in Germany the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK).

⁶⁵ Lutheran January/25.1.1989 LCMS dialogue bid discouraged; Kieschnick 2009, 108. According to KKA Böttcher (2005, 4–5), apparently there was a sensation at one point in the meeting when Bohlmann suggested including the Missouri Synod in the LWF’s ecumenical dialogues. Stålsett rejected this, pointing out that LWF non-member churches with their differing convictions would only complicate the dialogues.

⁶⁶ KKA Böttcher 2005, 5.

⁶⁷ KKA Böttcher 2005, 5. According to Böttcher, the next official contact took place fourteen years later. Despite the fact that this research is limited to the year 2001, I would say, based on the material I have, that there were at least two reasons why the meeting took place in 2002: the first was to do with the influence of the Missouri Synod in Eastern Europe, and secondly, the president of the Missouri Synod changed and that opened some new opportunities.

⁶⁸ Lutheran January/25.1.1989 LCMS dialogue bid discouraged.

Mainstream Lutheranism advanced rapidly at the Eighth LWF Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil, in 1990, when the Federation clarified its position on the ordination of women. The assembly stated:

We thank God for the great and enriching gift to the church discovered by many of our member churches in the ordination of women to the pastoral office, and we pray that all members of the LWF, as well as others throughout the ecumenical family, will come to recognize and embrace God's gift of women in the ordained ministry and in other leadership responsibilities in Christ's church.⁶⁹

The Lutheran World Federation manifested its supportive position to the ordination of women at the Curitiba Assembly.

General Secretary Ishmael Noko pointed out that membership in the LWF required subscription to its doctrinal basis, as stated in Section II of the Constitution. Furthermore, even though the LWF had considered women's ordination "an important pastoral matter, it has not been considered or treated as a doctrinal issue, which might have effect with regard to church membership."⁷⁰ This shows the fundamental difference between mainstream Lutheranism and the Missourian view with regard to the ordination of women.

Moreover, the Lutheran World Federation was developing. The original constitution underlined the autonomy of member Churches and the federation itself as a free association of Lutheran Churches. This remained unchanged until 1990. The question of its self-understanding as a *communio* marked the years before and after Curitiba, and gave the impetus for the preparation and implementation of major structural changes authorized at the Eighth Assembly.⁷¹ The momentous decision was incorporated into Article III of the new constitution:

⁶⁹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 LATVIA 2002 Noko to Vanags 9.11.2002. One of the reasons why the Missouri Synod did not become a member of the LWF was that the doctrinal statement in its Constitution adopted in Curitiba (1990) was too limited in terms of its interpretation. The LWF Constitution states:

"The Lutheran World Federation acknowledges the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only source and the infallible norm of all church doctrine and practice, and sees in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, especially in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Catechism, a pure exposition of the Word of God."

Lynne F. Lorenzen (Jun/1998), in her article "The structure of the Lutheran World Federation as a model for ecumenical relationships" published in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, cites "Document 4 of the Fourth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation" as revealing the official interpretation: "To use [the] word 'and' to connect doctrine and practice does not suggest that the Holy Scriptures are to be a direct norm for action as well as teaching. That would be biblicistic legalism." According to Lorenzen, "This interpretation, along with just these two documents, is not sufficient for some Lutherans; for example, the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod is not a member of the L.W.F." These two Lutheran confessional documents, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Catechism, are not enough for Missourians. (The Nature of the Lutheran World Federation, Document 4 of the Fourth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, July 30-August 11, 1963, in Helsinki, Finland (Geneva: L.W.F., 1963))

⁷⁰ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 LATVIA 2002 Noko to Vanags 9.11.2002.

⁷¹ Pfabe 1998, 127–128; Schjørring 1997b, 45, 76. According to Nordstokke (1992, 479), "One of the most disputed questions" in the Curitiba Assembly "was the proposal change its constitution so that the LWF would be redefined as a "communion of churches" rather than "a free association of churches". As Gassmann (1995, 49) described it, confessional organizations developed into a communion of churches according to the example of the Anglican Communion, which also shaped the understanding of a Lutheran

What in 1947 had been a free association of churches unable to gather unanimously in the Lord's Supper was now officially "a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship".⁷²

Missourian Dr. Samuel Nafzger reported on the assembly. In his view, the most important decision made was the adoption by the required two-thirds majority of a new constitution. This new constitution referred to the LWF as a "communion" rather than a "free association" of Churches.⁷³ From the Missouri Synod's perspective the LWF made the wrong decision. Its new self-understanding further distanced the non-LWF Missouri Synod from mainstream Lutheranism.

Contacts with Soviet Lutherans

With regard to Eastern European connections with the Missouri Synod and mainstream LWF Lutherans, at least the Lutheran World Federation tried to maintain relations with the Lutheran Churches in Eastern and Central Europe after the Second World War. American Lutherans, including the Missourians, who joined the relief effort in 1944, played a dominant role in providing post-war economic aid, the first substantial aid being delivered in 1946. The situation of these minority Churches was truly challenging, however, and some of them remained in need because interchurch aid could not be delivered in countries occupied by the Soviet Union.⁷⁴

It was particularly difficult, even impossible, to do relief work among these Churches during the Stalin era: this reflects the reality of the Cold War. According to Jens Schjørring (1997), the Lutheran World Federation "refrained from becoming an instrument of the West, the situation was extremely difficult and had consequences for

Communion, or Communion of Lutheran Churches, in the LWF and which was becoming a general ecumenical concept.

⁷² KKA Böttcher 2005, 2; Root 1997, 243.

⁷³ ALCMS Lutheran World Federation (8th Assembly: 1990). Minutes for the Church Relations Department Feb. 12 1990. According to Gassmann (2001 n, 74), a "communion of churches" indicated "the deepening spiritual and confessional bond that unites its member churches in faith, sacramental fellowship, witness, and service."

⁷⁴ Malkavaara 1993, 5, 60; Schjørring 1997c, 97; Ryman 2005 b, 77. According to Malkavaara (1993, 53), inherent in the relief work of some strongly confessional American Lutherans were virtually imperialistic thoughts about the role of Americans as saviors of European Lutheranism. Malkavaara (2002, 33) adds that the National Lutheran Council and the LCMS together established an aid organization, Lutheran World Relief. According to Meriläinen (2007, 41), Missourians were especially concerned about the situation of the German Lutheran free Churches. For more about the role of American Lutherans and the work the Churches did in rebuilding Europe after WWII, see Juha Meriläinen: *Suomi ja Euroopan kirkollinen jälleerakentaminen 1945–1948* (2007). The Missouri Synod gave financial help to the Finnish Church, for example, and the Finnish Church considered the Synod a pleasant and trustworthy cooperation partner (Meriläinen 2007, 134). From a broader perspective the influence of the Missouri Synod in Europe is nothing new given the availability of the publications and work of some of its theologians since the late 19th century. The best-known literature on the Missouri Synod in Finland, for example, is the work of C.F.W. Walther and Franz Pieper (Kuusniemi 2007, 5; Arkkila 2014, 154–156). In the main the readership of this literature is confined to the Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (LEAF) and to new pietistic circles.

service priorities”. In addition, some of the Churches in exile became “vigorously anti-Communist”, which also slowed down “the establishment within the LWF framework of more normal relations with churches behind the iron curtain.”⁷⁵

Many small Eastern European Lutheran Churches were still in major need of outside support in the 1960s. Later, in the 1980s, LWF consultations enabled small minority and large Lutheran majority Churches to confer about re-evangelization and mission renewal. Consultations in Eastern Europe began with the European Lutheran Churches in Tallinn, Estonia, in 1980. This was made possible by the new, more open atmosphere in the Soviet Union.⁷⁶

Despite the efforts of mainstream Lutherans and the Lutheran World Federation to ease the situation of Eastern European Churches, the Missouri Synod did not make any, or at least no official or church-wide, approaches to Soviet-bloc Churches before the big changes in Eastern Europe. In this it differed strongly from members of the Lutheran World Federation and/or the World Council of Churches, which had at least some contact with Churches in the Soviet bloc.⁷⁷

However, although not unified, American Lutherans often spoke with one voice against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and also against the People’s Republic of China. Those states were seen as atheist regimes that oppressed their own citizens and wanted to purge the world of religion.⁷⁸ The Missouri Synod still followed its own line of thinking on many other issues, being politically and theologically more conservative than the other two large Lutheran bodies, namely the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America. Lutherans were worried about the fate of Christians inside the Soviet border, and conservative Lutherans at least were vocal in condemning these large Communist nations as “demonic”. For example, the President of the Missouri Synod J.A.O. Preus reflected the anti-communist attitude of American Lutherans when he stated: “Communism is the most terrible evil that the world has ever known.”⁷⁹

There was at least one exception to the LCMS non-involvement in the Soviet Union, the Lutheran Hour (established in 1930) broadcasts to Communist nations. Between 1945 and 1966 this broadcasting was done through Radio Luxemburg, for example. There were thus at least some efforts to penetrate the Soviet Union.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Schjørring 1997c, 97–98.

⁷⁶ Dahlgren 1990, 115; Schjørring 1997c, 120–121; Scherer 1997, 165–166.

⁷⁷ Robert Kolb email interview 25.11.2011

⁷⁸ Settje 2007, 1. “Yet this Cold War harmony disappeared when Lutherans discussed other foreign policy matters, such as the domestic threat of Communist infiltration or the Vietnam War. Here, a wide variety of opinions existed.”

⁷⁹ Settje 2007, 8–9, 20, 22. As Whitt (2008, 1) put it: “Lutherans of all political and theological orientations were deeply suspicious of the communist behemoths and deeply concerned about the fate of Christians in these countries and their satellite states.” However and interestingly, according to Settje (2007, 21) Lutherans “never called the Cold War a holy war”.

⁸⁰ Pankow 1992, 43, 76, 127; Settje 2007, 27. As an LCMS magazine reported in 1965, “Lutheran Hour programs in Europe are transmitted over two of the world’s most powerful stations, Radio Luxembourg and Radio Europe. From these two stations the Word of reconciliation penetrates countries behind the Iron

There may also have been unofficial or personal endeavors. Some of the Missouri Synod members may have smuggled Bibles into the area, the Missouri Synod's historically Slovak-Americans (merged with the LCMS in 1971) could have had some contact with their country, and other immigrants might have had small-scale contacts. Reverend Richard Wurmbrand, a Romanian immigrant, was well known in the Missouri Synod during the years of the Cold War. He criticized the Lutheran World Federation because it cooperated with Lutheran Churches inside the Soviet Union, for example, and even claimed that members of its staff were "infiltrated by Communism".⁸¹

All in all, during the period between the beginning of the Missouri Synod's foreign mission in the 1890s and before the 1990s the main focus was elsewhere, such as in Africa and East Asia, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, and India, its first overseas mission field. Despite their lack of focus on the Soviet Union the Missourians were certainly conscious of the sufferings of Eastern European Churches.⁸²

The Missouri Synod's mission work in the area dates back to the fall in 1989 of the Berlin Wall, built in 1961, which alerted the LCMS World Mission that changes were taking place in the former Soviet Empire. The people in the Synod were fully aware of what was happening in Eastern Europe, and by 1990 it had become clear that mission work was feasible in Russia. Nevertheless, the LCMS World Mission "was forced to conclude, that given the financial trends in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, it would not be able to become involved in Russia."⁸³ The Missouri Synod was not yet ready in 1989/1990 to get involved in the work done in the area of the USSR.

All in all, the Missouri Synod had almost no contacts with the Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran Churches before 1991. The main reason for this was that it was not a member of the Lutheran World Federation: LWF member Churches were, to some degree, connected to the Eastern European Lutheran Churches even during the Soviet era. At least two ideological reasons prevented the involvement: the "isolationist fear of unionism in church relations" and the "anti-communist thing". Anti-communism was a reflection of the general American mood at that time, and the Missourians, among others, "loved to oppose godless Communism but it was just that it wasn't possible because we didn't take part in any larger organizations".⁸⁴

Curtain." According to Pankow (1992, 64), after WWII The Lutheran Hour "was the largest regular broadcast of any kind in the world, utilizing 682 stations".

⁸¹ Brug 2010, 7; Robert Kolb email interview 25.11.2011; Fevold 1980, 278; Settje 2007, 76, 79. See Richard Blythe's *The Pelikan Movement: An Immigrant Story* (2009). According to Luoma (2013, 19), Wurmbrand's books were also read in Finland, especially among members of Revival movements. Marquart (1990, 1) described Wurmbrand as a "Lutheresque Romanian Pastor". Over the years the Missouri Synod received a number of immigrants from Eastern Europe, and specifically from Czechoslovakia. (ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Summary of Discussions 18.3.1992)

⁸² Meyer 1963, 22; Tino 2014, 198; Robert Kolb email interview 25.11.2011; Nelson 1980, 492. According to Tino (2014, 198), the Missouri Synod's first five foreign missionary efforts were in India, Brazil, Argentina, Cuba and China.

⁸³ ADM Daniel Mattson: Beginnings of LCMS Mission Work in Russia; Luukkanen 2001, 219; McLeod & Saarinen 2006, 75. Overall not many, if any, American Churches worked on Russian soil before the upheavals. (Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011)

⁸⁴ Robert Kolb interview 11.2.2011.

There were thus two main reasons for the standoffishness: the first was the difficulty of making contacts outside formal organizations such as the Lutheran World Federation, and the second was that the Missouri Synod was trapped in its own concept of church fellowship. In other words, it did not know how to relate to Churches with which agreement was lacking on a wide range of issues.⁸⁵

In sum, it can be said that mainstream Lutheranism had some contacts with Churches under Communist rule through the Lutheran World Federation. What is of strong significance, however, is the fact that the Missouri Synod, being more critical of ecumenism, did not have official relations with Baltic and Ingrian Churches, although there were contacts with some of their exiles.

1.2.2 The Ingrian and Baltic Lutheran Churches

The position of religion in Russia has changed a lot during the course of history. The 20th century in particular was a period of major discord in the long “symphonic” relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the Russian state. The harmonious co-existence of the ecclesiastical and the civil authority is considered the ideal form of relationship between the Church and the state in the Orthodox tradition. Regardless of this, the 20th century was anything but harmonious.⁸⁶

The Russian Revolution in October 1917 heralded not just a societal change but also a huge change in outlook on the world. Old truths and beliefs were discarded and even banned in society. One of the victims was religion with its dogmas and traditions: it was “forbidden fruit” in these socialistic societies. The negative attitude to religion was based on Marxist philosophy and dialectical materialism, and on the late-19th-century naturalistic view of life according to which the only reality that exists is perceptible only to the senses. The metaphysical was described as an illusion, whereas the scientific materialistic view helped people to understand how things really were. The erroneous metaphysical view was dangerous because it fostered fiction, assumptions and false beliefs. Although he followed the ideas of Karl Marx, who saw religion as the “opium of the people”, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, in fact, had a more negative attitude towards religion. The Orthodox Church in Russia had been linked very closely to czarist power, and religion was one of the elements that were interpreted as a hindrance to development. Furthermore, atheistic Marxism-Leninism became the official state ideology.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Robert Kolb email interview 25.11.2011. As Robert Kolb summed it up: “So the difficulty of contact and our narrow view of our ecumenical responsibility both contributed to our non-involvement.” Unlike the Missouri Synod, the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church participated in the LWF and its relief efforts around the world. (Settje 2007, 22)

⁸⁶ ROCOR Church and State 2002; Agadjanian 2000, 265; Kääriäinen 2004, 42; McLeod & Saarinen 2006, 87.

⁸⁷ Beeson 1977, 15; Kääriäinen & Furman 2000, 28. Murtorinne 2010, 10–13. A full citation from Karl Marx (1970, 1) in his Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people”. According to Murtorinne (2010, 13), in his religious-political

One of the aims of the Bolshevik party was to isolate the Russian Orthodox Church. A new law on religion that came into force in January 1918 separated church and state, and also church and school. It deprived the churches of their public law status and took away their economic basis. A new law on religion, which complemented the 1918 law, was passed in 1929. It was designed to further weaken the position of religion, because its role had not diminished as much in the previous ten years as it was supposed to. The new law and the atheist propaganda that peaked in the early 1930s led to the collapse of the Russian Orthodox Church in many areas, and almost all religious activity was stifled.⁸⁸

Marxism-Leninism and the Soviet Union's law on religion created the model to which all countries under Soviet influence had to become accustomed, and especially those that belonged to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. These countries were primarily the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Integration into the Soviet Union started in 1940 after the invasion, and incorporated Soviet policy on religions and churches. It brought about policy changes, atheistic propaganda strengthened its grip, and religious activities were further controlled. The amalgamation of these three Baltic States into the Soviet Union in 1944 heralded an attempt to totally standardize the law on religion.⁸⁹

The Communist regime's policy on religion changed back and forth in the 20th century, but was always negative and unfavorable. The Russian Orthodox Church played an active role in the Second World War, loyally defending Russia against Nazi Germany. As a result, relations between the Church and the state improved. Josef Stalin had ambitions to use the ROC as a tool in its foreign policy, namely to support its expansive power politics. Stalin died in 1953 and although still continuing, the persecution gradually eased in the entire Soviet Union for a while, only to increase in strength in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, supported by the Soviet Premiers Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev. Khrushchev was the one who led the march to the final realization of

writing "Socialism and Religion" (1905) Lenin assumed an unwelcoming attitude to some of his supporters' ambitions to combine religion and socialism and to funnel the emotional force of religion to build socialism. The struggle against religion was part of the class struggle and covered all forms of religion, and in this battle it was necessary to use all the criticism that the most recent research in the fields of natural sciences and religion could offer. For a comprehensive overview of Lenin's interpretation of religion and his church policy, see Luukkanen *Lenin ja uskonto: Leninin käsitys uskonnosta ja hänen uskontopoliittinen toimintansa vuosina 1893–1924* (1991).

⁸⁸ Beeson 1977, 40–41; Väliaho 2004, 51; Luukkanen 1994, 5; Ylönen 1997, 20–21; Kääriäinen 1998, 21–23; Kääriäinen & Furman 2000, 50; Sherat 2000, 225; Sihvo 2000, 327; Kääriäinen 2004, 5; Turunen 2005, 15–16; Santti 2008, 150; Murtorinne 2010, 14, 16.

⁸⁹ Murtorinne 2010, 21. The Soviet Union set an example with its negative attitude towards religion. All Eastern European countries, including the Baltic States, followed this example. It was based on three things: the separation of state and church, abolishing the teaching of religion in all governmental institutes, and socialist autocracy. The Marxist-Leninist ideal was concretized in the Soviet Union legislation on religion. This set an example that Eastern European socialists tried to follow, even though from time to time there were historical and tactical reasons for not fully complying. (Murtorinne 2010, 22–24) David E. Powel (Dreifelds 1995, 55–56) notes in his analysis that the Communist regime tried to achieve these six anti-religious objectives:

"1. To destroy the political and economic strength of the church. 2. To limit the church's access to the citizenry, especially the children. 3. To induce people not to attend church. 4. To induce people not to celebrate religious holy days or perform religious rituals. 5. To convince religious believers that their views are "wrong". 6. To mould citizens into militant atheists and Soviet Men."

Communism, which resulted in the strengthening of Marxist-Leninism in the field of church policy. There was a strong effort to quickly find the final solution to the question of religion, manifested especially at the beginning of the 1960s as strengthened atheistic propaganda. Scientific atheism⁹⁰ was to permeate all levels of education. Harsh methods were used against churches and all religious communities. Many church buildings, monasteries and seminaries were closed down and many clergymen were imprisoned, or sent to labor camps and even to mental hospitals. The view was that religion could not have a visible role in the upcoming communist society.⁹¹

Religious persecution attracted worldwide attention, which also gave some respite, but discrimination continued and atheist propaganda was still extensive in the 1970s. Believers were arrested and congregations subjected to administrative prohibitions even up to the 1980s, and religion was still regarded as an unscientific illusory world-view. It wasn't until the mid-1980s and beyond that preparations could be made for the celebration of a thousand years of Christianity in Russia. Furthermore, the collapse of the country's economy forced the leading elite to find new ways of dealing with religious citizens.⁹²

a. The Ingrian Church

From the perspective of this research it is relevant to focus on Lutheranism in Russia, and especially Ingrian Lutheranism. The roots of Russian Lutheranism stem from the immigration to Russia of ethnic Germans during the time of Peter the Great, but they also go back to the Finnish-speaking communities and groups with contacts to the Baltic Lutheran Churches. The Ingrians (or Ingermanlanders) are a Finnish people that moved from Sweden-Finland to the St. Petersburg area in the 16th century. Lutheranism is thus one of the traditional denominations in Russia, and there have been Lutherans there for a very long time – “as long as the Anglican establishment in England”. The first Lutheran church building in Moscow was completed in 1576, and the first Finnish congregation was established in 1611. Lutherans gained recognition in 1832, and its official position was assured when the Czar issued a statute allowing the formation of a Russian Lutheran Church. All Russians had to confess the Orthodox faith, and Lutheranism was restricted to non-Russians until 1905. However, this relative freedom did not last long. There were 33 congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in 1928, all of which were officially closed down at the end of the 1930s and their properties were confiscated. The Lu-

⁹⁰ According to Kääriäinen (1989, 11), *scientific atheism* “is a Marxist-Leninist discipline, the task of which is the criticism and overcoming of religion, the formulation of scientific theories about religion, and teaching an atheistic world-view.”

⁹¹ Kung 1975, 33; Dahlgren 1990, 26; Kääriäinen 2004, 10, 50; Settje 2007, 19; Luukkanen 2009, 368; Murtorinne 2010, 17–20.

⁹² Kääriäinen & Furman 2000, 31; Murtorinne 2010, 20–21.

theran seminary in Leningrad was also shut down. The last Lutheran church was closed in 1938.⁹³

Mass evacuations and deportations were targeted at Ingrians, among others: 50,000 Ingrians were exiled throughout the Soviet Union during the 1930s. Areas near the Finnish border were totally cleared of people with Finnish origins. Germans invaded Western Ingria during the Second World War, and started the transportations aimed at moving Ingrians to Finland in 1943: 63,000 of them were transported. Approximately 56,000 of these returned to the Soviet Union before the end of 1953. Return to Soviet Karelia was permitted in 1948, but going back to the St. Petersburg (Leningrad) area was possible only after Stalin's death (1953). The largest numbers of Ingrians went back to areas around Petrozavodsk and St. Petersburg, and also to Estonia. The will to reactivate church life was strong among them.⁹⁴

Miraculously, Lutheranism survived without an official ministry or church structure, and even without Bibles, hymnals and prayer books. This situation lasted a very long time, for more than half a century. When the Lutheran congregations did not exist officially the churches worked underground, mainly with the help of laypersons, who were mostly women. To maintain their Christian identity they gathered in houses and in informal prayer meetings.⁹⁵

These people were lost Soviet Lutherans in the eyes of Western Lutherans. The involvement of the Lutheran World Federation in rediscovering these lost followers began in 1955, the first meeting being held in Kazakhstan. Latvian Pastor Harald Kalnins (in Latvian Haralds Kalniņš)⁹⁶ began visiting Lutheran congregations in Central Asia in the 1960s, for example, sponsored by the LWF. The LWF Europe Secretary Paul Hansen accompanied Kalnins, and by 1978 the LWF had been given permission to contribute Bibles, hymnals, and so forth.⁹⁷

Lutheran Churches were allowed to function publicly only in the Baltic countries, and even there within limits. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia was allowed to become public at the beginning of the 1970s, which was when the congregation in Petrozavodsk was allowed to begin its work. The year 1977 was significant because the Pushkin church was inaugurated, and this aroused Finnish people's interest in Ingrians.⁹⁸

⁹³ Pirinen 2002, 11; JES 36:1–2 Winter-Spring/1999 New Myths for Old: Proselytism and Transition in Post-Communist Europe; Malkavaara 1993; Scherer 1997, 170; Ylönen 1997, 7; Sihvo 2000, 322; Kahle 2002, 23; Kääriäinen 2004, 81; Stricker 2004, 247; Ylönen 2010, 307, 309; Litzenberger 2013, 3; Luoma 2013, 9, 15. According to Litzenberger (2013, 2), there were 1,100,000 million Lutherans in the territory of Russia in the early 20th century, and of them 905,000 were Germans. For more on the situation of the Ingrian Church during the first decade of the Soviet era, see Juhani Jääskeläinen: *Inkerin suomalainen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko neuvostojärjestelmän ensimmäisenä vuosikymmenenä 1917–1927* (1980). For more information on anti-religious activities in Ingria in the 1930s, see Myllyniemi 2000, 305–321.

⁹⁴ Dahlgren 1990, 127; Sihvo 2000, 322, 325; Santti 2008, 143–156; Rajala 2009, 11; Ylönen 2010, 309–310; Luoma 2013, 16.

⁹⁵ Scherer 1997, 170; Ylönen 2010, 310.

⁹⁶ For more about Kalnins see Talonen 1997, 81.

⁹⁷ Scherer 1997, 170; Stricker 2000, 3; Stricker 2004, 254.

⁹⁸ Dahlgren 1990, 129–130; Arkkila 2002, 49; Ylönen 1997, 27; Sihvo 2000, 341; Stricker 2000, 9; Ylönen 2010, 310.

Mikhail Gorbachev rose to power in 1985, marking the beginning of the perestroika⁹⁹ and glasnost¹⁰⁰ era in the Soviet Union. After many decades the Ingrians were allowed their own pastor in 1987, named Arvo Survo. Young and charismatic, Arvo Survo was the one who aroused Ingrian national enthusiasm and fostered the rise of the Ingrian Church. A new era began in 1988 when the government's attitude to religion changed in connection with the millennium celebration of the Russian Orthodox Church. Within a few years the "opium of the people" had become "an integrating factor in Society". At this stage the Finnish Church responded to the enthusiasm concerning the Ingrian Church, and Finn Church Aid began to coordinate the support efforts.¹⁰¹

The Ingrian church officially declared itself in Kupanitsa church at Pentecost, 1989. Arvo Survo and Aatami Kuortti were behind the move, which was a question of reviving the old historical Church rather than establishing a new one. The event was sensitive politically and also in terms of inter-church relations. Estonian and Finnish church leaders had slight reservations about the event. In any case, in 1989 it was possible to arrange the first summer meetings in over 60 years. The development was already quite rapid, the number of Finnish-Ingrian congregations increasing from two to fifteen between 1988 and 1990. Despite the declaration, however, the Ingrian Church continued to be part of the Estonian Church as a deanery.¹⁰²

The year 1990 was very significant for the Ingrians. The law of religious freedom was passed, giving full freedom of religion in the Soviet Union. It was then possible to register new Finnish congregations and to restore old church buildings. Finn Church Aid was very active in helping the Ingrians. It soon started to coordinate the building process, and at first was involved in almost all of the building projects.¹⁰³ In fact, the Finnish Church and its organizations were active in the Soviet Union one or two years before the Missouri Synod arrived there.

The Ingrian Church is the most relevant denomination in Russia as far as this research is concerned, but there are also others that are of interest. The biggest of the Lutheran churches, which like the Missouri Synod is of German origin, is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States (ELCROS), or as referred to at the beginning in

⁹⁹ *Perestroika* means reconstruction (Service 1997, 441; McLeod & Saarinen 2006, 75).

¹⁰⁰ According to Service (1997, 448), *glasnost* "is a difficult word to translate, broadly connoting 'openness', 'a voicing' and 'a making public'". McLeod & Saarinen (2006, 75) defines *glasnost* as openness.

¹⁰¹ Dahlgren 1990, 34–35; Risto Lehtonen interview 17.3.2011; Väliaho 2004, 51; Kääriäinen 1989, 156; Ylönen 1997, 27; Kääriäinen 1998, 1; Kääriäinen 1993, 80; Service 1997, xxii; Lieven 1999, 426; Kotiranta 2000, 5; Sihvo 2000, 345; Liiman 2002, 5; Kääriäinen 2004, 5; Turunen 2005, 7, 28; Luukkanen 2009, 418; Rajala 2009, 11, 18; Luoma 2013, 24, 95, 97.

¹⁰² Dahlgren 1990, 133; Pihkala 1998, 75; Arkkila 2002, 50–51; Sihvo 2000, 347; Rajala 2009, 12, 17; Luoma 2013, 29–30, 99–100.

¹⁰³ Sherat 2000, 228; Kääriäinen 2004, 6, 59; Turunen 2005, 7, 29; Rajala 2009, 26; Ylönen 2010, 310; Luoma 2013, 37. For the 1990 Law see Sherat 2000, 228–235 and Kääriäinen 2004, 66–67. However, the first church renovation process with Finnish counterparts, namely some of the revivalist movements, began as early as in 1989. (Survo 2002, 62)

German, *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche In Russland und anderen Staaten* (ELKRAS, founded in 1988, later and in this research ELCROS).¹⁰⁴

Overall, it can be said that Lutheranism is not a mainstream religion in Russia: quite the opposite, it is only a small minority denomination. There is no total congregational coverage in Russia, but Lutheran congregations are still registered widely throughout the territory.¹⁰⁵

b. Baltic Lutheran Churches

The Baltic Lutherans had a strong German identity dating back to the Reformation, in contrast to their Orthodox and Catholic neighbors. German Lutherans controlled the Estonian and Latvian Lutheran Churches for hundreds of years, and dominated all of the Baltic Lutheran Churches. When the Baltic nations first achieved independence in the 1910s there was a change in identity from *Die Herrenkirche* towards a national Church.¹⁰⁶

There were only two national Lutheran Churches in Eastern Europe, those of Estonia and Latvia. It is striking that these majority churches became minority churches in their own countries. Before the Second World War Estonia was overwhelmingly Lutheran, Latvia was clearly Lutheran, and Lithuania was almost completely Catholic. World War II had a strong impact on Baltic Lutheranism. A large number of Lutherans left their home country in 1944 to get away from the Red Army. Many Balts and Ingrians were transported to the Eastern parts of the Soviet Union in the 1940s. Baltic pastors were also affected, and many were deported. Despite the extremely difficult religious situation during the Soviet era there were no underground Lutheran Churches in the Baltic area, which may have made the Soviet times even harder for the Baltic Lutheran Churches.¹⁰⁷

The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church accepted a new bylaw in 1919 giving its leadership, for the first time, to Estonians. There were 1.13 million people living in Estonia in

¹⁰⁴ Spieth 2014, 222; Stricker 2000, 5. The history of ELCROS began in the 16th century, when the first German Lutheran communities emerged in Russia. The Czar favored Germans, so much so that there were about two million of them in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. The German congregations were disbanded at the end of 1938. A German congregation was permitted to register itself in Northern Kazakhstan in 1957, and more congregations were allowed after the mid-1960s. The German-based congregations formed a diocese in 1988, which was incorporated into The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia. The diocese became independent of the ELCL in the summer of 1990 and became part of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Soviet Union (later known as ELCROS). Other Lutheran churches in Russia also started to operate after the collapse of the USSR: The Evangelical Lutheran Church Augsburg Confession (Russia), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Karelia (*Karjalan kirkko*), and The Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church. The last-mentioned is presented in Chapter II because of its connections to the Missouri Synod. All the other Lutheran Churches and groups are very small and there is hardly any information available about them. (Pihkala 1998, 75; Ylönen 2010, 308–319)

¹⁰⁵ Ylönen 2010, 308. Less than 0.5 percent of Russians confess Lutheranism.

¹⁰⁶ Dahlgren 1990, 107; Lieven 1999, 133; Talonen 2008 b, 42.

¹⁰⁷ Küng 1975, 123; Liiman 2002, 14; Ketola 2009, 226; Murtorinne 2010, 43; Talonen 2010, 128–129, 153.

1939, and about 78 percent of them were Lutherans. Being a Lutheran at the time meant membership of the Lutheran Church, the position of which was still dominant.¹⁰⁸

Soviet Union laws on religion came into effect after the Second World War. Nevertheless, pastoral education started at the Institute of Theology in Tallinn in 1946, and Jaan Kiivit Sr. (1906–1971) was elected Archbishop in 1949. The Estonian Church started to communicate with the West again during the 1950s. The situation in the EELC became better for a while after the death of Stalin, until Khrushchev launched an attack on religion. Experiments involving the atheistic replication of church services were conducted in Estonia in particular.¹⁰⁹

This anti-religion development became visible in church life from 1958 on, when membership figures and attendance at church services began to decrease. Youth, in particular, began to disappear from the congregations. The number of members who paid their church membership dropped from 176,000 (1958) to 110,000 (1966). Even though the Estonian Church had difficulties in its homeland, foreign connections were activated and the Lutheran Church was able to join the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in 1959¹¹⁰. What is also of interest is that the EELC in exile was a founding member of both the World Council of Churches (WCC, formed in 1948) and the Lutheran World Federation. The EELC was accepted as a member of these two important ecumenical organizations, namely the WCC and the LWF, in 1962. The Estonian Lutheran Church became a member in 1963, but was forced to represent the ideology of the Soviet authorities and any ecumenical relations were limited to a few meetings during foreign visits from selected church personnel, or supervised encounters with visitors from abroad.¹¹¹

The ordination of women was authorized in the 1960s, and the first female pastor, Laine Villenthal, was ordained in 1967. Archbishop Kiivit Senior demonstrated too much independence in foreign relations however, and was therefore removed from office in 1967 under the official pretext of poor health. The next archbishops, both consecrated into office by Finnish archbishops, were Alfred Tooming (1967–1977) and Edgar Hark (1978–1986). They were under very strict government control.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Lahtinen 1991, 315, 317; Rohmets & Vihuri 2009, 32. On the formation of the Estonian Lutheran ministry at the turn of the 20th century, see Riho Saard: *Eesti rahvusest luteriku pastorkonna väljakujunemine ja vaba rahvakiriku projekti loomine, 1870–1917* (2002).

¹⁰⁹ Lieberg 1985, 43–44; Lahtinen 1991, 323–325; Elliot 1994, 14; Liiman 2002, 29; McLeod & Saarinen 2006, 82; Altnurme 2011, 271. For more about relations between the EELC and the Soviet state in the 1940s, see Riho Altnurme: *Eesti evangeeliumi luteriusu kirik ja Nõukogude riik 1944–1949* (2000).

¹¹⁰ The Conference of European Churches was created during the cold war period, and its first assembly was held in 1959 (CEC Assemblies 2014).

¹¹¹ Dahlgren 1990, 279; Lahtinen 1991, 325; Gassman 1995, 47; Schjørring 1997b, 56; Malkavaara 2002, 317; McLeod & Saarinen 2006, 82; Erling & Granquist 2008, 298; Kaldur, Kurg & Altnurme 2009, 126. For more about the role of the WCC after WW II, see Matti Peiponen *Ecumenical action in World Politics: The Creation of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), 1945–1949* (2012); on the LWF's role see Mikko Malkavaara: *Kahtia jakautuneet Baltian luterilaiset kirkot ja Luterilainen maailmanliitto 1944–1963* (2002).

¹¹² ELCL Bishops 2013; McLeod & Saarinen 2006, 82; Altnurme & Rimmel 2009, 114, 122; Altnurme 2011, 271; Viren 2013, 18–19. According to Settje (2007, 34), Archbishop Kiivit resigned in 1968 but the explanation for the resignation was not believed: “After the Soviets suddenly announced that he was sick,

The attack on religion calmed down after Khrushchev was replaced in 1964. The 1960s and 1970s were decades of calm for the EELC. However, its membership and member activity continued to decline. The lowest point was reached in 1986 when the number of paying members fell to under 50,000. Lutheran theological education was available in Estonia even in Soviet times. The small Institute of Theology in Tallinn was open in the 1970s and 1980s, and in practice was the only theological education center in Estonia during the Soviet period. Only 40 pastors graduated between 1946 and 1987 because of the sanctions imposed under Communist rule.¹¹³

The extent of the “field” in the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church increased in the mid-1980s as the leaders focused more on foreign matters than inner development. The Estonian Council of Churches was established in 1989 with the purpose of making government control easier. According to Lieven (1999), the reason was that the non-Lutheran Churches in Estonia “tend to mistrust the influence of Lutherans” and established the council as “a counterbalance”. However this council turned out to be a very important forum for church cooperation following the new Estonian independence.¹¹⁴

The Estonian Archbishops had more opportunity to be in contact with foreign churches and countries, but there are no documents and no other evidence suggesting that there had been connections with the Missouri Synod before the 1990s. In contrast to the Missouri Synod’s inactivity in the area, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America had contacts with Eastern Europe during the Soviet era. For example, some ELCA student groups and delegations visited Tallinn at the end of the 1980s and met EELC officials. Archbishop Kuno Pajula, in particular, had contacts with the ELCA.¹¹⁵

The period that began in 1987 could be called “The Return of the Churches”. It was a period of awakening in the national and in the religious sense. Many people were returning to the Church and members of the clergy participated in the liberation movement. Kuno Pajula was elected Archbishop of the Estonian Lutheran Church in the same year. In line with the tradition that Finns installed its archbishops, Finnish Archbishop John Vikström performed the ceremony. Pajula was the last archbishop to be elected into office under Soviet rule.¹¹⁶

The Estonian Lutheran Church was facing huge changes in the same way as the other Churches of the Soviet Union. The national awakening focused on them all, but the revival in the Lutheran Church was one of the strongest. Church attendance and membership increased rapidly, and there were more holy services. The EELC had difficulties maintaining all that growth and demand, and soon it became evident that it was

Lutherans speculated that the Soviets really created this story in order to install someone they could better manipulate.”

¹¹³ JTA Altnurme to Talonen 7.4.2009; Lahtinen 1991, 326, 327; Elliot 1994, 14; Liiman 2002, 21–22. However, there were more than 200,000 baptized members in the Estonian Lutheran church in 1987, despite the smaller number, less than 50,000, who had paid for membership. (JTA Altnurme to Talonen 7.4.2009)

¹¹⁴ Lahtinen 1991, 328, 332; Lieven 1999, 367; Liiman 2002, 40; Hintikka 2010, 182. For more about the establishment of the Estonian Council of Churches see Saard 2009.

¹¹⁵ EELKKA 1984–1990 Pajula to Rusch 31.3.1989; Wee to Pajula 30.5.[1989]; Urmas Viilma interview 22.8.2011; Veiko Vihuri email interview 12.3.2012.

¹¹⁶ Dahlgren 1990, 122; Liiman 2002, 5, 40; Altnurme & Rimmel 2009, 123; Viren 2013, 25–26.

not very united as a body. It is difficult to find clear theological divisions, but there were members who had been influenced by Herrnhutism (Moravianism), Evangelism, and also people's or folk church¹¹⁷ theology.¹¹⁸

The situation concerning pastoral education improved at the beginning of the 1990s. The Theological Faculty returned to Tartu University in 1991, and the Institute of Theology in Tallinn continued its work. Lutheran theology was not as downgraded and isolated during Soviet times in Estonia as it was in Ingria and the other Baltic countries. Estonians had quite a lot of contacts with foreign Churches and theologians because Tallinn was one of the westernmost cities in the Soviet Union. It was located near Finland and seemingly enjoyed greater freedom of religion.¹¹⁹

On the whole, the era of foreign powers, beginning from 1940 and continuing until Estonian independence in 1991, was a period in which the Lutheran Church had to fight for survival under an anti-church regime.¹²⁰

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, founded in 1524, had a strong position in the country in 1925: 57 percent of the population were Lutherans, 23 percent Roman Catholics and nine percent Orthodox. The situation changed during the years following the Second World War, however. The Latvian Church, which lost its position as a national church, faced a very difficult situation in Soviet Latvia. All church activities were strictly defined and controlled, and the Communist regime closed down all theological institutions in 1940. The number of members dropped during Communist rule, from 1.2 million in 1935 to only about 120,000 in 1990. There were also Latvian Lutheran exiles who fled from Latvia at the end of WWII and immigrated to Australia, New Zealand, England, the USA, and Canada, for example. They founded a new church in exile, which had 89,000 members and 137 pastors in 1962. The numbers then decreased.¹²¹

During the time of Nikita Khrushchev in the 1950s and 1960s many church buildings were closed or used for various other purposes, such as factories, museums, clubs, movie theaters and concert halls. A very severe loss to the Church was the appropriation of the great 13th-century cathedral of Riga, which was taken away from congregational use in 1959, restored, and opened again for cultural use in 1962.¹²²

¹¹⁷ The terms *peoples' church* and *folk church* are used in this research to refer to the majority Churches in the Nordic area and two of the Baltic Lutheran Churches. Lyttkens (1963, 148) refers to "the "folk church," a name which implies that there has been a de-emphasis on the idea of a state church, but that the church's bond with the people as a whole has not been forgotten." For example the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has not been a state church since Schauman's church law of 1869, see Kauko Pirinen *Schaumanin kirkkolain synty* (1985).

¹¹⁸ Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014; Lahtinen 1991, 329, 333.

¹¹⁹ Liiman 2002, 24; Kaldur, Kurg & Altmurme 2009, 144; Talonen 2010, 149.

¹²⁰ Kaldur, Kurg & Altmurme 2009, 126.

¹²¹ Talonen 1991 a, 335–343; Balodis 2004, 139; Talonen 2005, 162; Talonen 2008 a, 138.

¹²² Talonen 1991 a, 336; Petkūnas 2001, 27. Grislis (1996, 51) notes that the benches of the National Lutheran Cathedral had been turned around with their backs toward the former altar.

All influential pastors of the Latvian Church from the 1940s until the 1970s were educated either in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Latvia or at the University of Dorpat (Tartu). Both of these universities were schools of liberal theology.¹²³

The Latvian Church had very limited publishing facilities. The religious materials it could publish after 1945 were very restricted. This was a long, lean period for church life and theology. It was the time of the theology of the Ghetto. These years of oppression and marginalization were a kind of “wintertime”, during which there was no room for theological development.¹²⁴

Nevertheless, some international connections were made, as the Archbishop of the Latvian Lutheran Church Gustavs Tūrs (from 1946 to 1968) was able to maintain the organization and to establish influential foreign contacts. The Latvian Church joined the World Council of Churches in 1962 and the Lutheran World Federation in 1963, The Latvian Churches had to emphasize their work for peace in their international activities.¹²⁵

The ordination of women has long roots in Latvia. In the 1970s and 1980s Archbishop Jānis Matulis, installed by Swedish Bishop Sven Danell in 1968, took the unprecedented step of ordaining half a dozen women, although no decision had been made in the Church assembly. The first three pastors ordained in 1973–1974 were Latvian exiles. Matulis took his ideas for the reforms from the West. However, the ordination of women was short-lived: after Matulis' death the new Archbishop Ēriks Mesters put an end to the practice.¹²⁶

Reverend Roberts Feldmanis (1910–2002) had a very strong influence on the development of the ELCL from the early 1980s. He was later Professor of Church History in Riga University, and at the same time a vicar in an influential *Mežaparks* congregation. Feldmanis and members of his congregation assumed a major role in building the Latvian Church.¹²⁷

The movement known as Rebirth and Renewal, which took shape after the mid-1980s, was also influential and demanded more space for the Church in society. The Cathedral of Riga was given back to the Lutheran church in 1988, an apparent sign that a new era was coming. There was also an end to religious persecution. The year of 1988 was commonly regarded as the demarcation point between decline and rebirth for the Latvian Churches.¹²⁸

Kārlis Gailītis was elected Archbishop at the 1989 meeting of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia. Gailītis was more open to societal changes than his predecessor Ēriks Mesters: Swedish Archbishop Olof Sundby installed them both. These

¹²³ KKA Mankusa [2006], 3–4; Talonen & Rohmets 2014.

¹²⁴ Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Talonen 1985, 18; Talonen 1991 a, 337; Talonen 1997, 98; Talonen 2002, 198; Talonen 2005, 165; Altnurme & Rimmel 2009, 118.

¹²⁵ Dahlgren 1990, 279; KSML 11.5.1985; Aderkas 1985, 95; Talonen 1991a, 337–338; Klīve 1995, 124; Schjørring 1997b, 56; Talonen 2005, 167; Talonen 2007, 257.

¹²⁶ Küng 1975, 132; Dahlgren 1990, 122; Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014; Dreifelds 1995, 69; Talonen 2005, 166; Mankusa 2006, 332;

¹²⁷ Talonen 2002, 195; Talonen 2010, 137, 153. For more about Feldmanis and the history of the Latvian church see Talonen 2002: *Robert Feldmanis (1910–2002), Latvian kirkkohistorian professori* (2002), and Kalme, Rubenis & Šmits: *Roberts Feldmanis: Latvijas Baznīcas Vēsture* (2011).

¹²⁸ Talonen 1991a, 343; Dreifelds 1995, 63; Petkūnas 2001, 27. The benches were turned around once more in 1988 to their original position after 29 years when the cathedral was in other use. (Grislis 1996, 51)

new winds of change in the ELCL strengthened its positive image in the eyes of the Latvian public. Gailītis brought back the ordination of women, and this time it was, for the first time, accepted in the Church assembly. All in all, the years after 1987 were good for the Lutheran Church. The number of congregations grew from 200 to 241 (1990), and the growth continued.¹²⁹

Only two people were awarded the degree of Doctor of Theology from the Church seminary during the whole period of Soviet Latvia. The ELCL seminary was transformed into an official university organization as the Theological Faculty of Latvia University when the faculty, founded in 1920, was given back to the university in 1990, thereby realizing the vision of Archbishop Gailītis. The Lutheran World Federation supported the faculty's re-establishment. It had also been a dream of Professor Feldmanis, which Latvian Lutherans shared. The new Faculty of Theology was opened on 1 September 1990.¹³⁰

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania

The Lithuanian Lutheran Church was a minority Church even during the Reformation. Before the major upheavals of 1940 there were 3.4 million Lithuanians, and about 75,000 of them were Lutherans. Most of the German-speaking population moved to Germany in 1940–1941, and as a result only one third of the country's Lutherans remained in Lithuania. In addition, heavy pressure on religious leaders in the 1940s and 1950s led to a situation in which spiritual life had, for the most part, to be maintained by laymen. The Lutheran church was isolated from all foreign contact, including theological contact.¹³¹

The Soviet occupation was hard for all Christians in Lithuania. Soviet communists recognized very early on the enormous power of the Roman Catholic Church. At that time Lithuanians identified Catholicism as their national religion. The situation in Lithuania was thus very different from that in the other Baltic countries in which the majority of the people were Lutherans.¹³²

Lithuanians had been immigrating to North America for a long period of time, one of the major waves being after World War II. American Lutheran organizations helped many Lithuanian Lutherans to get to America, inviting them through the Missouri Synod and the Churches that later formed the ELCA. Others settled in Germany, Great Britain, Australia and Canada, for instance. These Lithuanian Lutherans founded a Church for exiles, which was supported by the Lutheran World Federation.¹³³

¹²⁹ Dahlgren 1990, 41; Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014; Dreifelds 1995, 65, 73; Stricker 2004, 257; Talonen 2010, 137.

¹³⁰ Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014; Reseptio 1/1993 Matkaraportti Luterilaisen maailmanliiton 14. Eurooppa kokouksesta 4.–9.11.1992 Riiassa, Latviassa; Talonen 1991 a, 336; Dreifelds 1995, 69; Balodis 2004, 159; Talonen 2007, 258–259; Talonen 2010, 149.

¹³¹ Talonen 1991 b, 344; Petkūnas 2001, 24. Despite the minority status the first book written in Lithuanian was the Lutheran Catechism. (Petkūnas 2001, 23)

¹³² Petkūnas 2008 b, 94.

¹³³ LQJAS, Vol. 41, No. 2/Summer 1995 Lithuanian Lutherans in North America; Talonen 1991 b, 345.

The Lutherans in Lithuania were considered to be Germans, and the Lithuanian Lutheran Church was referred to as the “German Church”. There were cases when members of the Lutheran congregations were deported because they were designated as Germans, even though many of them were ethnic Lithuanians. In other words, their Lutheranism was the only reason for their deportation. For this reason, too, those who immigrated to America attended German services at first. Furthermore, Lithuanian Lutherans were so strongly identified with Germans that the Lithuanian Lutheran Church felt it had to adopt an attitude of political noninvolvement during the Soviet years.¹³⁴

Not many synodical meetings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania took place during the Soviet era. A meeting was organized after Stalin died, then the Church gathered for its first post-Stalin synodical meeting in 1955 and was granted a new church order. Its governance and publishing activity were rebuilt. There was another synodical meeting in 1970, at which Jonas Kalvanas Sr. (1914–1995) was elected leader. He was elected bishop at the third synodical meeting after WW II, arranged in 1976. Archbishop Alfred Tooming of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church officiated at the inauguration.¹³⁵

The Lithuanian Lutherans faced perhaps even greater difficulties than the other Baltic Lutherans because they were a minority Church. Moreover, their church buildings were appropriated, and the Lutheran Church in Vilnius, for example, was transformed from a church into a sports hall. The foreign contacts of the ELCLi were also very limited because most of the Lutherans lived in an area that foreign tourists were not allowed to visit. Nevertheless, they still had some contact with Lutherans abroad: the Lithuanian Church joined the LWF in 1967, and in 1977 Kalvanas was elected the first Lutheran from the USSR to be a member of the LWF executive commission.¹³⁶

The small Lutheran Church faced the challenges of renewal politics in the 1980s. The strong Roman Catholic Church was identified with national endeavors. The political development was rapid in 1989–1990. A new law on religion came into force in 1989, and as a result property confiscated from the Lutheran Church began to revert to its original use. A highly memorable event took place in August 1989 when a 600-kilometer-long human chain formed in protest against the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, and called for independence. More than a million Balts took part, the chain reaching from Tallinn through Riga to Vilnius.¹³⁷

Lithuania became independent on 11 March 1990, which heralded the beginning of a new era. Incredibly, 50 years of suppression and persecution had not been enough to

¹³⁴ LQJAS, Vol. 41, No. 2/Summer 1995 Lithuanian Lutherans in North America; Petkūnas 2001, 25; Petkūnas 2011, 10, 13. According to the 1923 census, more Germans than Lithuanians belonged to the Lithuanian Lutheran Church. (Petkūnas 2011, 20)

¹³⁵ Talonen 1991 b, 345; Petkūnas 2007, 6; Petkūnas 2011, 180. For more about Kalvanas during the Stalinist era, see Petkūnas 2011, 180–233.

¹³⁶ Hermann 1985, 119; Talonen 1991 b, 345–346; Schjørring 1997b, 56. Talonen (1991 b, 345) states that the Lithuanian Church joined the LWF in 1968, but according to the LWF history (Schjørring 1997b, 56) it was one year earlier, in 1967.

¹³⁷ Dahlgren 1990, 41; Talonen 1991 b, 346; Grisliis 1996, 51; Lieven 1999, 427; Harju 2007, 9.

destroy the Church. Lutheranism in Lithuania was weakened but still alive. In 1990 the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania had only nine pastors and 25 congregations, the biggest of which was Taurage with 4,000 members.¹³⁸

The synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania gathered in 1990. At that time Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Sr. was almost 80 years old and the synod decided to call his son Jonas Kalvanas Jr. to the position of auxiliary of the bishop. Even though the ordination of women was not common practice in the Lithuanian Church there was one exception, when Bishop Kalvanas Sr. ordained Tamara Schmidt in 1990. However, she was ordained to serve the Lithuanian Church in Diaspora. As noted, the country's closest neighbors, Latvia and Estonia, had also ordained women.¹³⁹ Thus, all of the three Baltic Lutheran Churches had women pastors at some point before the year 1991.

All in all, the Baltic Lutheran Churches were no longer majority Churches. The reasons for the collapse, in addition to fierce propaganda, lay in the huge societal changes resulting from the Communist invasion. Collective farming destroyed the countryside, for example, which had been an important area for the churches. The industry policy, which led to mass immigration, caused many Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians to move to Tallinn and Riga in particular. These immigrants had no ties with Lutheranism. In 1990 there were about 175,000 (12% of the population) Lutherans in Estonia, 350,000 (11%) in Latvia, and 29 000 (1.0%) in Lithuania.¹⁴⁰

The Eastern European Churches were practically isolated for decades during the communist era, although there were some top-level contacts with the West after the 1950s. There was a massive change when the USSR showed signs of collapse. Given the course of events in the USSR, international interaction almost exploded. The Eastern European Lutheran Churches rapidly expanded their contacts with the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches.¹⁴¹

The formerly thriving Baltic Lutheran Churches faced near extinction during the Soviet era, and required aid from around the world. At the same time the Missouri Synod was not among those that gave aid to the Baltic and Ingrian Churches. In short, the Synod had no official contacts with them before the 1990s.¹⁴² However, this situation was soon to change.

¹³⁸ Talonen 1991 b, 346; Petkūnas 2008, 7.

¹³⁹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Lithuania 1991–1997. Dumpys to Görög et al. 20.9.1995; Petkūnas 2001, 28–29; Petkūnas 2008, 9–10; Ketola 2009, 231.

¹⁴⁰ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Central and Eastern Europe April 30- May 22, 1994. Lithuania May 15, 1994; Petkūnas 2001, 24; Talonen 2010, 132–136. The correct percentage is 1.0%, in contrast to 0.1% given by Talonen (2010, 132): it seems to be just a decimal error.

¹⁴¹ Talonen 2010, 140; Daniel Mattson interview 11.2.2011.

¹⁴² Robert Kolb interview 11.2.2011; Guntis Kalme email interview 29.3.2011; Settje 2007, 181.

II Rushing into the post-Communist world, 1991–1995

2.1 Russia

2.1.1 First contacts

“Thank God, the coup failed”. This is how Glenn O’Shoney, the LCMS World Mission Executive Director and the editor of the *Missionary to Missionary* newsletter, expressed his feelings in September 1991 when the attempted *coup d’état*, or counter-revolution (19–21 August 1991) by Soviet Communists to seize control of the country from Gorbachev failed. The dissolution of the USSR was formally finalized in December, when Russia and other post-Soviet countries opened their doors to foreign missionaries and churches, for example. The Missouri Synod, which at the time consisted of approximately 2.6 million baptized members, was active almost immediately when Russia allowed in the Christian witness.¹⁴³

The Missourian pioneer in the area was Reverend Wallace Schulz: “I was the first in there”, he said. He was in the area before and during the failed coup in 1991, sent by the Synod’s auxiliary¹⁴⁴ organization, namely the International Lutheran Laymen’s League (ILLL, founded in 1917 and also known as Lutheran Hour Ministries). The League’s primary work was the proclamation of the Gospel through radio and television. Schulz did not represent the Synod’s main bureaucracies, thus the first post-Soviet contacts were not made directly through the official LCMS organization.¹⁴⁵

These first contacts in 1991 were not limited to Ingrians - quite the opposite, as Reverend Schulz put it: “And the entire Ingrian Lutheran church at that time, we had nothing to do with it, we were not even aware of it, so to speak.” It should be taken into account that the different Russian Lutheran Churches and groups were not very clearly identifiable at first, although the main reason for not being aware of the Ingrians was that the Missourian focus was more on Lutherans of German origin, because of their own roots. Historically, the Missouri Synod’s mission work had tended to concentrate on German immigrants, and was referred to as “a home mission abroad” (in *German: Innere*

¹⁴³ ALCMS BFMS *Missionary to Missionary* Sep. 1991; Hassinen 1997, 110; Robert Kolb interview 11.2.2011; Jukka Paananen interview 9.6.2011; Service 1997, xxii; Ylönen 1997, 28; Lieven 1999, 108; Kääriäinen 2004, 10; Luukkanen 2004, 343; McLeod & Saarinen 2006, 75; Kuusniemi 2007, 3; Luukkanen 2009, 428, 436; Ylönen 2010, 310; Luoma 2013, 101.

¹⁴⁴ There have only been two recognized auxiliaries in the LCMS: The International Lutheran Laymen’s League and the International Lutheran Women’s Missionary League. “An auxiliary enjoys the closest affiliation with the Synod, because, in addition to several other requirements, “it exists as an arm of the Synod and has its primary function aiding the Synod, specifically in programs that extend the ministry and mission of the Synod.”” (Burce 1998, 378–379)

¹⁴⁵ Burce 1998, 379; Wallace & Kathy Schulz interview 13.2.2011; Coates & Lueker 1964, 397; Pankow 1992, 15; Todd 2000, 121–122. See the history of the International Lutheran Laymen’s League, Pankow Fred & Edith: *75 Years of Blessings and the Best is Yet to Come!* (1992).

Mission im Ausland). The aim was to bring German immigrants together in congregations in various countries. It was probably for these reasons that Schulz's first contact, as early as in spring 1991, was with Harald Kalnins, the Bishop of the German Lutheran Church in Russia (ELCROS)¹⁴⁶ who was based in Riga, Latvia. It is highly relevant that the Missouri Synod did not have to push itself into the area, as Bishop Kalnins was eager to cooperate with the Missourians. He told Schulz and his wife Kathy that they were "angels that God sent" and he had "been waiting for you".¹⁴⁷

Much planning and activity followed the huge upheaval. The LCMS Board for Mission Services (BFMS)¹⁴⁸ considered establishing a Luther House in Leningrad, sent Bibles straight to Russia, and dispatched some Christian literature to be taken to Russia via Finland. Partners in cooperation at this time included the two official auxiliaries of the LCMS, namely the International Lutheran Laymen's League and the International Lutheran Women's Missionary League (ILWML, organized in 1942).¹⁴⁹

Perhaps the first auxiliary-organized, somewhat indirect Missouri Synod contacts with Russian Lutherans, who included Ingrians, were made in 1991 when the International Lutheran Women's Missionary League (ILWML, set up in 1942) collected funds to send religious material into Russia. The ILWML did this through the Board for Mission Services in the Missouri Synod, and a small sister Church, the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland (CLCF; *Suomen tunnustuksellinen luterilainen kirkko*), which helped with the Bible distribution.¹⁵⁰ Both of these lay organizations of the Missouri Synod, the ILL and the ILWML, working in cooperation with the BFMS and the CLCF, were the fastest to react to the need for mission work in the former Soviet Union.

¹⁴⁶ Bishop Kalnins' title was Bishop of the German Evangelical Lutheran Churches in the Eastern States. He was recognized by the Soviet authorities as a superintendent in 1980, and was officially installed as bishop in 1988. Thus he was responsible for the German Lutherans. He stated that the problems in Russia were massive, and that all who were prepared to proclaim the Gospel of Christ were welcome. (Stricker 2000, 3; Stricker 2004, 254) Kalnins retired in 1994, and served as bishop for German-speaking parishes in Latvia until his death in 1997. Stricker (2004, 256) further points out that in later years when he was serving parishes Kalnins "even in this role" "was in no way subordinate to the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church or its archbishop."

¹⁴⁷ Wallace & Kathy Schulz interview 13.2.2011; Meuser 1980, 361; Granquist 2003 b, 169. According to Granquist: "Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) has been very active in working with Lutherans in the former Soviet Union, many of whom are ethnic Germans who had settled in Russia and now are living in Russia, Ukraine, and the Central Asia republics." This is a true statement, but it would be more exact to say that LCMS activities in the former Soviet Union focused primarily on people of German origin, but that ethnicity soon declined in importance in the choice of partners. According to Danker (1964, 294–295), at the beginning of its foreign mission the Missouri Synod was "primarily concerned with fellow Germans". Stricker (2001, 109–110) further argues: "Cooperation between the ELCROS and the Missouri Synod was at first good", but theological differences later created some problems.

¹⁴⁸ Before the 1981 organizational changes in the LCMS the board was known as the Board for Missions. (Burce 1998, 376)

¹⁴⁹ ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary Sep. 1991; Danker 1964, 309; LWML Basic Facts 1999; Todd 2000, 126. It seems that the versions of the LLL/ILLL and LWML/ILWML are used almost as synonyms.

¹⁵⁰ ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary Aug. 1991; Burce 1998, 379; LWML MGR 2011, 67, 79; Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011.

Hence the Missouri Synod worked with its Finnish sister Church, the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland, in its outreach to Russia. The CLCF's role as a mission partner in the Russian work of the LCMS mainly involved publishing activities: the Synod's workers received "a lot of help" from the CLCF. The outreach project included the translation of Luther's Catechism into Russian (completed in October 1992)¹⁵¹, distributing some 2,000 Russian-language children's Bibles, and establishing mission work among the Veps. The CLCF leaders visited Russia and distributed these Bibles to its people. The rebuilding of the damaged churches in Gatchina, 50 kilometers south of St. Petersburg, was identified as priority work for the CLCF, with the Missouri Synod's assistance. The first contacts with the Ingrians focused mainly on the St. Petersburg area.¹⁵²

Communist rule in Russia lasted for over 70 years, from 1917 to 1991. This was longer than in the other Eastern European countries that came under the Communist sphere of influence after the Second World War and witnessed the system's collapse during 1989–1991. These changes shifted the status of the Ingrian Lutherans. The possibility of independence became a necessity for the Ingrian Church when Estonia gained its independence on 20 August 1991. It had to become independent of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church because Ingrian Lutheran congregations were registered in the Estonian Lutheran Church under the 1990 Law on the Freedom of Religion.¹⁵³

The Estonian Church made the official decision to establish an Ingrian Church that was independent of the Ingrian deanery on 1 January 1992. It became an independent actor, even though it was heavily dependent on support from the foreign Lutheran Churches. St. Petersburg was the main location of its central administration. The Missouri Synod must have been known among the Ingrians at this point because it was included among the several counterparts and Churches to which the declaration of independence of the Ingrian Church was sent.¹⁵⁴

As was clear by now, according to Reverend Dr. Daniel Mattson, the Missourians had an interest in and an awareness of the potential that became apparent after the collapse of the Soviet Union before any direct official contacts were made. Reaction on the official level was somewhat slower than among the auxiliaries, namely the ILLL and the ILWML. Consequently, the Ingrian Church was already independent when the Missouri Synod

¹⁵¹ The publication was a team effort, even though the CLCF did most of the work. Funding for this project came from The Lutheran Church-Canada, the Lutheran Laymen's League, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League and the LCMS World Mission. Two thousand copies of the catechism were purchased: 1,000 of them were sent to St. Petersburg and the other 1,000 were kept in Brooklyn to be distributed to Russian immigrants. (ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary Dec. 1992 & Jan. 1993; LWML MGR 2011, 67)

¹⁵² ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary Sep. 1992; ALCMS BFMS Mission News 15.1.1992; Jeffrey Thorndson interview 12.2.2011.

¹⁵³ ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary Sep. 1991; Ylönen 1997, 8; Kääriäinen 1998, 27–28; Kääriäinen & Furman 2000, 50; Rajala 2009, 51–52; Kääriäinen 2010, 48.

¹⁵⁴ Ylönen 1997, 32; Pihkala 1998, 75; Sihvo 2000, 348, 353; Rajala 2009, 51–53; Ylönen 2010, 310. Pihkala (1998, 75) pointed out that the Estonian Church wanted the Ingrian deanery to become independent because it aimed to become the national Church after Estonian independence.

became officially and directly active in Russia. One of the issues discussed at the first meeting of the Ingrian Church council on 25 January 1992 was the need to have a Russian Hymn Book. The book was quickly compiled and the Missouri Synod's St. Petersburg center offered to publish an edition of 10,000.¹⁵⁵ Thus, at least at the beginning of 1992 there was official cooperation between the Ingrian Church and the Missouri Synod.

A very significant event was when the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation¹⁵⁶ stepped forward with an offer to support the Missouri Synod's work in Russia on account of its concern about the fate of German Lutherans in the former Soviet Union. At that time the name of the donor was not publicly used. *Missionary to Missionary* (April 1992), for example, referred to an anonymous donor who had given one million dollars for work among Russian-speaking people.¹⁵⁷

Some Missourians already knew that the donor was the entrepreneur Marvin M. Schwan, who wanted to help long-suffering Lutherans. He believed it was particularly urgent for the Gospel be proclaimed as widely as possible to those who had been suppressed by Communism and Marxism for many years, which is why "a lot of money was released for this type of work". A "life-long friend", Larry Burgdorf, wrote about M. Schwan and the situation. According to Burgdorf, Marvin Schwan looked for ways to help as soon as "the evil empire self-destructed". Burgdorf suggested starting the ball rolling by offering a gift of one million dollars to the LCMS mission department. Schwan readily agreed. The mission department had expressed the intention to work with the Lutherans who were already in Russia. The "substantial gift" made it possible for the official mission organization of the Missouri Synod, the LCMS World Mission, to undertake mission work and to get started on the "immense task there".¹⁵⁸

Finnish Architect Isto Pihkala¹⁵⁹ started working with the Ingrians in Pushkin in August 1992. He pointed out that the conditions under which the Missouri Synod came to Russia were very complex and challenging. A lot was going on: grief work because of the people who were lost in the communist oppression, the Church was in the process of becoming organized, there was economic collapse along with privatization, and poverty and hunger were rife. Given the many problems and challenges associated with the development of the Church as a spiritual community, the massive diaconal need for help,

¹⁵⁵ ADM Daniel Mattson: *Beginnings of LCMS Mission Work in Russia*; Hassinen 1997, 114.

¹⁵⁶ The Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation was a very generous contributor to Lutheran Churches in the USA, especially the Wisconsin Synod, the Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. It strongly supported the missionary work of the Missouri Synod in particular. The founding documents of the Schwan Foundation specify certain organizations as recipients of grants, one of which is the LCMS. (IUPUI Marvin 2012) For example, in the 1980s Schwan Sales Enterprises, Inc. gave \$3 million for remodeling the new WELS synod office. (Fredrich 2000, 251)

¹⁵⁷ ADM Daniel Mattson: *Beginnings of LCMS Mission Work in Russia*; ALCMS BFMS *Missionary to Missionary* April 1992.

¹⁵⁸ ALCMS BFMS *Missionary to Missionary* March 1996; IKA LCMS ILC Burgdorf to Kugappi 30.12.2004; Wallace & Kathy Schulz interview 13.2.2011; LCMS Russia 2013.

¹⁵⁹ Isto Pihkala officially became the Secretary General of the Ingrian Church in February 1993. (Pihkala & Kivioja 1998, 60; Luoma 2013, 94). He was in the position from 1993 until 1999. (Pihkala 2002, 80)

and everything else there were enormous tensions. All this is what faced the Missouri Synod.¹⁶⁰

As mentioned, the Missouri Synod was not simply pushing itself into Russia, but was actively welcomed in many places. The Ingrians needed to take the Missourians as partners. However, the Missourians had to have a clear field of operation because, as the Ingrian Church workers already knew, ecumenism was an issue between the Synod and the Lutheran World Federation.¹⁶¹

It should be stressed that the only thing the Ingrians asked for and desired from the Missouri Synod was that it would not establish a new competing Church in Russia, not then and not ever. This precondition was acceptable to the official Missourian organization and so the LCMS World Mission agreed to work with the existing Lutheran Churches in Russia. As Reverend John Mehl wrote: “When the LCMS World Mission began working in Russia in 1992, we made it clear that our goal was not to start a new Lutheran synod in Russia, but to work with historic Lutheran churches”.¹⁶²

The Missourians cooperated with many Lutherans from the very beginning. In 1992 the LCMS World Mission worked with the ELCROS, the West Siberian Mission in Novosibirsk (later the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church), and with the ELCIR. The work among German Lutherans was still slightly favored. It seems that the Missouri Synod was mainly in touch with the ELCROS at first, which was natural given their common German roots. The situation changed, however, and the Synod soon established relations with the ELCIR. Dr. Rainer Stahl, the General Secretary of the Martin-Luther-Bund¹⁶³, assumed that this was for theological reasons. The ELCROS was influenced by German theology and women had a significant role in its upkeep during communist times. This may have influenced the decision to allow the ordination of women, which was also a matter of Biblical interpretation. In addition, differences in mind set between the two great nations, the USA and Germany, may have caused some friction. Thus, in a sense they kept each other away. The Ingrians also feared that some Western liberal thinking might infiltrate the Ingrian Church through the ELCROS, which was one reason for categorizing it as liberal even though it might not have been. Furthermore, if not at first then very early on, the Missourians noticed that the Ingrians had a lively Church of the kind with which they wanted to cooperate.¹⁶⁴

Bishop Hassinen assumed that the Finns did not advertise the Missourians to the Ingrians. The Lutheran Evangelical Association of Finland (LEAF) had found its soul mate in the Missourians, and although probably not actively promoting them to start with,

¹⁶⁰ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012; Luukkanen 2009, 436–437, 440–441.

¹⁶¹ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

¹⁶² IKA LCMS + ILC Mehl to Kuukauppi 4.11.2004.

¹⁶³ The Martin Luther Federation (*Martin-Luther-Bund*) was a major German support organization of Lutheran Churches in Eastern Europe and Brazil. (Gassmann 2001 m, 210)

¹⁶⁴ IKA LCMS + ILC Mehl to Kuukauppi 4.11.2004; ADM Daniel Mattson: Beginnings of LCMS Mission Work in Russia; Robert Kolb interview 11.2.2011; Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011; Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012; Rainer Stahl interview 31.10.2012; Rajala 2009, 85.

may well have vouched for them.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the LEAF's conservative and doctrinal emphasis and its long-lasting contacts with the Ingrians might have created fertile ground for Missourian-style theology.

All in all, the Ingrians experienced strong foreign influence from Finland, on the official level of the Church and from the revival movements. The Finnish Church practiced the ordination of women, even though some of the mission organizations were quite conservative: in comparison with the other Nordic majority Churches, for example, the Finnish Church may have been the most conservative. Nevertheless, the Ingrians chose a different path than the German-rooted Russian Lutherans when they made the decision not to ordain women. In a way, therefore, the Missourians had to choose the Ingrians as their partners in Russia because they had more in common on the level of theological understanding. Most of them detected in the pastors and leaders of the Ingrians a vision that was very similar to that of the Missouri Synod. Dr. Daniel Mattson wrote that the Missourians had many contacts, "but the most consistent and communicating a vision similar to the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod came from the pastors and leaders of the Ingrians (ELCIR)".¹⁶⁶ It is possible that the prohibition of women's ministry was not solely attributable to the influence of the Missouri Synod, and was already accepted in the Ingrian Church.

Another reason why the attention of the Missouri Synod shifted to the Ingrian Church related to the inner tensions among German Lutherans. As noted, the organization affiliated to the Missouri Synod, namely the Lutheran Heritage Foundation,¹⁶⁷ had its main office in St. Michael's church in St. Petersburg. Sergei Preimann, the vicar of St. Michael's congregation, welcomed the Missouri Synod. St. Michael's was an old German church, and had not been an Ingrian church. Preimann initially had stronger connections with the ELCROS, hence a further aim of the Synod, and the LHF, was to connect with Russian Lutherans of German origin through the St. Petersburg office. However, Preimann left the ELCROS and came to the ELCIR because of the "Baronas-case"¹⁶⁸. It could be said that the inner tensions in the ELCROS were a contributory factor when the Missourians decided to make contact with the Ingrians. And after many phases the church of St. Michael ended up being an Ingrian church, and with it came the missionary office of the Missouri Synod.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011.

¹⁶⁶ ADM Daniel Mattson: "Beginnings of LCMS Mission Work in Russia"; Rainer Stahl interview 31.10.2012; Stålsett 2005, ix.

¹⁶⁷ Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011.

¹⁶⁸ The LWF Europe Secretary Tibor Görög sent a letter to the Prime Minister of the Moscow Government J. Luzhkov explaining the controversial situation (SKA SFVR E3:9 Görög to Luzhkov 9.10.1991): "The so-called "Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia" of today was "founded" without consulting the Lutheran World Federation or any other Lutheran church /such as those in the Baltic states, Germany, Scandinavia, or in the other countries). Pastor Baronas was sent to St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) as a vicar of the GELCSU by his Bischof, Dr. Harald Kalnins. But he subsequently broke with the GELCSU and founded his own "church"".

¹⁶⁹ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

The Missouri Synod did not abandon the German Lutheran Church, however. Despite the shift of focus to the Ingrian Church, the Missourians still had a lot of sympathy for the ELCROS, not least because it was significantly bigger at the time and more widely dispersed.¹⁷⁰

Among the people who were active in making connections with the Missourians from the Ingrian side were Sergei Preiman, Aarre Kuukauppi and Arvo Survo. These pastors realized that closer cooperation with the Missouri Synod would benefit the Ingrian Church in terms of education and support on many levels, and most of all in establishing its Lutheran identity.¹⁷¹

The self-identity of the Ingrian Church could not be taken for granted at the beginning of the 1990s. The major question was whether it was a community of faith based on language and nationality or, primarily, a community based on faith. The Ingrians faced linguistic controversies at first, and therefore they chose the line that the Church was a community of faith, as articulated in the church order, based on the Bible in accordance with the Lutheran confession.¹⁷² The similarity in the religious situation in this sense between the Ingrian Church in Russia and the Missouri Synod in the USA was notable. The identity of both was built on the idea of a church as a community of faith.

The Ingrians felt that the Missourian proclamation and emphasis suited their Church very well and fuelled mutual sympathy, and that they and the Missouri Synod were quite close in terms of theology. This theological similarity was surprising, given the long distance between them and the fact that they had only just formed a connection with each other. They shared an understanding of the Bible and the Confessions. The only practical difference was the fact that Missouri was presidential and the Ingrian church was Episcopalian. Both of them very soon affirmed that there were no big differences in theological thinking because their understanding of the Bible, Confessions, ministry and ethical questions was very similar. There were some differences, however. For example, the Missourians did not always behave in the manner the Ingrians would have wanted. Scrutiny of Missourian theology reveals that they did not like Pietism very much, whereas it played a very important historical role that had an impact on Ingrian Lutheranism.¹⁷³

There were also some differences in how practical issues were handled, but they did not cause problems. There was occasional tension between the Ingrians and the Finnish

¹⁷⁰ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

¹⁷¹ Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011; Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

¹⁷² Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

¹⁷³ Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012. According to Walz, Montreal & Hofrenning (2003, 147), Richard Jensen *The Winning of the Midwest: Social and Political Conflict* (1971) and Paul Kleppner *The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850 to 1900* (1970), “in the nineteenth century, German Lutherans – the bulwark of what became the LCMS and what comprised much of the former LCA – subscribed to a ritualist model, while Scandinavian Lutherans – who form a foundation of today’s ELCA – were pietist in their value systems and politics.” Lagerquist (1999, 68) defines the Missouri Synod as “more Confessional than pietist”, whereas Hinlicky (2012, 289) describes the ELCA as “less doctrinal and more pietistic” than the LCMS. From this perspective, the ELCA might also have had some similarities with the ELCIR, even more than the LCMS. However Stricker (2000, 13) defined the LCMS as “conservative, strongly Biblical, confessionally Lutheran, highly liturgical and pietistic.” One could argue that the Missouri Synod was not essentially pietistic, and not completely highly liturgical.

Church due to its pastors' reactions. According to Pihkala, Missouriian missionary workers were better trained in cross-cultural understanding than many Finnish people, and more problems came up from the Finnish than from the Missouriian side in building up the Church. Some of the efforts of the Finns served the interests of the mission organizations more than the needs of the congregations.¹⁷⁴ On the other hand, there were more Finns than Missouriians helping the Ingrian Church, which naturally meant more mistakes.

Even though the Missouri Synod was one of its supporters, the Ingrian Church obtained most of its support from its Mother church. The Finnish Church had been showing its commitment to the Ingrians since the Brezhnev era, and especially during the perestroika, in every field of church work. Several Finnish organizations had connections with the Ingrian Church. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission was very actively working with it, and all over the former Soviet Union. Finn Church Aid's priority in particular was to offer help in areas near Finland, including Russia and the Baltic countries. Thus the Ingrian Church received support from Finn Church Aid. This aid was connected with the LWF work.¹⁷⁵

Finns were strong players in the Russian missionary field. Finn Church Aid's Executive Director Risto Lehtonen¹⁷⁶ recalled that a couple of Missouriian representatives visited his office in Finland in the early part of 1992. One of them was Allan R. Buckman, BFMS Director for World Areas, who was making his first visit to the former Soviet Union. The two men were interested in how the Finnish Church had supported the Ingrian and Estonian Churches and other Lutherans throughout the former Soviet territory. They said that they intended to start activities in the area. Lehtonen had reservations about them, however, based on when he worked for the Lutheran World Federation. There had been negative experiences concerning the way the Missouriians had ended their cooperation in Africa and also in the USA. However, when the Synod's representatives came to him he thought, "Why not?" and was willing to give them all the information he had.¹⁷⁷

Risto Lehtonen wanted clarification on two issues concerning the Missouri Synod's involvement in Russia. First he wanted some assurance that it would not stop the emerging Lutheranism of the Ingrian Church. It was enough that there were already two Lutheran Churches in Russia instead of one. *Vestigia terrent* - what the Missouriians had left behind them was worrying: they had a tendency to break up Lutheran relations. Second, he inquired whether the Missouriians realized the risk if they neglected to support the Ingrian Church, and what would result if it was seen to be very close to conservative Americans should the political situation turn unstable again. Any new anti-Americanism would

¹⁷⁴ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012; Luoma 2013, 54–55.

¹⁷⁵ Hassinen 1997, 109; Risto Lehtonen interview 17.3.2011.

¹⁷⁶ Lehtonen had significant experience in different international ecumenical organizations. He was General Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation from 1968 to 1972, worked for the Lutheran World Federation from 1973 to 1987, and was the first director of Finn Church Aid from 1988 to 1993. (Lehtonen 1998, xvi, xix; Luoma 2013, 22)

¹⁷⁷ RLA Buckman to Lehtonen 11.6.1998; SKA SFRV F10G:3 Lorenz Grönvik: Matkaraportti Pietarin matkasta 30.10.–3.11.1992; Risto Lehtonen interview 17.3.2011.

destroy it. However, according to Lehtonen, the Finns were ready to cooperate in openness and in dialogue.¹⁷⁸

As has become evident, the first Missourian contacts with the Ingrians were indirect and somewhat unofficial. At some point someone suggested that the relations should be formalized. The Ingrians were of the opinion that the Missourian work should be better led and organized.¹⁷⁹ Hence, it was the Ingrians who began to speak about more official and more clearly defined connections.

The LCMS Board for Mission Services also wanted to coordinate the Missourian efforts better. The BFMS had been active in the St. Petersburg area from early 1992, an area it selected because of its importance in earlier Lutheran history in Russia. According to the Russian Strategy Statement (draft version), the Missourians had quite a lot of contacts, which confirmed the importance of working in the area. Their list included the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland, Finnish mission societies, the Slavic Gospel Association in the US and Russia, and high officials of the Russian Orthodox Church, which was officially legalized after 1991.¹⁸⁰

It seems that the first official BFMS missionary in Russia was Dr. Thomas Sluberski, who must have been sent there before February 1992 because he was mentioned in the February issue of *Missionary to Missionary*. Dr. Sluberski had a part-time teaching post at St. Petersburg University. The first LCMS clergyman called by the BFMS to serve in Russia was Reverend Martin Frusti, in 1992. He and his family set up the first LCMS/BFMS office in St. Petersburg, and he also taught in Koltushi. He wrote: "I worked very closely with the clergy and laypeople of the re-emerging Lutheran Church in Russia for over two years." During his years in St. Petersburg he worked with Dr. James Dimitroff, who was the area director and the main facilitator, and had come to Russia as a Missionary Counselor. According to him, the decisions were made in St. Louis: "We simply fulfilled the Goals and objectives that were set into place by the Board of LCMS World Mission."¹⁸¹

Church planting and leadership training were the two priorities set out in the LCMS/BFMS mission strategy. The term "church planting" was controversial. Dr. Daniel Mattson did not support the strategy, and attempts to implement it would have encountered public opposition from existing Lutheran Churches and resulted in public

¹⁷⁸ Risto Lehtonen interview 17.3.2011. The official polity of the Finnish Church was to strengthen the independence of the Ingrian Church. Finns did not want to create interdependence, but they took the independent sovereign Ingrian Church seriously. (Cantell 1993, 6)

¹⁷⁹ Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011.

¹⁸⁰ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement Draft; ALCMS BFMS *Missionary to Missionary* July 1992; SKA SFRV F10G:2 Birgitta Handog: Rapport från Lutherska världsförbundets koordineringskonferens för samarbete med lutherska kyrkor i Baltikum och Ryssland, Vilnius den 20–25.2.1993. SKA SFRV F10G:2 Aarno Lahtinen, Sylvia Raulo: Raportti LML:n Baltian ja Venäjän luterilaisten kirkkojen koordinaatiokouksesta Vilnassa 20.–25.2.1993; Luukkanen 1997, 19.

¹⁸¹ ALCMS BFMS *Missionary to Missionary* Feb.1992; ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992-. Mattson to Görög 20.8.1992; SKA SFRV F10G:3 Lorenz Grönvik: Matkaraportti Pietarin matkasta 30.10.–3.11.1992; Jeffrey Thormodson interview 12.2.2011; Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; Leif Camp interview 10.6.2011; Martin Frusti email interview 12.2.2012; James Dimitroff email interview 20.3.2012.

disagreement among Lutherans, which in turn would have been used by the news media to discredit the Church. Mattson also met pastors and people in all of the Churches who were interested in spreading the faith among the unbelieving populations in their own lands. Thus there were opportunities in virtually every Eastern European country to work with people who knew their own culture and could communicate the faith better than missionaries from the outside ever would.¹⁸²

For the above reasons it seems that the term “church planting” was used in the Russian and Baltic contexts to mean working through existing Churches to plant congregations. Glenn O’Shoney, who was intent on expanding the mission, wrote: “But Eastern Europe and Russia are also places where the Holy Christian church is present. Our response is to strengthen and nourish existing Christians.”¹⁸³

A major part of the work of the Missourians was teaching the English language. Most of the volunteers in St. Petersburg taught English as a second language. Schools allowed missionaries to teach English, and sometimes also to teach the basics of Christianity. Missourians in many university cities enrolled to conduct Bible studies in English, and when contacts were made they asked for suitable persons to join the Bible groups. Language education took the Missourians to different places in Russia. The Ingrians referred to such methods as “very skillful”.¹⁸⁴

Missionaries came in various guises, as called-to-serve missionaries, career missionaries or volunteers, for example. The volunteer programs were important. For instance, in 1992 a volunteer ministry program needed people in Russia, the plan being to have 20 volunteers there by the summer. The BFMS had six missionaries in Russia in September 1992, two of them called and four volunteers.¹⁸⁵

There was some competition or lack of coordination between the ILLL and the BFMS. Reverend Wallace Schulz believed that a unified approach in which both organizations would complement one another’s efforts would be the most fruitful. Given that Russia was an entirely new field for both the LCMS and the ILLL, this was an unprecedented opportunity to work out a joint strategy for evangelistic work. In the fall of 1992 Allan Buckman and Daniel Mattson were working with members of the ILLL staff to develop a joint strategy for all work in Russia. The staff of both organizations eventually drew up a joint strategy statement. “We are co-workers in the former Soviet Union”, wrote O’Shoney at the end of the statement. It was especially important to work together because at the time Russia was “receiving a lot of attention”.¹⁸⁶

The draft version of the BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement states: “The goal of both organizations is the expansion of a self-supporting, self-propagating and self-

¹⁸² ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report: Eastern Europe.

¹⁸³ ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary March 1992; Leif Camp interview 10.6.2011.

¹⁸⁴ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement Draft; ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary Jan. 1992; Risto Lehtonen interview 17.3.2011; Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011.

¹⁸⁵ ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary April 1992 & June 1992 & Sep. 1992.

¹⁸⁶ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia March 30, 1992; ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary Sep. 1992 & Oct. 1992.

governing, multi-ethnic Lutheran church in the former USSR.” The following three basic principles are laid out:

- 1) They will work through Lutheran church structures where these exist and through appropriate mission structures where Lutheran churches do not exist.
- 2) In cooperation with the existing Lutheran churches, they will seek to register as a mission organization to simplify working with the existing Lutheran churches and to seek out new areas where Lutheran churches can be established.
- 3) They will seek out new believers who will be incorporated into Lutheran congregations and use their God-given talents in service to those congregations.¹⁸⁷

The draft version goes on to list five strategic goals. The first is to “Provide effective theological and practical training to develop church leaders who will expand and nurture the Lutheran Church in the former USSR.” Both organizations were aware that some efforts had been made by German and Finnish communities in Russia to provide theological education programs for Church leaders. They had no desire, according to the Statement, to weaken or displace those programs, but only wished to strengthen them. This first goal was to be achieved in four ways via Luther Houses: responding to immediate needs, offering higher-education programs for church leaders, offering them distance-education programs, and publishing and disseminating literature. In other words, the BFMS and the LLL intended to establish Lutheran resource centers with the basic facilities, equipment and materials required to support the work being done in the area. The aim of the higher-education programs is defined as to design and implement “a program that is Confessionally and educationally sound and culturally respectable.”¹⁸⁸

The second goal is to “Develop and implement an evangelistic outreach ministry that will result in the growth of existing congregations and planting of new congregations.” Here the “planting of new congregations” replaces the disputable term “planting churches”. The third goal emphasizes working in cooperation with Russian ecclesiastical leaders and “providing materials and developing programs that will strengthen the nurture programs of the Lutheran communities and enable them to expand their worship and Christian education ministries.”¹⁸⁹

The fourth goal refers to meeting “the social and physical needs of the people of the former USSR”, to be achieved “through programs coordinated with evangelistic outreach ministries, so that the Lutheran church provides a strong and positive Christian witness in word and deeds.” The fifth and last goal is to “Develop both the human and financial resources needed to enable an effective, responsive ministry to the people of the former

¹⁸⁷ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement Draft.

¹⁸⁸ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement Draft.

¹⁸⁹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement Draft.

USSR.” The strategy was to use volunteers wherever possible, to exploit the mass media, and to establish Luther Houses.¹⁹⁰

Hopes were high at first that Russian Lutherans of German and Finnish origin would unite. The Russian Strategy Statement describes the situation as follows: “Of particular importance is the fact that the ethnic differences that kept Finnish and Germans separated are apparently being overcome in the creation of one Lutheran community.”¹⁹¹

Personal relations were very important when cooperating with Russian Lutherans. As the Missourians noted, working in Russia, and in all of Eastern Europe, demanded close personal relationships. This was assumed to be a product of Communism, which had made people very cautious around those they did not know.¹⁹²

The Missouri Synod was not the only American Lutheran Church at work in Russia. The Wisconsin Synod had been active there, but had faced difficulties, because the Russian authorities prevented its registration, apparently because it lacked connections with the Lutheran Churches in Russia.¹⁹³ Clearly, operating on Russian soil was not always easy and never self-evident. Having connections with existing Lutheran Churches was decisive.

The self-understanding of the Missourians was that their theological position was respected and valued. The statement emphasized confessional integrity as one important factor with regard to working in Russia. The Lutheran Church in Russia, not specifically defined, was generally considered conservative in doctrine and practice, thus the Missouri Synod had encountered little difficulty in working with it. There were also other actors, however, namely Finnish and German Lutheran mission societies, concerned about the fate of their Lutheran brothers and sisters in Russia. The Missouri Synod thus could not expect to be the only mission group cooperating with the Lutheran Churches there.¹⁹⁴

The Statement covers another two important points. First, assistance to the churches should be tailored in such a way that it does not make the Church dependent on outside resources in the long run. Second, the most important task for the two organizations, the BFMS and the ILLL, was to carry out evangelistic work among groups that had remained almost entirely unreached, and this should be done alongside existing Lutheran congregations.¹⁹⁵

In the fall of 1992, as it was starting actively to establish contacts with Eastern European Lutherans, the Missouri Synod apparently moved towards conservatism in its leadership. Alvin Barry replaced President Ralph Bohlmann, who was president for 11 years from 1981 to 1992. Although *The Lutheran*, the official publication of the ELCA, defined Bohlmann as a moderate, he would have been labeled a conservative in the ELCA. However, the newly elected President Barry was described as a conservative even

¹⁹⁰ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement Draft.

¹⁹¹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement Draft.

¹⁹² ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement Draft.

¹⁹³ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement Draft.

¹⁹⁴ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement Draft.

¹⁹⁵ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement Draft.

in the LCMS. Before his election Barry had raised questions about worship at meetings with ELCA bishops, and had affirmed LCMS opposition to women's ordination. In the words of Mary Todd (2003, 38), since the schism in the 1970s, but especially since 1992, the Missouri Synod had "shown evidence of fundamentalism and sectarianism."¹⁹⁶ Barry's and the synod's "new" conservatism was probably divisive among their Eastern European counterparts, at least to some degree. Work with the ELCROS in Russia might have further decreased because of the different theological lines.

There were many factors motivating the LCMS to do mission work in Russia and Eastern Europe. One was its passion to support Confessional Lutheranism. "If the LCMS is serious about the spread of Confessional Lutheran theology in the world, it will be a tragic mistake if it abandons its interest in Central and Eastern Europe", wrote Dr. Mattson. There was a kind of race between the Lutheran World Federation block and the Missouri Synod for who could spread their own interpretation of Lutheran theology to Eastern European Lutherans more effectively. Perhaps surprisingly, the Missourians found out during their years in contact with Eastern European Lutherans that they were somewhat closer in theology to Missouri than to the European Churches of the Lutheran World Federation.¹⁹⁷

Another motivating factor was the desire to return to one's roots. Europe was never mentally very far away from the Missourians of German origin, and it was quite natural for them to be more active in Europe. As Glenn O'Shoney wrote: "I suppose it's easy to understand why Eastern Europe is so appealing to our people. That's our roots!"¹⁹⁸

In conclusion, connections between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church were established and developed between 1991 and 1992. The first mission work in 1991 was carried out through Missourian auxiliary organizations. The LLL focused more on German Lutherans in Russia and the ILWML worked with the CLCF to reach Russian Lutherans, including Ingrians. Official and direct LCMS mission work in Russia began through the BFMS in 1992.

2.1.2 An expanding mission and an internationally active new bishop

The Missouri Synod's mission work in Russia expanded further in 1993 and 1994. This rather fast growth was noticed in many other churches and also in the Lutheran World Federation. The Synod did not focus exclusively on the Ingrian church, and still had Lutherans of German origin on its agenda. It seems that the Ingrian church gained more and more recognition during this period, and the undefined notion of "Lutherans in Russia"

¹⁹⁶ Lutheran 66/Sep. 1992 Changing Lutheran landscape, editorial; Brug 2010, 28; RAB 1998; ALB 2001; Todd 2000, 243, 278; Schmidt 2003, 190; Todd 2003, 34, 38. However Brug (2010, 28) sees that "no real changes take place" in the LCMS even when the conservative side wins the electoral balance. Kieschnick (2009, 9) defines: "In reality the president of our church body is a theological advisor and ecclesiastical supervisor."

¹⁹⁷ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report: Eastern Europe.

¹⁹⁸ ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary March 1992.

was becoming more specific in the Missourian mindset. The Ingrians also had some initial difficulties identifying all the foreigners with whom they were in contact: it was hard to know whether they were working for the Missouri Synod or if they were they just other English-speaking people.¹⁹⁹

The rapid growth of the mission work in Russia and Eastern Europe raised questions among some LCMS missionaries. The expansion was so fast that it was often necessary to assure the missionaries that it was not at the expense of the work in any other of the Missouri Synods fields. Glenn O’Shoney made it clear, for example, that the Missouri Synod was in Russia only because a generous donor funded the work, specifying that the money was only for their work among Russian-speaking people. O’Shoney realized the dangers with this kind of funding in terms of what would happen when the funds dried up, but on the other hand without such donations the LCMS would not have had the resources to fund their ministry in a number of places.²⁰⁰

One should consider the numbers of missionaries the Missouri Synod had in 1993 to put the missionary activity in Russia into some kind of perspective. According to *Missionary to Missionary*, in March 1993 there were 26 volunteers in Japan, 12 in Taiwan, eight in Slovakia and seven in Russia. As mentioned, mission work in Russia was expanding and, according to the plans, in the fall of 1993 there could be as many as 27 workers there, most of them volunteers. The Missourians still used the successful method of teaching the English language. As stated in the newsletter: “Russia is a country that lends itself well to the use of volunteers (teaching English as a second language).”²⁰¹

Relations between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church had not developed on the structural level: they were still getting to know each other. According to Aarre Kuukauppi, the Missourians had been doing some sort of observation work for a couple of years. They had sent some pastors, but the Ingrians did not know them well. One of them was Raymond Hartwick, who was sent to Russia in 1993 to evaluate the state of the Ingrian Church, what it was and whether it was seriously willing to build a Lutheran theology and a Lutheran church. Kuukauppi felt that Hartwick had quite a positive picture of the Ingrian Church, and his report on it facilitated the reaching of a mutual understanding.²⁰²

Another important aspect was how the leaders of the churches saw the cooperation, especially at the stage of unstructured connections. The leadership of the Ingrian Church became established, and on May 23, 1993 the Estonian Bishop Kuno Pajula inaugurated

¹⁹⁹ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

²⁰⁰ ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary March 1992 & May 1993.

²⁰¹ ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary March 1993 & April 1993; ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 FINLAND 1991 Risto Cantell: Raportti neuvottelumatkasta Pietariin 6.–9.1.1993. There were many career missionaries in Russia in 1993, sent by the BFMS. Missionary to Missionary (Dec. 1993) listed those who had been called or appointed since 1990. Those serving in Russia were Thomas Sluberski, Martin & Karen Frusti, Amy Hartwig, Ted & Helga Kuster, Jim & Christiana Dimitroff, Tim Geiger, Michael & Valerie Murphy, Morris & Jean Olson and John & Susan Mehl. (Missionary to Missionary Dec. 1993). Jim Dimitroff wrote: “With 50 new volunteers earmarked for 1995–96, Russia could easily become the largest LCMS mission field since the 1940’s.” (ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary Dec. 1994)

²⁰² Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011.

the Finnish Pastor Leino Hassinen as Bishop in Keltto church. Johanna Rajala (2009) concludes that Leino Hassinen's role in relation to the Finnish Church changed when he became bishop. As a bishop he was responsible only to the Ingrian Church, and could define his own policy. One thing he did in this new role was to seek close cooperation with the Missouri Synod. The Ingrian Church was a young church, and it was significant that Bishop Hassinen, an outsider from Finland, was elected bishop. Hassinen, as the church's first bishop after the years of oppression, was considered an excellent choice because the local pastors did not have a tradition of churchmanship.²⁰³

Bishop Hassinen's policy was to connect the Ingrian Church internationally, so that the turmoil in Russian society would be easier to cope with if things turned unfavorable. Hassinen welcomed connections with both LWF and non-LWF churches. The decision was made at the meeting of the church synod in March 1993, which unanimously chose Hassinen as bishop, to apply for membership of the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches, and the Conference of European Churches.²⁰⁴

The policy Bishop Hassinen adopted was very important to all his Ingrian counterparts: leadership has a great impact on the decisions taken in such a small church. Given the relationship between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church it was essential for Bishop Hassinen to establish positive relations with the Missourians. The Synod's rapid start in Eastern European and its Russian work had earned the respect of Ingrians and of Leino Hassinen. Hassinen was well aware of the strict conservative interpretation of faith in the Missouri Synod.²⁰⁵

The first major official meeting between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church was arranged when Barry and Hassinen had both become the "primus inter pares" of their respective churches. The Missouri Synod held a festive banquet for the leaders of the Ingrian Church in St. Petersburg on June 11, 1993, less than one month after the inauguration of Bishop Hassinen. The guests from the Missourian side included President Alvin Barry, the European, Asian and African area coordinators, treasurers and so on, and all employees stationed in Russia (about 20 people). The highest leadership of the Missouri Synod was on a tour in Russia, visiting many university cities, for instance. The Ingrian side had about half a dozen representatives, including Aarre Kuukauppi, Arvo Survo, Sergej Preiman, Isto Pihkala and Bishop Leino Hassinen.²⁰⁶

Despite the new official level of its relations with the Ingrians, the Missouri Synod was also in contact with ELCROS, in this case on the day after meeting the Ingrians on June 12, 1993. The Missourians had not yet chosen their church of priority in Russia. They made the same promises to the German Church and the Ingrians, provoking President Barry to accuse the Synod in his meeting with ELCROS representatives Dr. Georg Kretschmar, a deputy of Bishop Kalnins, and Frank Lutichius in St. Petersburg of having

²⁰³ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Russia 12.6.1993; Pihkala & Kivioja 1998, 9; Kahle 2002, 167; Rajala 2009, 66, 101; Luoma 2013, 95. The church government and the bishop were selected by the church synod. (Sihvo 2000, 353)

²⁰⁴ Ylönen 1997, 113; Luoma 2013, 95.

²⁰⁵ Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011.

²⁰⁶ Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011.

no intention of establishing LCMS congregations in Russia, and of being intent on cooperating with existing congregations.²⁰⁷

In the meeting Dr. Kretschmar emphasized the need for one body of literature to serve as a unifying force among Russian Lutherans. He also mentioned the need for a commission to organize translation work, a process in which the LCMS could be of service in terms of gathering information and helping Germans and Finns to work together. Stressing the need for some kind of structure to organize and promote translation work, Dr. Kretschmar suggested that the American missionaries could perhaps play a leading role so that it would not appear that one ethnic community was attempting to dominate another. He did this because German, Finnish and other Lutheran communities were involved, and there were apparently some tensions among them.²⁰⁸

The Missouri Synod was not working exclusively with the Ingrians in Russia, and neither was the Ingrian Church connecting only with the Missourians. Bishop Hassinen had close connections with the Lutheran World Federation. He was so concerned that the Ingrians should not remain alone that he encouraged the establishment of connections with the LWF, the LCMS and the CEC. Hassinen hoped that if there was a counter-revolution in Russia, the international cooperation partners could defend and protect the Ingrian Church in potentially difficult situations. Bishop Hassinen wanted to accomplish this international integration before he left office. The aim was to make the Ingrian Church part of a bigger entirety.²⁰⁹

Fears increased that the recently opened door to Russia would again be closed to Christian missionary activity when Russian legislators voted to ban foreign missionaries from proselytizing on Russian soil. The measure required the approval of President Boris Yeltsin (president, 1991–1999), however, before becoming law, which he had not yet given. The apparent reason for this was that Russia was not stable and its leaders were trying to find ways of creating stability in this vast country. Many religions and many churches came to the region when the doors opened. There were many fanatics and many cults, and also some alleged foreign influence through religious groups. Russian leaders looked for a way to prevent the problems arising from the new and to some degree chaotic religious situation.²¹⁰

The Lutheran World Federation also reacted. Responding to the Russian Lutherans' need for international backup, the LWF General Secretary Gunnar Stålsett sent a letter to President Yeltsin in July 1993. Stålsett was worried about the amendments to the law on the Freedom of Belief adopted by the Supreme Soviet on July 14. He was particularly concerned about the fact that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States, the LWF member church, had not been among the religious institutions invited to discuss the proposed amendments to the law prior to their adoption. Stålsett requested that the

²⁰⁷ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Russia 12.6.1993; SKA SFRV F10G:3 Lorenz Grönvik: Matkaraportti Pietarin matkasta 30.10.–3.11.1992. Professor Dr. Georg Kretschmar was elected deputy bishop in 1991, leading bishop in 1994 and archbishop in 1999. (Stricker 2004, 256)

²⁰⁸ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Russia 12.6.1993.

²⁰⁹ Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011.

²¹⁰ ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary Aug. 1993; Luukkanen 2001, 13.

amendments adopted by the Supreme Soviet not be signed into law at this time.²¹¹ This was an example of how the worldwide organizations could defend Russian Lutherans.

What is also interesting is the fact that the letter from Stålsett to President Yeltsin was sent as a copy to Dr. Allan R. Buckman, Director for World Areas, Board for World Mission Services of the Missouri Synod, along with the comment, “This provides you with the position taken by the Lutheran World Federation.”²¹² The Missouri Synod was considered a worthy counterpart to be informed about the developments and the positions adopted by the federation.

In this legislatively and societally unclear situation Bishop Hassinen warmly welcomed a non-LWF church, namely the Missouri Synod, to Russia to cooperate with the Ingrian Church. Missourian work continued and expanded in many ways. There was geographical expansion in Russia when the connections with the capital of the nation were established. The mission field expanded to Moscow in August 1993 when four teachers of English as a second language and a coordinator began working there. The career missionary Reverend John Mehl and his family also moved to Moscow in January 1994. Mehl had served in Russia since 1993. In addition, Dr. Robert Kolb started going to places in the former Soviet Empire in 1994. He usually attended short seminars, such as the first three-day Moscow Pastor/Deacon Seminar in September 1994 at which Dr. Kolb was the lecturer.²¹³

Publishing activity was increasing and it was among the most essential working methods. Luther’s Small Catechism was in its third print run in late 1993, all 20,000 copies of the second run having been sold. O’Shoney argued that this catechism was, without question, the most significant religious book in Russia to date. Reverend Martin Frusti was instrumental in publishing the first hymnbook, and by the end of 1994 the Missourians had published 10,000 books for Ingrian congregations. It made things easier in the church services.²¹⁴

The connection between the Missouri Synod and the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland was close, and publishing and distributing work was done in cooperation. The president of the CLCF Markku Särelä was awarded an honorary doctorate at the Concordia Theological Seminary Ft. Wayne (CTS) in recognition of his leading role in translating Luther’s Catechism into Russian.²¹⁵ Thus, the work done in Eastern Europe brought the LCMS and the CLCF into close contact.

The Missouri Synod also worked with other partners on publishing materials for Russian Lutherans. The Concordia Publishing House (CPH), the official publishing arm of the LCMS that was founded in 1869, was a strong partner in the publishing of Lutheran material, for example, and was co-operating closely with the BFMS in mid-1994. The

²¹¹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Stålsett to Yeltsin 28.7.1993.

²¹² ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Noko to Buckman 5.8.1993.

²¹³ AJT Draft 2005, 90–91; Robert Kolb interview 11.2.2011; Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; John Mehl email interview 19.2.2012; CSL Faculty Kolb 2014.

²¹⁴ ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary Dec. 1993; Leif Camp interview 10.6.2011; Rajala 2009, 90.

²¹⁵ ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary June 1994.

CPH assisted in the development of Russian resource materials such as for Sunday Schools (65,000 leaflets), mentioned as the first to be published in Russian, and in the translation of Edward W. A. Koehler's *Summary of Christian Doctrine* into Russian. Koehler's book was to become the primary systematic LCMS text for the seminary of the Ingrian Lutheran Church in Russia.²¹⁶

The fast missionary expansion brought a few challenges. It was not easy to control or even to know all the LCMS missionaries. The official ones were sent through the BFMS, but others came via other organizations and congregations. O'Shoney wrote revealingly in December 1993: "We know there are many LCMS people who have served in missionary positions, but who were not sent through the BFMS. We would like to identify these people, if possible."²¹⁷

The Missouri Synod also found it difficult to identify its own representatives, especially at first. There were many levels of involvement throughout the former Soviet Union. As Dr. Mattson pointed out, all the following actors were acting, largely unintentionally, as spokespeople for the Synod and making various promises: the Lutheran Laymen's League, the Orphan Grain Train²¹⁸, the Lutheran Heritage Foundation, the Missouri Synod seminaries and any number of individual congregations, pastors, and so on.²¹⁹ There was a lot of enthusiasm for the work done in Russia, but the field was too crowded and there was a lack of coordination.

In an attempt to resolve the coordination problems A. L. Barry, the President of the Missouri Synod, took a stronger role in its Eastern European work. He invited representatives of a number of different entities in the Synod that were involved in exploiting opportunities in the lands of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, to meet with him at the International Centre in St. Louis. As he explained in *The Reporter* (4/1994), "I had sensed a need to coordinate our efforts and make the best possible use of our resources as we address the challenges which we face in these lands." At the meeting were representatives from the International Lutheran Laymen's League, the LCMS Board for Mission Services, the International Lutheran Women's Missionary League, the Concordia Missionary Society, and Concordia Publishing House, as well as two district presidents. For about two days, together with President Barry, they addressed common

²¹⁶ ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary Dec. 1993 & Sep. 1994; History of CPH 2013.

²¹⁷ Missionary to Missionary Dec. 1993. Finnish mission organizations had similar problems in coordinating efforts in Russia, as Antti Luoma (2013, 68–69) points out.

²¹⁸ The Orphan Grain Train, established in 1992, is a volunteer network helping people around the world. The first shipment was brought to Riga, Latvia, in 1993. (OGT 2014)

²¹⁹ ADM Daniel Mattson: Beginnings of LCMS Mission Work in Russia. I would argue that the lack of coordination in the mission work was part of a larger question in the Missouri Synod, namely the question of what it was. Was it "a voluntary association (federation) of autonomous (self-governing) congregations", or was the idea "that a congregation, in associating itself with other autonomous congregations, agrees to limit the exercise of its autonomy and to participate in common objectives, policies, and procedures of the association (Synod)." (Sueflow 1998, 170–171)

concerns and interests on the matter of outreach to Russia and Eastern Europe. The meeting was referred to as a “Russian Think Tank”.²²⁰

All in all, President Barry was happy “that throughout our Synod there was an increasing interest in reaching out to the lands of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.” He perceived “a real heart-tie” to these countries, which had suffered under Communist persecution, and planned to visit Eastern Europe in the summer of 1994. The purpose of the trip was twofold. He wanted to become better acquainted with partner churches in Europe and to strengthen the relationships with a number of churches in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union on the one hand, and to offer encouragement to the many smaller church bodies in Eastern Europe on the other. Barry added, “I would like to ask all church workers and all parishes to be alert for persons who have an interest in serving in Russia or other countries which were formerly part of the Soviet Union.” He mentioned language skills and knowledge of the situation in the area as assets.²²¹ He seemed to have been personally interested in developing the mission fields and relations with churches in the former USSR. It seems that one of the reasons why Missourians wanted to do mission work in the former Soviet Union area related to anti-communism: they wanted to help people who had suffered under Communism. The desire to offer encouragement or moral support to these small churches was also strong.

Things advanced quite rapidly when Bishop Leino Hassinen tried to link the Ingrian church with all Lutherans abroad. Plans were made at the third meeting of the Ingrian Church assembly on October 7–8, 1994 in Kupanitsa to develop international relations through the Conference of European Churches and the Lutheran World Federation, and also to make a collaboration agreement with the Missouri Synod. The common aim of Bishop Hassinen and the Ingrian church was for the church to join the LWF, and at the same time maintain good relations with the Missouri Synod. Hassinen agreed that it was not very logical in some ways, but it gave the Missourians a kick start. They were soon on Russian soil, with a clear strategy of how to act and a good analytical grasp of the situation.²²²

By the decision of the Council of the Lutheran World Federation in July 1994, the Ingrian church was received as a full member in the communion of LWF member churches. Bishop Leino Hassinen referred to the LWF as the most natural church federation for the Ingrians. It had supported Ingrian Lutherans as the church was growing, even though it was not among its members. Annual meetings with the LWF gave a natural opportunity for communication. The participants included the leadership of the LWF’s Baltic and Russian Lutheran churches and representatives of the churches that supported them, namely the Finnish and some other Nordic churches, German churches, and ELCA and the Missouri Synod. The meetings dealt with the issue of work opportunities in the

²²⁰ Barry 1994, 5. See Kieschnick’s critique concerning the lack of coordination in the mission Kieschnick 2009, 114.

²²¹ Barry 1994, 6.

²²² Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011; Rajala 2009, 77.

Baltics and Russia. In Hassinen's view they were a good training ground for living in harmony with other churches.²²³

The Ingrian Church also cooperated with America's largest Lutheran denomination, namely the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In fact, Ingrians were active in making connections with ELCA. For example, in October 1994 the board of the Ingrian Church proposed to the ELCA Council that they establish relations of friendship. Bishop Leino Hassinen, Leading Pastor (appointed in 1993) Aarre Kuukauppi and Secretary General Isto Pihkala signed the proposal. The Ingrians wrote: "As a destitute church we urgently hope that ELCA would aid us in our witnessing task now that it has become possible after a long communist rule in this vast country". Interestingly the proposal made no mention of the support the Missouri Synod was giving, but did point out the substantial aid given by the Finnish Church.²²⁴ Obviously the leaders of the Ingrian Church were well aware of the complex relations between the two largest Lutheran churches in America. It would not have been strategically wise to emphasize its cooperation with the Missouri Synod.

All in all, developments in Russian law were among the main reasons why the Missourians wanted to establish more structured relations with the Ingrian Church. For example, at the beginning of December in 1994 the LCMS Board of Directors had to ratify the previous actions of the BFMS in establishing corporations in Russia and Kazakhstan. The BFMS had found it necessary, for the purpose of gaining entry into and operating in certain countries, to establish legal entities (usually corporations) when it sought to open mission fields. Without such entities the LCMS could have incurred legal liability resulting from its activities. Furthermore, in 1994, the Missouri Synod suggested to the ELCIR consistory that they make their relationship official. Leino Hassinen, the chairperson of the consistory, was delighted with the attitude of the Missouri Synod and with the fact that it was not establishing its own church in Russia but rather wanted to cooperate. Hassinen called this "great wisdom" from the Missourian side.²²⁵

In the background were two theological issues that facilitated a closer connection between the Missourians and the Ingrians. First, the question of women's ministry was somewhat difficult for the Ingrians, but given their weak situation any disruptive doctrinal discussions on the subject were not welcome. The whole Ingrian church was vulnerable on so many levels that Bishop Hassinen encouraged Finnish women pastors not to act very publicly when visiting Ingrians. Lay preacher Maria Kajava (1908–2000) encapsulated the thinking in saying that women took care of the pastors' duty in difficult circumstances and now it would be the time for men to do it.²²⁶ It could be stated that the Ingrian Church

²²³ IKA LWF/MERJA Agneta Ucko to ELCIR 30.1.2001; Hassinen 1997, 112; Ylönen 1997, 113.

²²⁴ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 ELCIR to ELCA 27.10.1994; Pihkala 2002, 73; Noll 2003, 14.

²²⁵ ALCMS Foreign Entities Incorporation of I-58 1994 LCMS Chief Administrative Officer, 1972–1998; Rajala 2009, 85.

²²⁶ Arkkila 2002, 41–43; Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011; Väliaho 2004, 53–54; Santti 2008, 198–203; Luoma 2013 34. According to Hassinen, Kajava said: "Myö hoijettiin paimentehtävää vaikeissa oloissa. Hoitakaa työ miehet nyt."

handled the question of women's ordination in such a way that it did not scare the Missourians away.

Second, the need for full altar fellowship was one of the reasons for developing closer and more official contacts. According to Kuukauppi, the 1980s practice of open communion suited the Ingrians well. There were few pastors, only one for many years, and not many communicants. Anyone who confessed to being a follower of Jesus was accepted for communion. The question of Holy Communion came up at the beginning of the 1990s, however, when there was more theological training in the Ingrian Church. There was clarification of what communion was: connection among believers not just a sign of love. Sometimes there were services when the Ingrians were open about their practice of taking communion, but the Missourians, who had stricter ideas and practices, were not necessarily open to accepting some of them. They perceived the holy supper as a communion of believers and not a communion of love, as the Ingrians first thought. At this point the Ingrians stopped to think: what would it take to make the relationship deeper. The Missourians referred to the requirement of their constitution for initial doctrinal discussions, and if a mutual doctrinal understanding were reached then it would be possible to sign an agreement and then initiate full fellowship.²²⁷

2.1.3 The first fellowship talks in St. Petersburg

After a few years of mutual connections the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church were ready to discuss moving on to the next level. The first fellowship talks between the ELCIR and the LCMS were held between 30 March and 1 April 1995 in St. Petersburg. The meetings covered many doctrinal and practical questions that could have caused problems.²²⁸

Bishop Hassinen, at least at first, led the cooperation negotiations with the Missouri Synod and gained the trust of its representatives. The Missouri Synod delegation comprised A. Buckman, R. Hartfield, R. Hartwig, D. Mattson and F. Schielke, and the Ingrian delegation included L. Hassinen, A. Kuukauppi, R. Lehtonen, I. Pihkala, S. Preiman and A. Survo. Bishop Hassinen invited Risto Lehtonen to these bilateral discussions because of his strong international experience. Even though the President of the Missouri Synod, Dr. Barry, was not present, District President Hartfield mentioned that Barry had an interest in the discussions and his prayers were that they would bring the two Churches together. It was agreed that the meeting would not involve real negotiations, but that its purpose was to exchange information and news.²²⁹

Reverend Hartwig outlined the areas in which the Missouri Synod wished to learn more about the Ingrian Church, basing his comments on President Barry's memorandum to the delegation:

²²⁷ Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011.

²²⁸ AJT Draft 2005, 91; LCMS ICA CTCR FILES Joint Statement of Agreement Introduction Oct. 15 1997.

²²⁹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR, 31 March 1995; Risto Lehtonen interview 17.3.2011; Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; Rajala 2009, 101.

- a) The history and structure of the ELCIR;
- b) The theological position of the ELCIR;
- c) The ELCIR's relationship with other church bodies and the LWF;
- d) The ELCIR's understanding of and commitment to the Porvoo Common Statement;
- e) The ELCIR's relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland; and
- f) The ELCIR's hopes for and expectations of fellowship with the LCMS.²³⁰

The Synod's representatives were particularly interested in the history and structure of the Ingrian Church and its theology and connections with other Churches or church confederations, such as the Lutheran World Federation and the Finnish Church. The Missourians were also interested in the commitment of Ingrians to the Porvoo Statement²³¹. Regarding the ecumenical situation, the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches and the Anglican Church in Great Britain had quite recently concluded a major agreement, the Porvoo Common Statement of 1992. The question was still relevant, however, because the signing process extended throughout the mid-1990s and was still open, especially since the Ingrian Church was (and still is) not party to the Porvoo Agreement. There were two reasons why the Ingrians did not sign the agreement: Bishop Kuukauppi said he did not have time to attend every meeting, and the Ingrians did not think it necessary to cooperate with the Anglicans. Of relevance, too, was the fact that the agreement was widely criticized by confessional Lutherans, including the Missouri Synod.²³²

²³⁰ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR 31 March 1995.

²³¹ Gassman (2001 i, 271), on the Porvoo Agreement: "Agreement between Anglican and Lutheran churches in northern Europe on full church fellowship. From 1989–1992 a bilateral dialogue was conducted by the four Anglican churches of Great Britain and Ireland and the eight Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches. The conversations led to agreement on the fundamental controversial issues of bishops in apostolic succession. In the concluding *Porvoo Common Statement* of 1992 (Porvoo is the town in Finland where the statement was finalized), mutual recognition and acceptance of the participating churches is expressed and full communion between them is declared. This new relationship would include full sacramental fellowship, exchange of ministries, common witness in present-day Europe, joint congregations in foreign lands, and many other forms of exchange and cooperation. The four Anglican churches and six (Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden) of eight Lutheran churches have accepted the statement and celebrated the agreement in 1996. It does not change the confessional identity of the churches, but it does bring the majority of Christians in northern Europe into this form of Christian unity. Many regard the statement as one of the few most important ecumenical events in the last decade of the 20th century."

²³² Tomi Karttunen interview 9.3.2012; Harding Meyer 1997, 269–270; Heiene 2005, 137; Stålsett 2005, x; Rajala 2009, 85. See the Missouri Synod's critique (LCMS Porvoo 1999) *The Porvoo Statement and Declaration in Confessional Lutheran Perspective* (1999). It (LCMS Porvoo 1999, 10, 26) states: "On the 7-point fellowship scale devised by the Faith and Order Conference (Lund, 1952), and ranging from 1. Full Communion to 7. Closed Communion, the Porvoo arrangement rates a full 1." In sum, the Missouri Synod's critique is that visible unity had become the most important thing for the Churches involved in the Porvoo Statement, and that doctrinal differences were put aside.

Bishop Leino Hassinen and Dr. Risto Lehtonen presented the areas of interest of the Ingrian Church. They explained that the Churches in Russia presented new, unrestricted opportunities for work, and that those outside Russia could also play a role, which could be a blessing but could also have the potential to create its own kind of chaos.²³³ The emerging Ingrian Church highly appreciated stability, and recognized that the Missouri Synod had a history of trouble making: it represented an opportunity, but was also a potential threat.

The questions the Ingrian Church wished to address to the Missouri Synod were as follows:

- 1) Is the LCMS ready for open coordination with the ELCIR in view of differences in the doctrinal and ecclesiological base of the two churches?
- 2) How free is the LCMS to cooperate on the basis of its own constitution and respecting the constitution of the ELCIR? Are the positions of the two churches sufficiently close to one another?
- 3) What about altar and pulpit fellowship? Is this possible for two churches with such widely differing histories and concerns?
- 4) The implications of membership of the Ingrian Church in the Lutheran World Federation and the Conference of European Churches. The Ingrian church has also applied for membership in the World Council of Churches.
- 5) The Implications of close ties with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and ongoing relationships with other Nordic Lutheran Churches and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- 6) Would the LCMS be ready for joint, integrated programs for the training of church workers, relying on indigenous leadership, and would it be ready to work exclusively through its partners?
- 7) Would it be willing to commit itself to a joint support strategy with other Lutheran supporters in its cooperation with Lutherans in Russia?
- 8) There is some concern based on the ELCIR's understanding of LCMS history that closer relationships with the LCMS might put pressure on it to break its

²³³ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999. Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR 31 March 1995.

traditional ties. Is the LCMS committed to triumphalist views, or is it prepared to work together in partnership with others?²³⁴

The last question expresses some doubts about the Missouri Synod. There may have been some Finnish influence here. There is implied suspicion that the Synod was not ready to be a responsible partner, or to be tolerant enough in its doctrine and practice, and thus to be a real partner with the ELCIR.

The meeting continued with the Ingrians describing the situation of their Church. They also defined their policy on moral issues such as abortion and divorce. There were comments on ethical questions such as that the Ingrian Church had not taken many theological stands in writing. It had no statement on abortion, for example, even though its pastors were against readily available abortions. Commitment to Lutheranism and to the Bible was emphasized. It was made clear that there were no women pastors in the Ingrian Church, and that the situation was not going to change. Under the leadership of Bishop Hassinen the Ingrians challenged the Missourians with difficult questions. Could there be altar and pulpit fellowship between Ingrians and Missourians? What kind of doctrinal differences were there between the two Churches? How would Ingrian connections with the LWF and the CEC affect possible cooperation with the Missourians? Was the Missouri Synod intent on domination or was it ready to work in cooperation with the Ingrians as partners? Hassinen put pressure on the Missourians about creating a new Church in Russia, and offered them an opportunity to work inside the Ingrian Church.²³⁵

It is clear from the minutes of the meeting that the Ingrian Church regarded itself as a conservative body in which the Scriptures had to judge the doctrine and the practice. The article of the ELCIR constitution on the Confession of the Church affirmed the fundamental authority of the Bible on the matter of Christian faith.²³⁶ Naturally this strict interpretation was a bridge-building factor, but it still highlighted the fact that the Ingrian Church really was conservative and Bible oriented, which was the case before contact with the Missouri Synod intensified. This is a fact that should have been known more widely: the overall conservatism of the Ingrian Church was not attributable to Missourian input, but was rather one of the reasons for getting into contact with the Missourians in the first place.

The stand of the Ingrian Church on Holy Communion was explained to the Missourian representatives: manifest and impenitent sinners were not allowed to take communion. Nevertheless, the Church recognized that neither pastors nor laypeople could be expected to be perfect. The question of communion was extremely relevant because the Missouri

²³⁴ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR 31 March 1995. According to Braun (2003, 52–53), the rapid growth of the Missouri Synod during the 19th and 20th centuries produced “what some observers called an extraordinary synodical *esprit de corps* and others labeled “triumphalism”.”

²³⁵ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR 31 March 1995; Rajala 2009, 86.

²³⁶ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR 31 March 1995.

Synod was known in Lutheran circles for practising closed communion²³⁷. Interestingly, some Ingrian pastors had begun to see the Missouri Synod's strictness in a very positive light: some Finns followed communion practices that were perceived as far too open in the Russian context, allowing Orthodox Christians and non-believers to take part, for example.²³⁸

Consequently, the discussion turned to communion practice. According to the minutes of the meeting:

The LCMS practices "close communion", i.e., only Lutherans who agree in doctrine and practice attend Holy Communion in LCMS churches. However, the LCMS recognizes that matters are not always so clear, and so pastors are allowed to exercise a certain amount of discretion.

In the ELCIR, the problems are aggravated by the fact that here is no standardized training for church membership in the ELCIR. Therefore, not everyone is given adequate confirmation instruction. The church recognizes that it is important that people be better prepared, but it takes time for people to grow in understanding and maturity.²³⁹

It was also noted that the Ingrian Church was not showing any kind of doctrinal indifference. It was trying to deal with people who were "young in the faith", and therefore explained the meaning of communion every time the sacrament was celebrated. A further assumption was that it "wants to open the gates of love, but not at the expense of the church's doctrine".²⁴⁰ The Missourian understanding of the communion could, at this point, have affected the way the Ingrians thought about it. At least they shared a surprisingly similar position regarding the Eucharist.

The Ingrian Church was said to adhere to the traditional understanding of ordained ministry, and therefore had decided not to ordain women into the ministry of the word and the sacrament. It also turned out that neither its synod nor its synodical council had conducted any in-depth study or discussion on the question of the ordination of women. Ingrian women had been responsible for maintaining the ministry of the Church for

²³⁷ For more about closed communion see Kuusniemi 2007, for documents defending the practice see the CTCR reports, "Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper" (1983) and "Admission to the Lord's Supper" (1999), and for a critique of the LCMS positions see Brug 2010, 5–61. Closed communion is discussed further in Chapter 3.1.1 of this volume.

²³⁸ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR 31 March 1995; Pihkala 1998, 135. Pihkala refers to *Tuomasmessu*, which was not well suited to the Ingrian Church's reality.

²³⁹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR, 31 March 1995.

²⁴⁰ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR 31, March 1995. A particular question was raised about the Missouri Synod's Communion practice concerning the military chaplaincy. Fred Schielke had reported that LCMS chaplains served communion in the context of Lutheran services. However, exceptional circumstances, such as those on the battlefield, permitted them to offer communion to those outside of the LCMS.

decades when most men were in the labor camps, or had perished in connection with Stalin's persecutions or the war. Moreover and significantly, "these women regard it natural that under the normalization of the situation of the church men are in charge of the ordained ministry". The German-rooted Lutheran Church in Russia came to the totally opposite conclusion, however, although the situation had been quite the same during Soviet times when women generally assumed certain responsibilities. Allowing women to become pastors was considered to be in line with the hard times when women were actively involved in the work of the Church.²⁴¹ This might have been the result of German Lutheran influence, and the strong support of the ELCROS. Regardless of whether or not it was just foreign influence, however, is a good question to ask.

The question of the ordination of women was combined with that of the ecumenical or inter-Lutheran relationships between the Ingrian and other Churches. This is referred to in more detail in the minutes of the meeting: "For example, the ELCIR does not agree with the ordination of women, but it is in fellowship with Scandinavian churches which accept women's ordination". The following arguments were used to soften this fact. The Ingrian Church had found friends in Scandinavian Churches that did not accept the official position: it disagreed with the official position of those churches but was not in a position to lead a "crusade" against them; and women pastors who came to the Ingrian Church from outside were not allowed to celebrate Holy Communion, but they were still allowed to preach.²⁴² Thus the Ingrian Church tried to mediate between these opposing theological positions among the Churches with which they were connected, especially on the question of women's ordination.

The meeting continued the next day, 1 April 1995, and now it was the Ingrians' turn to put questions to the Missouriians. They asked about the structure of the Missouri Synod, and its present and potential relationships with Lutheran Churches that already existed in Russia. In reply Allan Buckman said that the LCMS was not legally incorporated as a Church, but was a mission society and did not intend to start a Church body related to the Missouri Synod in Russia. The intention was to assist existing Lutheran Churches in the areas of leadership formation and church planting. The Missouriians would try to plant congregations in areas where there was no Lutheran church, but did not intend to form an alternative denomination.²⁴³

According to the Missouriian representatives in the meeting, up until April, 1995 the Missouri Synod had worked with existing Lutheran Churches on a project basis on matters such as the production of Sunday school materials, the Lutheran hymnal, the

²⁴¹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR, 31 March 1995; Rainer Stahl interview 31.10.2012.

²⁴² ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR, 31 March 1995.

²⁴³ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR, 1 April 1995.

reconstruction of St. Michael's²⁴⁴, and the provision of teachers for the Ingrian theological education program.²⁴⁵

Questions were raised concerning the relationship of the Missouri Synod with the Lutheran Council involving Russian-speaking Lutherans, and the council's relationship with two Russian Lutheran Churches. The Ingrians asked: "Is it the intention of the LCMS to use this council as a back door way of forming an LCMS denomination in Russia?" The Missourian delegation replied that it was not the intention of the Synod to use the council or any other body to form a Lutheran denomination. The Missouri Synod already had contacts in Novosibirsk, for example, and worked cooperatively with Pastor Vsevolod Lytkin. The representatives also pointed out that the Synod had carefully avoided any activity that might be divisive with regard to Lutheranism in Russia.²⁴⁶

Thus, the most important question for the Ingrians was asked many times and on many occasions. Twice in the meeting Bishop Hassinen asked the Missourians if they were going to establish their own new Lutheran Church in Russia, which would have been the third one in the country. Both times they answered that they were not, but that they wanted to find a partner for cooperation.²⁴⁷

Reverend Arvo Survo noted that the real issue was whether the Missouri Synod could firmly trust the Ingrian Church to remain faithful to its confessional position and so work in close cooperation with the existing Church. In his view, if the Missouri Synod found out later that the Ingrians were moving in another direction it would understandably have to move in a different direction to maintain its own confessional integrity. Survo also mentioned that the Lutheran mission in Russia would be strengthened if the Missouri Synod could work in close cooperation with the Ingrian Church.²⁴⁸

The Missouri Synod's delegation was in complete agreement with the Ingrian view that no other expatriate should be chosen to lead the ELCIR or the ELCROS. At the time the leaders of both Russian Lutheran Churches were men of foreign origin, and no North Americans, for example, should be added to this group. It was desirable that the practice of having foreign leaders should end.²⁴⁹ The underlying fear that the Missouri Synod might try to conquer the Ingrian Church would ease if the leadership of both were in the hands of Ingrian or Russian-born bishops.

²⁴⁴ The reconstruction of St. Michael's church was the biggest church-building project the LCMS supported. Finns and Missourians were equally involved in the project. (Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; Jeffrey Thormodson interview 12.2.2011)

²⁴⁵ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR, 1 April 1995. The Missouri Synod worked with the Ingrian church and the ELCROS on preparing the Russian-language hymnal. (RLA Venäjänkielinen virsikirja)

²⁴⁶ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR, 1 April 1995.

²⁴⁷ Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2012; Rajala 2009, 85.

²⁴⁸ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR, 1 April 1995; Rajala 2009, 85.

²⁴⁹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR, 1 April 1995.

The Ingrian Church wanted a clear cooperation agreement on programs covering theological education and leadership development, salary subsidies for the Russian Lutheran clergy, and cooperation in the production of Russian literature and in the reconstruction of Church properties.²⁵⁰

The Ingrians insisted that the program of theological education be rooted in Russia, but by means of international assistance. The plan was to form an international group together with the ELCROS, with representatives from each of the supporting international organizations. A preliminary proposal for this international committee was drawn up, the plan being to share it with the Missouri Synod.²⁵¹

Protestant theological education was expanding rapidly. Mark Elliot gives a broader perspective on the situation in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (Jan 1994): “Protestant theological education is emerging in the former Soviet Union in a manner unique in the history of Reformation churches.” He continues: “Never before, and nowhere else, have Protestants launched as many formal theological training programs as they have in Soviet successor states” and “what is doubly unprecedented, they started from a base zero.”²⁵²

Western influence in the theological education was not unproblematic. As Mark Elliot argues, “every Protestant seminary in the former Soviet Union is relying heavily upon instructors from the West.” He also criticizes Western instructors, who “lack sufficient appreciation for Russian, Ukrainian, and Baltic history and culture, a problem that better orientation could help to correct.” Furthermore, the theological “brain drain” to Europe and North America was known to be a problem to be taken seriously when recruiting new students for theological seminaries and so forth.²⁵³ The Ingrian Church’s demand for theological education to be rooted in Russia may have come from knowledge of this wider phenomenon.

The greatest barrier to expansion was said not to be the lack of facilities, but rather the lack of support for workers. The situation was aggravated by the financial crisis in Russia. In addition, the Ingrian Church was not able to respond to all existing teaching opportunities. To do so would have required more curricular materials, cassettes and other teaching aids, as well as cooperation in the production of such materials.²⁵⁴

The Ingrians needed assistance with their building projects. The idea was not to renovate cathedrals, but to work on pragmatic projects that would serve small

²⁵⁰ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR, 1 April 1995.

²⁵¹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR 1 April 1995.

²⁵² Elliot 1994, 19.

²⁵³ Elliot 1994, 16. Elliot (1994, 16, 22) quotes Jack Grave’s article *Plugging the Theological Brain Drain* (EMQ 28 (April 1992), 155): “The percentage of seminarians not returning from study abroad is estimated to be as high as 75 per cent from Colombia, 85 per cent from the Caribbean, and 90 per cent from India. It is hoped that Western seminaries will keep this danger in mind as they accept students from Soviet successor states.”

²⁵⁴ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR, 1 April 1995.

congregations. Social-service projects, which were still in the preliminary stages, needed assistance in the form of facilities for mother and child healthcare and alcohol rehabilitation. The Ingrians also wanted to have facilities in Moscow as a matter of urgency. There was already a small site in the center of the city, but funds were needed for its renovation. The feeling was that Lutherans should be represented in the capital city, and that Moscow should also be the center of mission work among Finno-Ugric peoples because of its proximity to them. There was also a need for facilities in Central Asia, and Ingrians hoped for the participation of the Missouri Synod along with Finnish mission agencies in such projects.²⁵⁵

It is worth noting that the course of the Ingrian Church changed during the negotiations. Aarre Kuukauppi, Arvo Survo, Sergei Preiman and some others realized that negotiations under Bishop Hassinen's guidance would not succeed. There was no mention of this in the official minutes but, according to Kuukauppi, Bishop Hassinen had already announced to the Missourians that the kind of theological line the Church would choose in the long run, such as on the question of women's ministry, was not self-evident. However, the other Ingrians present did not support this and they interrupted the bishop, taking him aside to negotiate with him. They told Hassinen that he was there to help the Ingrian Church, and now was the moment when the Church had to speak with its own voice and not with the voice of Finnish pastors, that they did not want any sort of liberal theology, and that there would never be women pastors because it was against the Scriptures. Risto Lehtonen and Leino Hassinen then raised their hands and asked the Ingrians to continue the negotiations. Kuukauppi described the situation: he was sitting like a cat on hot bricks because Bishop Hassinen was of a respectable age and had done his all for the Ingrian Church, but it was such a historic moment that they were worried it would go in the wrong direction if they did not express their opinions clearly and unambiguously. Hassinen himself also realized that it was his last year of leading the Church, and for this reason alone he agreed to the wishes of the other pastors.²⁵⁶

At any rate, the discussions were open, clearing the air and clarifying the cooperation. At the end of this momentous meeting it was agreed that Bishop Hassinen would write to President Barry to propose that the talks continue, and that the Ingrian Church would make suggestions about what it considered an appropriate structure within which to continue the talks. District President Hartwig expressed his gratitude to the participants, referring to the mutual commitment of both sides to spreading the Christian faith and the desire to do so according to the Scriptures and the Confessions. Bishop Hassinen expressed his pleasure in having the opportunity to engage in serious discussion with representatives of the Missouri Synod. He also looked forward to continuing talks and to the possibility of forging closer relations between the two Churches.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR 1 April 1995.

²⁵⁶ Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011.

²⁵⁷ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999. Meeting of the representatives of the LCMS and the ELCIR, 1 April 1995; Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011. Some districts of the Missouri Synod were involved in social help. (Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011)

2.2 The Baltic countries

2.2.1 Estonia – cautious optimism

“The Return of the Churches” began in the 1980s and continued until 1991, when Estonia gained its independence. The number of participants in Lutheran church ceremonies peaked in the same year.²⁵⁸ The first connections between the Missouri Synod and the Estonian Lutherans were established at the height of this boom.

The Missouri Synod’s indirect mission work in Estonia apparently began in 1991, given that two Estonian groups, invited by the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland, had attended a Bible camp in Finland by 15 January 1992. This was one of several CLCF outreach programs, with assistance from the LCMS.²⁵⁹ Hence, in the first years the Missouri Synod also worked with the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland in the Baltic area, at least in Estonia.

Wallace and Kathy Schulz were among the first Missourians to make contact, probably with Lutherans in Tallinn. According to them, they had a good relationship with the Estonian Lutherans. There were not as many connections in Estonia as in other countries, however, because the Estonians had a more highly developed church structure, and also had “two different streams of theological thinking in there already at that time.” One reason for this different kind of theological thinking may have been that the main foreign help for the Estonian Church came from the Finnish Church, the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church (*Nordelbische Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche*, NEK) and the Lutheran World Federation.²⁶⁰

Direct correspondence between the Missouri Synod and the Estonian Lutheran Church began in spring 1992. For example, the Estonian Archbishop Kuno Pajula responded to an inquiry from Daniel Mattson, the LCMS Eastern European Coordinator, inviting him to visit Estonia on his European journey, and suggesting the end of March 1992.²⁶¹ Apparently the visit took place two years later.

The same year, 1992, Missouri Synod congregations were asked to work together to help to meet unprecedented relief and mission needs in Eastern Europe through a coordinated mission and relief effort called “Eastern European Outreach”, which included the LCMS World Mission and World Relief. The Synod hoped to obtain financial aid to purchase food, medical supplies, Bibles, Sunday school materials and other mission-support items. The focus was on meeting people’s physical and spiritual needs. The LCMS gave some diaconal help through World Relief and the associated activities of

²⁵⁸ Altmurme & Rimmel 2009, 123; Lieven 1999, 276. According to Lieven, the Supreme Councils in Estonia and Latvia declared *de jure* independence in 1990, although *de facto* independence was gained in 1991.

²⁵⁹ ALCMS BFMS Mission News 15.1.1992.

²⁶⁰ Wallace & Kathy Schulz interview 13.2.2011; Veiko Vihuri email interview 12.3.2012; Viren 2013, 63.

²⁶¹ EELKKA Toimik Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanada kirikute, kirilike organisatsioonide ja eraisikutsiga 1988–1993 Pajula to Mattson 23.3.1992.

Eastern European Outreach. The latter came into being when it was decided “through the President’s Office and through the World Mission that they wanted to be involved in Central and Eastern Europe.”²⁶²

Organizations related to the Missouri Synod were also active in Estonia. Wallace Schulz, for example, wrote to Archbishop Kuno Pajula thanking him for the privilege of meeting with the archbishop and other Estonian pastors and laymen earlier that month. Schulz informed Pajula that another Missourian pastor, Reverend Robert Rahn, Executive Director of the Lutheran Heritage Foundation²⁶³, planned to visit the Baltic countries. Schulz encouraged him to bring with him some sample materials similar to those that Schulz had discussed with Pajula earlier. According to Schulz, the Estonians were interested in Sunday school materials and teaching aids. Once Rahn was in Estonia the people from the Lutheran Church could decide whether or not the materials the Missourians had were usable among Estonian congregations. Pajula had also expressed an interest in television programs, which Schulz mentioned to the Lutheran Laymen’s League.²⁶⁴

Reverend Robert Rahn also wrote to Archbishop Pajula in March 1993. At that time the Missourians had a branch office in Riga and were making the necessary arrangements for Rahn’s visit. Rahn informed Pajula of the Lutheran Heritage Foundation’s desire to help translate books and materials from English and German into the relevant language, such as Estonian, Latvian, or Russian. Rahn replied that he was looking forward to visiting Estonia, and stating: “The LHF exists only to help churches with confessional Lutheran materials and books and only if requested.” He explained that the board of the Lutheran Heritage Foundation comprised members of the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod²⁶⁵, and that the LHF was not an exclusively Missourian organization.

Reverend Rahn probably made his first trip to Estonia at the end of March 1993, travelling from Riga. Reverend Salumäe was the LHF Branch Director at the time. Rahn was impressed with the facilities the Estonian Church had in Tallinn, and with “the fine work you are doing to preserve confessional Lutheranism in your country”. He observed that the Estonian Church was “much more advanced” than the other places he had visited,

²⁶² ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report LCMS WR Projects March 10–17, 1993; ALCMS BFMS Mission News 15.1.1992; Daniel Mattson interview 11.2.2011.

²⁶³ Reverend Robert Rahn founded the Lutheran Heritage Foundation on 19 November 1992. (LHF FF 2013) It was active at that time in the whole area. On 26 April 1993, the LHF Executive Director Robert Rahn reported on the meetings and the situation in Eastern Europe to the Lutheran Heritage Foundation and to the Riga Staff & Board. He emphasized the fact that many people had shown surprise at the progress the LHF had made in its short existence. The first publication came off the press in April 1993. It was a sermon preached by Dr. Wallace Schulz on the topic of Easter hope. It was printed in Russian and distributed in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The LHF wanted to translate the Lutheran classics, especially at first. (EELKKA Toimik Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanada kirikute, kirilike organisatsioonide ja eraisikutsiga 1988–1993 Rahn to LHF 26.4.1993; Daniel Mattson interview 11.2.2011)

²⁶⁴ EELKKA Toimik Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanada kirikute, kirilike organisatsioonide ja eraisikutsiga 1988–1993 Schulz to Pajula 24.1.1993.

²⁶⁵ EELKKA Toimik Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanada kirikute, kirilike organisatsioonide ja eraisikutsiga 1988–1993 Rahn to Pajula 8.3.1993.

and he was “especially impressed by the publishing that is being done.” He also referred to its significant steps forward in publishing materials through its own efforts, and the Estonians already had a good publishing organization.²⁶⁶ The Estonian Lutheran Church truly was more advanced than the other Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran Churches at the beginning of the 1990s, and thus more self-sufficient.

In addition, the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis became more active in Estonia and its neighboring countries during 1993. Wallace Schulz, who was then an associate Lutheran Hour Speaker, wrote to Reverend Jaan Kiivit in March. Schulz was impressed by the pastors’ desire to be exposed to other confessional Churches such as the Missouri Synod. He had spoken with the administration and faculty of the Seminary about having some Baltic pastors come for a short course in the summer. The people in the seminary were enthusiastic and were taking the unusual step of arranging a special course in Biblical and Confessional studies for pastors from the Baltic countries, including Estonia. They also planned to invite some Estonians to attend a special three-week session in St. Louis, the entire program to be funded by the Missouri Synod. Estonian Lutherans were warmly welcomed to join the courses. According to Schulz, the Missourians desired “very strongly for Estonia also to be part of this program”. Consequently, two Estonians, Mihkel Kukk and Ivo Pill, attended the summer seminar in the Concordia Seminary in July 1993. Overall, the Missouri Synod people “tried to gather together as many people as possible from the Baltics”, and for many it was a very exciting experience to be abroad for the first time, and in the USA of all places.²⁶⁷

Relations between the Churches continued to develop. Archbishop Kuno Pajula wrote to the Missouri Synod in September 1993: “We are very happy for developing contacts between Missouri Synod and Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church...” and “We hope that you are as ex[c]ited about this collaboration as we are.” In addition, the Estonian Church designated Pastor Tiit Salumäe as the person responsible for relations between the EELC and the LCMS. Salumäe had already made contact with the Missouri Synod when he asked CLCF President Markku Särelä to make arrangements for a visit with President Barry during the latter’s visit to Finland. Salumäe also served as head of the Department for Publishing and Information. Daniel Mattson, for example, knew Tiit Salumäe well and there was cooperation between them.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ EELKKA Toimik Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanada kirikute, kirilike organisatsioonide ja eraisikutsiga 1988–1993 Altmäe to Rahn 23.3.1993; EELKKA Toimik Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanada kirikute, kirilike organisatsioonide ja eraisikutsiga 1988–1993 Rahn to LHF 26.4.1993; EELKKA Toimik Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanada kirikute, kirilike organisatsioonide ja eraisikutsiga 1988–1993 Rahn to Pajula 26.4.1993.

²⁶⁷ EELKKA Toimik Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanada kirikute, kirilike organisatsioonide ja eraisikutsiga 1988–1993 Schulz to Kiivit 18.3.1993; EELKKA Toimik Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanada kirikute, kirilike organisatsioonide ja eraisikutsiga 1988–1993 Silmet to Schulz 9.6.1993; Ilars Plüme interview 5.4.2011; Juris Uļģis interview 6.4.2011; Mindaugas Sabutis interview 28.9.2011; Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014. The Lutheran Hour also did radio work in other parts of the former Soviet Union, and according to Väliaho (2004, 138) such work was carried out in Moscow from 1993 on and resulted in the establishment of extensive contacts in different parts of Russia.

²⁶⁸ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Haapsalu 16–18 May, 1994; EELKKA Toimik Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanada kirikute, kirilike organisatsioonide ja eraisikutsiga 1988–1993 Pajula to Missouri Synod 14.9.1993;

Archbishop Pajula, like the Ingrian Bishop Hassinen, was not in contact exclusively with the Missourians with regard to American Lutherans, and was also in touch at least with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The assistant to the Bishop of the Metropolitan Washington D.C. Synod, Reverend Ronald F. Christian, wrote a letter thanking Archbishop Pajula and Reverend Peeter Kaldur for visiting his home in Washington, D.C., and informed Archbishop Pajula that he would be joining the Baltic Conference Church Meeting in Estonia in February 1994. He was hoping to have a discussion with Bishop Pajula about the possibility of bringing several people from their Synod to Estonia and other Baltic countries in the summer of 1994, accompanied by Bishop E. Harold Jansen.²⁶⁹

The LCMS Eastern European Coordinator Daniel Mattson wrote to Archbishop Pajula in February 1994, inviting Estonian pastors and theological students to a summer seminar in St. Louis from 5–24 July. The Concordia Seminary was giving a special course for representatives from Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States and Russia. Mattson also mentioned Dr. Robert Kolb in his letter, wondering if it would be possible for him to visit Estonia and perhaps give some lectures there. Dr. Kolb had recently been invited to serve as director of the new Institute for Mission Studies in the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (inaugurated in January 1994), and to reorganize the Mission's program in St. Louis. The Schwan Foundation was willing to give a very generous grant to the Institute for Mission Studies if it would send someone to help the post-Soviet Churches. Kolb was assigned that role and in 1994 started visiting Churches in Russia, Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia and Latvia. The first place he visited was St. Petersburg.²⁷⁰

All in all the Missouri Synod's work in Estonia had a rather slow start. After all these perhaps not very well structured first contacts, the first official meeting between the Synod and the Estonian Church was held on 18 May 1994. Reverend Robert Hartfield and Mattson travelled with Salumäe to Tallinn, where they had a meeting with Bishop Einar Soone and two other members of the consistory. Archbishop Kuno Pajula was not able to meet them because of other commitments. Contacts and cooperation between the two Churches were touched on briefly in the discussion. The concluding remark was that very little had been done in Estonia. Salumäe had already met President Barry in Finland, but Mattson and Hartfield were the first official Missouri Synod visitors to the Estonian Church.²⁷¹

Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011; Andres Pöder & Urmas Viilma interview 22.8.2011; Altnurme, Riho 2009, 229.

²⁶⁹ EELKKA Toimik 266/1 Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanadaga 8. dets 1992- 8. november 1995 Christian to Padam 9.2.1994.

²⁷⁰ EELKKA Toimik 266/1 Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanadaga 8. dets 1992- 8. november 1995 Mattson to Pajula 15.2.1994; Burce 1998, 377; Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011; Robert Kolb interview 11.2.2011. "In 1993 Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, called him to be Missions Professor of systematic theology and director of the Institute for Mission Studies. From 1994 through 2010 he taught abroad, chiefly in post-Soviet Europe, for three months of the year." (CSL Faculty Kolb 2014)

²⁷¹ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Tallinn 18 May, 1994.

The discussion in the meeting focused on the priorities of the LCSM World Mission and the possibility of working with LCMS World Relief in proposing relief and rehabilitation projects. Mattson and Hartfield emphasized the fact the Missouri Synod tried to stay away from building projects but was very interested in developing the skills of people.²⁷²

A lack of pastoral leadership was one of the greatest problems facing the Church, with many aging pastors and many with a rather low level of education because of the communist oppression that lasted until 1989. Estonian Lutherans asked about sending people to the USA for further study. Mattson stressed the general rule that anyone planning to study in America should have completed their first degree beforehand and must be in training for a specific position in the homeland. Mattson and Hartfield confirmed the LCMS's willingness to work with the EELC, but pointed out the need for carefully defined study programs.²⁷³

The Estonians also inquired about the possibility of Missourians taking part in training programs in Estonia. From the Missourian point of view that was the preferred way of operating, and they could work with the Estonian Church in drawing up appropriate programs. Mattson and Hartfield mentioned the program they were already working on with Dr. Kolb of the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and the Estonians expressed their interest in this kind of program.²⁷⁴

The literature needs of the EELC were also discussed. The Small Catechism produced by Reverend Markku Särelä was available and the Church would have liked to put out a translation of the Large Catechism and the entire Book of Concord, as well as to become involved in mass-media ministry, particularly in television programming. The Estonian representatives foresaw no difficulties getting on television, but the Church did not have suitable materials. A former LLL representative had promised to send some but none were delivered, even though the Church had arranged broadcast time. Mattson and Hartfield pointed out that the LLL was the LCMS auxiliary specialized in mass-media ministry, and promised to ensure that the proper people in the LLL administration would be contacted in the hope of establishing connections with the Church in Estonia.²⁷⁵

Bishop Soone was concerned about the need to keep the Church leadership informed when projects were undertaken in Estonia. A new theological institute had been established in Tartu and the bishop thought the Missouri Synod might somehow be involved, pointing out that although the head of the institute was a pastor of the Estonian Church, the Church leaders had not been consulted. It turned out, however, that this had nothing to do with the Missouri Synod, but involved some other Americans.²⁷⁶ As this incident shows, there was a clear wish for the bishops to be involved in setting up projects.

²⁷² ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Tallinn 18 May, 1994.

²⁷³ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Tallinn 18 May, 1994.

²⁷⁴ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Tallinn 18 May, 1994.

²⁷⁵ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Tallinn 18 May, 1994.

²⁷⁶ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Tallinn 18 May, 1994; ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Riga 20 May, 1994. The unclear situation was resolved very quickly, because Dr. Mattson had the explanation. Steve Sirek was the Orphan Grain Train manager in Riga in 1994. He arranged for Mattson to meet with Dr.

In reply the Missourian negotiators stated that the policy of the LCMS World Mission was to work only through the leadership of national Churches, and no project submitted to it would be approved without the signature of the bishop, indicating his approval. They added that it was not possible under the Missouri Synod's structure to guarantee that no LCMS individuals would take independent action. If the Estonian Church thought that people connected with the LCMS were interfering in its internal affairs, its leadership should feel free to inform President Barry.²⁷⁷ Apparently the basic problem of a lack of coordination in the mission work was well recognized on the official levels of the Synod.

Mattson commented thus on the first official meeting: "A start has perhaps been made in Estonia...", and "the most important task for the LCMS right now is to begin work on establishing the personal relationships that will be the foundation for all further work in Estonia."²⁷⁸ Mattson may have felt that the Estonians had some reservations about cooperation, and that establishing personal relations would help to gain their trust.

One way to promote theological training and personal contacts was to use the facilities of the Missourian seminaries. The Ft. Wayne seminary assumed a bigger role in 1994 because the Concordia Seminars had become "very popular". The Missourian Synod had to provide more programs for the former Soviet states, and the Ft. Wayne seminary became involved in the training. The programs were similar and the participants were brought together on the final day.²⁷⁹

Wallace Schulz was very active in this. The Concordia Seminary, St. Louis therefore invited a few Estonians for three weeks of study in July 1994, promising to cover all costs including air transportation, food and housing. Similarly, Concordia University, River Forest, Illinois officially invited the Estonians to a three-week summer seminar on Christian education and covered all their expenses.²⁸⁰

As many as seventy people, representing ten different groups attended the LCMS summer seminars in 1994, coming from many different places of the old U.S.S.R. Almost every year during the mid-1990s a group of students or pastors was invited to visit the Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.²⁸¹ The seminary was obviously a *primus motor* in the

Francis Monseth, Dean of the Association of the Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in Minneapolis. He was not a Missourian, but he was from the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, with degrees from the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Monseth used his sabbatical year to travel to Riga to teach in the seminary for Russian Germans, supposedly under the direction of Bishop Kalnins, but when he arrived in Riga with his family he found that there was no seminary. He therefore took the opportunity to teach at the Theological Academy in Tartu. This was the source of Bishop Soone's report that the Missouri Synod was involved in an unknown training program in Estonia. An organization called Lutheran Estonian American Friends had been formed to assist the Estonian Church. (ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Riga 20 May, 1994)

²⁷⁷ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Tallinn 18 May, 1994.

²⁷⁸ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Tallinn 18 May, 1994.

²⁷⁹ EELKKA Toimik 266/1 Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanadaga 8. dets 1992- 8. november 1995 Schulz to Altmae 22.6.1994.

²⁸⁰ EELKKA Toimik 266/1 Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanadaga 8. dets 1992- 8. november 1995 Krentz to Piir 20.4.1994; EELKKA Toimik 266/1 Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanadaga 8. dets 1992- 8. november 1995 Johnson to Piir 18.4.1994; Johnson to Piir 24.5.1994.

²⁸¹ EELKKA Toimik 266/1 Kirjavahetus USA ja Kanadaga 8. dets 1992- 8. november 1995 Schulz to Altmae 30.6.1994; Andres Pöder & Urmas Viilma interview 22.8.2011.

establishment of connections with Baltic and Ingrian Lutherans at the beginning of the 1990s. It was apparently more active in the early 1990s than the Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, which gradually became involved from 1994 onwards.

On the whole, cooperation between the Missouri Synod and the Estonian Church did not gather a lot of pace in the first years of the 1990s. There were at least three reasons for this. First, the leadership of the Estonian Lutheran Church did not welcome the Missouri Synod without reservation. There was a change in 1994, however, when Archbishop Kuno Pajula retired due to old age and Jaan Kiivit Jr. was elected in his place in the first free such election after the Second World War. New Church leadership always carries the potential to improve or worsen relations, but in this case the continuity was strong and nothing changed very much. There are two different perceptions of how Archbishop Kiivit handled connections with the Missouri Synod. One opinion is that he was ready to cooperate and the cooperation was more active in his period, even though he was described as quite careful in wanting to keep the Estonian Church independent in its decisions and independent of any other Churches. The other opinion is that Kiivit's priority was the Lutheran World Federation, and that he did not focus on the Missouri Synod. He might even have wanted, at some point, to reach a decision in consistory, and not to have any contacts with the Synod.²⁸² It could be concluded from the above that Archbishop Kiivit, like Archbishop Pajula, was fairly reserved in cooperating with the Missouri Synod.

The second reason for the slow start was the greater self-sufficiency of the Estonian Lutheran Church. Dr. Daniel Mattson, at some point, even asked Dr. Olli-Pekka Lassila, LWF/DMD Associate Europe Secretary, why there was so much intense discussion concerning the Ingrian seminary and its needs, and why the Estonians did not raise such issues. Lassila replied that the Estonian Lutherans had resolved their relationship in many respects: they had their seminary and they had their theological education program, for example. Their concerns were entirely different from those of Russians and other Balts. As Mattson remarked, it “helped open my eyes, you know, so I could when I visited Estonia, I could see that there is a lot of truth in that.” It was also realized in Finland that the needs of the Estonian Church were different from those of the Ingrian Church, for example: the former already had its own functional structure and was considered quite self-sufficient.²⁸³

The third reason was the basic difference between Missourian and Estonian theology. The Estonian Lutheran Church had allowed women to become pastors, and continued to do so. This was one of the major reasons for the reservations between the two bodies. Despite the differences, however, the Missouri Synod and Dr. Mattson tried to maintain contacts with all the Churches in the area.²⁸⁴

²⁸² Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Andres Pöder & Urmas Viilma interview 22.8.2011; Altnurme 2009, 229; Altnurme & Rimmel 2009, 123; Talonen 2010, 138.

²⁸³ RLA Inkeri Baltian ja Inkerin projektin projektisuunnitelma 1993–1997; Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011.

²⁸⁴ Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011; Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011.

2.2.2 Latvia – the new archbishop welcomes cooperation

There was a theological vacuum in Latvia at the beginning of the 1990s. In the words of Reverend Ilars Plūme, “We were very interested to learn something new and to find out what really is Lutheranism and what is Christianity”: it was a “very exciting time” when so many people from many churches and from “all kinds of groups” came to Latvia. The situation was very different from the times before 1990, with quite limited contact with any Church abroad. The Latvian Lutheran Church had some international contacts in the West dating from before the Second World War, and again from the 1950s. It maintained its traditional connections with the Church of Sweden, for example. From the end of the 1980s it became more active in establishing contacts abroad, which is when communications with Finnish theologians intensified. However, totally new connections were forged in 1991, the year when full independence was restored to the Latvian state.²⁸⁵

The “first swallow” or pioneer from the Missouri Synod to Latvia was the Lutheran Hour Speaker Wallace Schulz. The International Lutheran Laymen’s League chose him because he had long been interested in Russia and had been involved in the mission since the 1960s. He was just asked to see if the League could get something started. Schulz recalled that he was given “no contacts, no map, nothing”. Hence, the first organization affiliated to the Missouri Synod to go into Latvia was its auxiliary the ILLL, which operated the Lutheran Hour Ministries with Reverend Schulz. According to Mattson, Schulz thought it was important for the Missouri Synod to be involved in the work with existing Lutheran Churches so that they would be aware of all the Lutheran options that were available to them.²⁸⁶ Giving the confessional option was at the core of the Missouri Synod’s work in the whole of the former Soviet Union.

At first Schulz preached in “all of the churches”, but focused mostly on the German Lutheran Church (ELROS), whose leader Bishop Harald Kalnins was located in Riga, where the first contacts were made. The ILLL was cooperating with the German Lutheran Bishop Kalnins, and consequently bought property and established an office to serve the bishop’s training program. It also actively recruited Missourian pastors and professors to teach on the program. The situations of the Lutherans in Russia and in the Baltic states were very similar, and therefore some Missourian work in Russia was channeled through Riga. The Missouri Synod’s initial interest in Latvia stemmed from its broad interest in Russians as such, and in the former Soviet Union, and was further fuelled when the ILLL invited large groups of Americans to Latvia before going on a tour of Russia and Kazakhstan. At that time Americans were interested in seeing St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other places. Many volunteers were involved in renovation projects and the like.

²⁸⁵ SKPSL 1/1985; Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011; Juris Uļģis interview 6.4.2011; Jouko Talonen email interview 20.2.2014; Talonen 1985, 17–19; Talonen 2005, 137–154. The Republic of Latvia was established on 18 November 1918. This first period of independence lasted until the Soviet occupation in 1940. (Balodis 2004, 140) Among Finnish theologians, at least Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara, Dr. Jouko Talonen and Reverend Peter Kankkonen became known among Latvian Lutherans at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. (Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014)

²⁸⁶ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia March 30 1992; Wallace & Kathy Schulz interview 13.2.2011; Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011.

Every two weeks Schulz brought a group of them through the ILLL, over 300 altogether. In general, it was natural for the Americans to use volunteers given their long history of ‘voluntary religion’, meaning that support from its members is an integral part of the life of the Church.²⁸⁷

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, or at least its leader Bishop Kārlis Gailītis, did not give a very warm welcome to the Missouri Synod, or to Wallace Schulz, at first. Archbishop Gailītis spoke to Schulz “very directly and very harshly”, and was “very angry” that the Missouri Synod was in Latvia because they did not belong there. Bishop Gailītis was an “LWF man”. He was elected the sixth Vice-President of the Federation and attended his first meeting of the LWF Executive Committee in Geneva in January 1992. His election gave the Churches in the Eastern and Central European region a Vice-Presidency in the organization. In addition, in 1991 the ELCL had nine women pastors. Archbishop Gailītis was quite clearly on the side of the more liberal mainstream LWF Lutheranism. However, not all ELCL theologians agreed with his unresponsive attitude towards the Missouri Synod.²⁸⁸

At the beginning of the 1990s the theological direction of the Latvian Church was increasingly being determined by Professor Roberts Feldmanis, then in his 80s. Feldmanis had taught several generations of pastors, including Jānis Vanags, whom he later served as his theological advisor. Feldmanis represented conservative theology and clearly rejected women’s ordination. He was open to the Missouri Synod, and welcomed the Missourians to Latvia: he was an influential person there, and stated that the Missouri people were the people Latvian Lutherans should be talking to. Feldmanis had had a strong influence on the new generation of Latvian theologians since the 1980s. He came closer to confessional Lutheranism in his last years, but still maintained his independent attitude towards the Missouri Synod, for example. He also had many contacts in Sweden.²⁸⁹ This ecumenical yet still confessional position had undoubtedly influenced young Jānis Vanags, and had an impact on the line the Latvian Lutheran Church took during the 1990s.

Many younger Latvian theologians supported the position Feldmanis had taken. Jānis Vanags explained the nature of the new situation, and for many of them it was “quite a

²⁸⁷ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- BFMS and LLL Russia Strategy Statement Draft; Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011; Wallace & Kathy Schulz interview 13.2.2011; Guntis Kalme email interview 29.3.2011; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011; Juris Uļģis interview 6.4.2011; Erling & Granquist 2008, 25. Erling & Granquist (2008, 25) explain the American form of voluntary religion: “This idea, formed by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestant immigrants to North America, and codified in the American constitution and legal theory, says that any religions formed in this country are voluntary organizations, dependent on the support of their members, and not supported financially by government in any way.”

²⁸⁸ SKA SFRV E3:9 Ståsett to All member churches etc. Feb. 1992; Wallace & Kathy Schulz interview 13.2.2011; Dreifelds 1995, 69.

²⁸⁹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Latvia 1991–2001 28.–30.8.1993 Conversations held on the occasion of the Consecration of Janis Vanags as Archbishop of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL); Zviedre 1994, 31; Robert Kolb interview 11.2.2011; Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014; Talonen 1991, 339; Talonen 2002, 199, 202. Feldmanis had some connections with Missouri Synod people: for example, Professor Robert Preus visited Feldmanis’ home in February 1994 (Talonen 2002, 199). Latvian theologian Edgars Rumba (1904–1943) also combined conservatism and ecumenism. Rumba had connections with Sweden and with Nathan Söderblom. (Talonen 2008 b, 212–213)

shock to realize” how different they were and that the ideas that had given them strength or faith to endure were now considered “backward and obsolete and sort of fortress mentality”. He continued:

It was also quite shocking discoveries to come in encounter with churches whose faith is based mainly in historical-critical method. So it was like a cross-cultural shock in a way. And then we started, we heard there is LCMS somewhere in America, who had similar tenets or positions like ours. And we looked for some contacts. I think it started through, not through official links between the churches. The official links or official contacts started quite late.²⁹⁰

Vanags described the “cross-cultural shock” they experienced with mainstream Lutherans, which paved the way for the Missourians. Their initial idea was to connect with conservative theology, and they knew there was a conservative synod, the Missouri Synod, although the Latvian theologians did not know much about it at first. As with many Ingrians, although in this case perhaps even more strongly, there was already a demand among Latvian Lutherans for a traditional, conservative Christian approach. The Missouri Synod’s theological position further influenced their already conservative Lutheran thinking, especially because these younger generations in Latvia and in neighboring Lutheran Churches were very “impressionable”.²⁹¹

The bridge building between the Missouri Synod and the Latvian Lutheran Church started on the individual rather than the official level. According to Reverend Guntis Kalme, he started the LCMS outreach to Latvia through his private contacts. He named the most active “individuals” in establishing connections: “Rev. Wallace Schulz, me and God”. Reverend Kalme was thus a link between the Missouri Synod and the Latvian Church, especially from the Latvian side.²⁹²

The Missouri Synod’s activity in Latvia began on the official level in 1992, first in correspondence and then in the form of an official visit. The first letter from the Missouri Synod to Latvian Archbishop Kārlis Gailītis was dated 5 March 1992. Eastern European Coordinator Dr. Daniel L. Mattson informed the Archbishop that he was coming to Europe and planned to visit Riga, and would like to see the church and its educational programs and to get to know the people involved. He also said he “could bring greetings on behalf of Dr. Bohlmann and the members of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.”²⁹³

Apparently there was no response to Mattson’s letter. Gailītis may not have been sure about how to relate to the Missourians, given his attitude towards Wallace Schulz, because on 16 March the President of the Missouri Synod Ralph A. Bohlmann also wrote to him in an attempt to clear up any possible prejudices:

²⁹⁰ Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011.

²⁹¹ Wallace & Kathy Schulz interview 13.2.2011; Jānis Ginters interview 5.4.2011. I would argue that the Estonians were perhaps the least impressionable among the Lutherans in the Baltic and Ingrian churches.

²⁹² Guntis Kalme email interview 29.3.2011; Juris Uļģis interview 6.4.2011.

²⁹³ LELBA F1 A3 L 69 1992–1994 Mattson to Gailītis 5.3.1992; Talonen 2012, 141.

Please be assured that The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, having no interest in establishing a presence in the territory which your church serves, nevertheless stands ready to be of assistance in any way possible to strengthen your witness and confession of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thereby Bohlmann assured Gailītis that the Missouri Synod wanted to be involved in the lives of the Latvian Lutherans, but within the existing Church order, and also asked him “to extend every courtesy to Dr. Daniel L. Mattson, who serves as coordinator of the activities of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod in Eastern Europe.”²⁹⁴

After this Dr. Daniel Mattson went to Latvia as the first official visitor from the Missouri Synod. As the letters sent to Archbishop Gailītis indicate, he wanted to talk with Gailītis first. The office of the archbishop was difficult to find, situated in some backyard. Gailītis welcomed Mattson to Latvia and was very forthright, even at their first meeting. He wanted to ask certain questions before making any decisions about how to go forward.²⁹⁵

According to Mattson, Gailītis had three main questions. First, as a vice-president of the Lutheran World Federation, of which the Missouri Synod was not a member and in fact was opposed to, he wondered if the Latvians and the Missourians could cooperate, and how that would work. Second, he mentioned the fact that the Latvian Church had ordained women and had women on theological courses, so it was likely they would ordain more women. Third, he referred to some dissident movement with young pastors inside the Latvian Church, and asked if cooperation with the Missouri Synod would make things more difficult for him.²⁹⁶

Dr. Mattson answered Archbishop Gailītis’ questions. He said that the Missouri Synod already had partner Churches that were members of the LWF, such as those in Korea, India, Japan, Nigeria and Ghana, and that the Missourians tried to follow the policy that required national Churches to make their own decisions on the kind of relationship they needed to accomplish their work. On the matter of women’s ordination he replied that they had to respect each other’s viewpoints. However, he would not want to put the Missouri Synod in a situation in which they had to compromise their position, and in turn assured Gailītis that the Synod would not do anything to put the Latvian Church in the position of

²⁹⁴ LELBA F1 A3 L 69 1992–1994 Bohlmann to Gailītis 16.3.1992.

²⁹⁵ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip report Eastern Europe: Retrospect and Prospect; Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011. Mattson wrote in his report: “I believe that I was the first person from the LCMS to officially visit the Lutheran churches in Lithuania, Latvia, and the Silesian area of the Czech Republic. I was the first person since president Bohlmann’s group to visit the bishops in Hungary and Poland. The bishop in Estonia, the most Lutheran of the Baltic states, has never been officially visited although Dr. Eugene Bunkowske has briefly met him.” The official visit to Estonia was in May 1994, as indicated in Chapter 2.2.1. Moreover when the Missouri Synod first established contacts in Latvia the leadership of the ELCL had reservations, whereas the leadership of the ELCROS welcomed the Missourians warmly. Mattson met Bishop Harald Kalnins in Latvia on 31 March 1992, for example. Mattson had a letter from Dr. Bohlmann, which he gave Kalnins to read. Bishop Kalnins assured him that he had no reservations about having relations with the Missouri Synod, and welcomed LCMS assistance. He specifically mentioned the helpfulness of Reverend Wallace Schulz. (ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia April 1, 1992)

²⁹⁶ Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011.

having to compromise on what they thought was right. Finally on the question of factions in the Latvian Church, Mattson said it was a principle of the Missouri Synod not to interfere in the internal affairs of other Church bodies, and that the Missourians were not looking to form a faction within the Latvian Church. This honest discussion between the Latvian archbishop and the official representative of the Missouri Synod was fruitful. Gailītis told Mattson that he did not have any reservations about cooperation.²⁹⁷ Mattson had skillfully sown the seeds when he managed to dissolve the archbishop's prejudices through direct and honest personal contact.

As Eastern European coordinator, Mattson was in a strong position to express the views of the Missouri Synod because he served as a liaison between the President's Office and the LCMS World Mission. As he put it, "For the most part I was probably the first person that most of these people met and who could speak officially for the Missouri Synod – because I had the backing both of the President's Office and the LCMS World Mission." It was sometimes difficult to know which of the many actors, organizations and individuals officially represented the Missouri Synod, and Mattson had to keep assuring the national Churches: "I am the guy who speaks for the LCMS. They don't speak for the LCMS!"²⁹⁸

The Lutheran World Federation also became more and more active in Latvia and the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s. The LWF European meeting was held in Riga in November 1992, for example. This was the first meeting in a country that had gained its independence after the collapse of Communism. The decision to change the venue from Leeds to Riga was indicative of a belief on the part of the LWF that the Lutheran Churches were united across national borders.²⁹⁹ Latvia may have been considered the hub of the region's Lutheranism, not least because of the two Lutheran Churches and their bishops, Kalnins and Gailītis. Both the LWF and non-LWF camps made every effort to be particularly active in Riga. Hence, Riga was the key city for Baltic and Russian Lutheranism for at least the first few years of the 1990s.

The subject of Lutheran communion came up in the LWF European meeting. According to Reverend Pirjo Työrinoja, who was at the meeting, it became evident that the Missouri Synod had every intention of expanding its educational and churchly cooperation in many countries, and had earmarked money for this purpose. She further observed that the relationship between the LWF and the Lutheranism outside it was becoming a very real issue,³⁰⁰ and clearly saw what was coming at this early stage.

²⁹⁷ Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011; Pankow 1992. According to Mattson, it came up later that Jānis Vanags was the leader of the faction.

²⁹⁸ Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011. Apparently the International Lutheran Laymen's League was involved in Latvia and considered itself increasingly to be a mission society. There had been some problems with the ILL's activities. For this reason Mattson informed the LWF staff that the ILL did not request advice from the Missouri Synod on program development and so on. It was recognized that the LCMS could not always influence the Lutheran Laymen's League. (ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Summary of Discussions 18.3.1992)

²⁹⁹ Työrinoja 1993 a, 21–23.

³⁰⁰ Työrinoja 1993 a, 24.

Questions regarding the relations between the LWF and the LCMS/non-LWF were reactivated.

At the time, the development of mainstream and non-mainstream Lutheranism was proceeding quite rapidly along different lines. The discussion about the ordination of women was lively during the 1990s. The LWF tried to keep some count of the percentage of Lutheran Churches that had approved women's entry into ministry. According to Pirjo Työrinoja, the percentages were 49 in 1984 and 69 in 1992. Thus, in 1992 more than two thirds of the Churches accepted women's ordination.³⁰¹

Overall, 1992 was a time of fast growth for Latvian Churches, and as many as 92 percent of all Latvian children born in that year were baptized, taking all the denominations into account. Religious education was in a good position in state schools, and Latvia was the first of the former USSR republics to take advantage of this situation. The year had its dark side for Latvian Lutherans, too: Archbishop Kārlis Gailītis died in a car accident in November.³⁰²

Following the archbishop's death, the Synod of the Latvian Church was convened to elect a new archbishop on 26 January 1993. In the end there were two candidates, Reverend Elmārs Rozītis from the Exile Church (Germany) and Reverend Jānis Vanags from Saldus (Latvia). Both candidates were given 30 minutes to present themselves and their program. Vanags said he would not ordain women pastors. Furthermore, under the Latvian Church's constitution candidates should have ten years experience as a pastor but Vanags had only seven and was technically too young to be elected. The church law was changed, however, to make him eligible as a candidate. Of the 309 votes, Vanags received 154 and Rozītis 145. The required minimum to be elected archbishop, according to the constitution, was half of the votes plus one, but this was not reached.³⁰³ Vanags would have needed 155 votes.

Some foreign observers, including Henning Kramer and Wilhelm Poser from the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Birgitta Handog from the Church of Sweden, were not fully convinced that the proper procedure was followed. Apparently, after the election, some Germans tried to find out how to annul it. There were concerns that the new archbishop had not been a pastor for long enough, and also some questions about voting rights. The major reason why the Germans acted in this way, at least as some Latvians saw it, was that Jānis Vanags opposed the ordination of women.³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ Työrinoja 1993 b, 36–37. The results are based on the following two LWF documents: "The Ordination of Lutheran Churches. LWF Documentation No. 18, March 1984" and "The ordination of Women within LWF Member Churches. Geneva 1992."

³⁰² SKA Ārkebiskskopen F4e:1 Intern Rapport Val av ärkebiskop i den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan I Lettland Riga 26 januari 1993; Dreifelds 1995, 65, 73.

³⁰³ LELBA Latvijas ārkārtas Sinodes 1993 Protokols; SKA Ārkebiskskopen F4e:1 Intern Rapport Val av ärkebiskop i den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan I Lettland Riga 26 januari 1993; SKA SFRV F10G:2 Aarno Lahtinen & Sylvia Raulo: Raportti LML:n Baltian ja Venäjän luterilaisten kirkkojen koordinaatiokouksesta Vilnassa 20.–25.2.1993; Zviedre 1994, 103–104; Wallace & Kathy Schulz interview 13.2.2011; Jānis Ginters interview 5.4.2011.

³⁰⁴ SKA Ārkebiskskopen F4e:1 Intern Rapport Val av ärkebiskop i den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan I Lettland Riga 26 januari 1993; Jānis Ginters interview 5.4.2011. Henning Kramer (email interview 26.1.2015) described the situation in a slightly different manner: "There was a discussion in the church assembly about

The voting also raised the question of foreign (liberal) influence, because most of the Western church leaders supported Reverend Elmārs Rozītis and most of the Latvians preferred Jānis Vanags, a lifelong resident of Latvia.³⁰⁵ Vanags also had the support of some young conservative pastors, who had strongly criticized the Exile Church and the Western sister Churches for their secularization and their spreading of alien influences to Latvia. This criticism focused mainly on the activities of the Germans. The young conservatives in question had connections with the Missouri Synod and its International Lutheran Laymen's League. Victory for Rozītis and the liberal side might have brought the cooperation to an end before it had really started. The voting result crucially affected future developments. Given all this, it is hardly surprising that both camps, the LCMS and the LWF, realized they had to try to affect the outcome, although the Missourians probably did not coordinate their efforts entirely intentionally. According to Dr. Sandra Gintere, Archbishop Vanags was and remained a symbolic figure, having stood, first of all, for traditional Christianity. The Latvian Church would probably have gone in a completely different direction if Vanags had lost and Rozītis had won.³⁰⁶

Birgitta Handog, the observer of the Church of Sweden, asked in her report what the Church should do in such a situation, when there was some sort of problem with the election and the elected archbishop, Vanags, was not going to ordain women. For these reasons it would not be wise for the Swedes to consecrate the Latvian archbishop, but on the other hand the Church of Sweden should maintain the tradition of consecrating Latvian bishops and remain loyal to apostolic succession. Handog added that the Missouri Synod was, at the time, working very actively in the whole Baltic area, and that there were missionaries in Latvia with its huge economic potential. There was even the possibility that the Latvians would turn to the Missouri Synod to install their archbishop.³⁰⁷ It was clear that the Missouri Synod's presence in Latvia had to be taken into account in the decision-making of the Church of Sweden in this situation. However, the Missouri Synod probably could not have carried out the installation because it had basically a presidential structure.

The Church of Sweden made its decision: Archbishop Gunnar Weman informed the Latvians that he would not take part in the consecration because of his other duties, but he proposed that the Bishop of Stockholm, Henrik Svenungsson, should conduct the service on his behalf. Finally, the young pastor Jānis Vanags, who was ordained on 1 December 1985, was installed as Gailītis' replacement and so became archbishop on 29 August 1993. In his address Bishop Svenungsson spoke about the historical fellowship (*gemenskapen*)

the question, whether all regulations of the Latvian Church-constitution were observed. But at least the chairman of the Synod declared that the election was legal, and so everybody - also my Northelbian Church - had to accept the election results."

³⁰⁵ IYTN Aug. 3, 1994 "A Latvian Bars Ordaining Women".

³⁰⁶ SKA SFRV F10G:2 Aarno Lahtinen & Sylvia Raulo: Raportti LML:n Baltian ja Venäjän luterilaisten kirkkojen koordinaatiokouksesta Vilnassa 20.–25.2.1993; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011.

³⁰⁷ SKA Ärkebiskopen F4e:1 Intern Rapport Val av ärkebiskop i den evangelisk-lutherska kyrkan i Lettland Riga 26 januari 1993. Even the Church of England asked the Church of Sweden for more information about the situation, because they were considering whether they should possibly take part in the event. (SKA Ärkebiskopen F4e:1 Marsh to Harlin March 8, 1993)

between the Church of Sweden and the Latvian Church, and proclaimed that the archbishop should be a *pastor pastorum* for its pastors.³⁰⁸ He spoke about issues that many people were deliberating: how the cooperation with other Churches would continue, and whether this new archbishop would be able to mediate well enough internally.

No representatives of the Missouri Synod were present on the occasion of the consecration of Archbishop Vanags, even though people from the Synod and from the International Lutheran Laymen's League had been active in Latvia for about two years. Furthermore, the Missourians had already met Vanags several times, and had offered financial support to the Church.³⁰⁹

Archbishop Vanags kept his pre-election promises, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia suspended its earlier decision to allow the ordination of women. However, the female pastors who were ordained were allowed to continue in their positions. This suspension raised questions regarding *communio* both within and between the member churches in the Lutheran World Federation.³¹⁰

After the election and before the consecration, in June 1993, Archbishop Jānis Vanags was elected “straight from a countryside church” to the LWF council when he replaced his predecessor. The line he had taken concerning the non-ordaining of women was questioned and discussed in the meetings. Vanags described what happened. “I was so naive that I thought I am among Christian sisters and brothers where I can frankly speak about everything”, but the openness about the reasons for not ordaining women made it difficult for the Latvians on the LWF level, “so the Latvian church was singled out and all the attacks were focused on the Latvian church.” The presence of the Missouri Synod was crucial in that situation, showing that not everyone “hated” the Latvians and that there were also those who supported them.³¹¹ One could argue that some of the LWF member Churches and the LWF itself pushed the Latvians closer to the Missouri Synod with their critical attitude.

The Missouri Synod's representatives met the new archbishop, probably for the first time, when Mattson and Reverend Robert Hartfield were visiting Latvia in 1994. Dean Roberts Akmentiņš of the theological faculty had died (14 May) just before they arrived and his funeral was the afternoon they met the Archbishop. Their first impression was

³⁰⁸ SKA SFRV F10G:3 [Henrik Svenungsson] Tal vid vining av ärkebiskop Janis Vanags i Riga domkyrka den 29 augusti 1993, 12 söndagen efter Trefaldighet; SKA Ärkebiskopen F4e:1 Weman to Saveljevs May 18, 1993; Zviedre 1994, 94, 103; Dreifelds 1995, 73; Zālite 2000, 43; Talonen 2010, 137. Dreifelds (1995,73) on Vanags: “His policies have been more defensive and status-quo oriented.” As a response to the election result the LWF wanted to strengthen its line in the Latvian Church. The intention was that the Church of Sweden would possibly strengthen its influence in Latvia, for example. (ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Latvia 1991–2001. Conversations held on the occasion of the Consecration of Janis Vanags as Archbishop of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL) 28.–30.8.1993)

³⁰⁹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Latvia 1991–2001. Conversations held on the occasion of the Consecration of Janis Vanags as Archbishop of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL) 28.–30.8.1993.

³¹⁰ Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014; Lema, Marple, Filo, Kumari & Hjelml 1997, 308; Ketola 2009, 229.

³¹¹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Latvia 1991–2001 Conversations held on the occasion of the Consecration of Janis Vanags as Archbishop of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL) 28.–30.8.1993; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011.

positive, Mattson stating that the archbishop “is very young, but he is an impressive figure. I had the feeling that we were talking to a person of genuine faith and character.” The Archbishop expressed his happiness that the Missouri Synod was willing to work with the Latvian Lutheran Church. He assured the Missourian representatives of his personal commitment to conservative Lutheran theology, and expressed his desire to lead the Church in the same theological direction. At the same time, however, he reminded his listeners that he had been elected Bishop of the whole Church and he would not want to engage in any actions that would split it.³¹²

Archbishop Vanags also pointed out that the Latvian Church had been a member of the Lutheran World Federation for many years. It was not his intention to take it out of the LWF, the leadership of which had treated him with respect and there had been no attempt to persuade him to adopt any position that went against his beliefs, even on controversial issues such as the ordination of women. It seems that relationships between the Latvian Church and LWF staff had been good.³¹³ Interestingly, Vanags wanted to give a good account of the staff to the Missourian representatives, even though the reality might have been somewhat different.

Vanags had received a letter from an individual pastor, probably Dr. H. L. Harnapp, within the LCMS, proposing that the Latvian Church set up a seminary program for the Baltic States – a proposal that would run in opposition to the position of the more liberal Lutherans and the LWF. The Archbishop questioned the appropriateness of this letter, and wondered if it constituted interference in the internal affairs of the Latvian Church.³¹⁴ His aim was, from the very beginning, to keep the Latvians independent and he apparently did not readily accept some excessively extreme views, not even from the Missourians.

Mattson and Hartfield assured the Archbishop that such a proposal in no way reflected the thinking of the leadership of the Missouri Synod, that the LCMS was not interested in pursuing policies that would divide Church bodies, and that it did not consider itself to be at war with the LWF. Even though LCMS polity allowed individuals and congregations considerable freedom to make their own decisions, it tried to discourage its people from launching independent mission projects, and was strongly opposed to any interference in the internal affairs of other Churches. Mattson and Hartfield informed the Archbishop that

³¹² ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Riga 18–21 May, 1994; *Zviedre* 1994, 56–57.

³¹³ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Riga 18–21 May, 1994.

³¹⁴ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Riga 18–21 May, 1994. Vanags might have referred to the letter Dr. H. L. Harnapp sent to Archbishop Vanags in January 1994. Harnapp wrote: “I have heard of your courageous stand in testimony to God’s inerrant, inspired and infallible Word”. Harnapp also described the very deep divisional experiences he had had with some of the members of the LWF: “It is my understanding the [that] the LWF is lending you no aid and comfort in your consecrated labors. That is not surprising. Throughout the 37 years of my service to Christ in the USA and Canada, I have received less than honorable [honorable] treatment at the hands of Lutheran church bodies who are members of the LWF. This has not made the Lord’s labors easier.” Furthermore Dr. Harnapp pointed out how the support of confessional theological education could be protected most effectively: “It is more important for us to help train faithful brethren from Latvia to serve in Latvia, than it is for us to send from the LC-MS to Latvia. The brethren from LATVIA can do better work among your own people than our men. It would be my prayer that you would send the best men available to you at this time.” (LELBA F1 A3 L 69 1992–1994 Harnapp to Vanags 24.1.1994)

only the Eastern European Coordinator had the authority to speak for the LCMS, and that he should feel free to inform the president of the Missouri Synod whenever he felt the Missourians were on the wrong track.³¹⁵ It is obvious that on the official bureaucratic level the Missouri Synod aimed at and emphasized working in a respectable and constructive way.

Mattson wrote in his trip report that he still felt the Missouri Synod should give some attention to the Lutheran Church in Latvia. As a consequence of the death of Archbishop Gailītis and the turmoil that surrounded the election of Archbishop Vanags the Church was not organized in the best possible way. This made it more difficult to know who to speak to. Mattson stressed again the importance of knowing people and establishing personal relationships on which future activities could be based. He concluded his report of his meeting with the head of the Latvian Church thus: “Nevertheless, the church is attempting to act in a confessionally responsible way and would appreciate the opportunity to be in dialogue with the LCMS”.³¹⁶

Dr. A.L. Barry, President of the Missouri Synod, sent a letter of introduction to Archbishop Vanags concerning Reverend Robert Hartfield, who was acting as a Missouri Synod representative throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Barry asked Vanags to “receive him as the official representative of the Missouri Synod and “permit him to speak with you to discuss the opportunities we have together to proclaim the precious message of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christus”.³¹⁷

Archbishop Vanags thanked President Barry for introducing Reverend Hartfield, who had visited his office, and was sure “that we will have a good contact and co-operation”. He continued: “It is important to know an authorized person, and as the representative of one of largest Lutheran communities – LCMS, he will be welcomed here in most respectful and friendly ways”.³¹⁸ Now the channels of communication between the leadership of the Missouri Synod and the Latvian Church were open.

Although Archbishop Vanags gave the Missouri Synod representatives a relatively positive account of the Lutheran World Federation, the LWF maintained its criticism of Archbishop Vanags’ decision not to ordain women. This became clear in June 1995 at the LWF Council meeting in Windhoek, Namibia. Vanags was strongly criticized by other LWF Council members for his negative stand on the ordination of women, and even the question of suspending the Latvian Church from membership of the LWF came up. A resolution was passed calling upon all member Churches “to provide and intensify theological education for women and to facilitate the ordination of women”. The LWF exerted enormous pressure on Archbishop Vanags specifically because of his view on this matter.³¹⁹

³¹⁵ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Riga 18–21 May, 1994.

³¹⁶ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Riga 18–21 May, 1994.

³¹⁷ LELBA F1 A3 L 69 1992–1994 Barry to Vanags 9.6.1994.

³¹⁸ LELBA F1 A3 L 69 1992–1994 Vanags to Barry 1.8.1994.

³¹⁹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Latvia 1991–2001 Vija S. Klīve: The Association of Lutheran Women Theologians of Latvia Is Founded, August 1995; Jānis Ginters interview 5.4.2011. The question of the ordination of women was not the only position the Latvian Church and the Missouri Synod shared. The question of

Possibly as a result of the Windhoek LWF Council meeting, the inner tensions over the theological line taken by Archbishop Vanags assumed a visible form when The Association of Lutheran Women Theologians of Latvia (ALWTL) was founded in Riga in July 1995. There were 18 Latvian women theologians present, including four pastors, and three pastors from the USA. The principal goal of the ALWTL was to promote the professional activities of academically educated female theologians in their work in the Latvian Church and in society. A further goal was to contact the Lutheran World Federation and other ecumenical organizations “who are interested to know what is happening in the Church in Latvia, especially as far as the attitude and activities of the LELC toward women theologians and pastors”.³²⁰

The ALWTL planned to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the ordination of women in Latvia on 25 August 1995. E. Rozītis, then the Archbishop of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad, and Reverend Vilis Vārsbergs (Dean 1994–1999), the Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Latvia but who was originally from Chicago, had promised to take part in the celebration in the Cathedral of Riga. Twenty years earlier, in 1975, Archbishop J. Matulis had ordained the first three women pastors: Vaira Bitēna, Berta Stroža and Helēna Valpētere.³²¹ The Latvian Church abroad and the Faculty of Theology positioned themselves against the archbishop’s line, which would be relevant in the future with regard to theological training in the Latvian Church.

The ALWTL very soon had a competitor, the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Women Association (LELWA). In December 1995 Archbishop Jānis Vanags wrote a letter to Reverend Robert Hartfield, the LCMS World Mission Coordinator in Middle Europe, informing him about the situation concerning teachers coming from the Missouri Synod to Latvia for the year 1996, coordinated by Guntis Kalme, director of the Pastoral Training Program. Vanags was under great pressure regarding his leadership of surrounding Lutheran organizations and Churches. He wrote very revealingly:

Recently our women have established both biblical and confessional association – Latvian evangelical Lutheran women association – LELWA.

LELWA would be willing to establish contacts with the same kind of women organizations in LCMS. In our situation when our Church is under the great

homosexuality began to arise in the Lutheran world during the 1990s. On 5 September 1994 the Latvian Church consistory adopted a resolution “About the Practice and Propaganda of Homosexuality”, stating that the ELCL Consistory recognized “that the practice of homosexuality is considered a sin comparable to the so called deadly sins...”, and that the Church was “Categorically against any attempts to portray the practice of homosexuality as a normal human orientation”. In addition, all parishes were directed not to allow persons who deliberately practiced homosexuality and had chosen it as their way of life to carry any responsibilities during parish services. Within the Church hierarchy they would be separated from the community if they continued their homosexual behavior. (ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Latvia 1991–2001 The Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Consistory Resolution, adopted September 5, 1994, “About the Practice and Propaganda of Homosexuality”; Ketola 2009, 236.)

³²⁰ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Latvia 1991–2001 Vija S. Klīve: The Association of Lutheran Women Theologians of Latvia Is Founded, August 1995.

³²¹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Latvia 1991–2001. Vija S. Klīve: The Association of Lutheran Women Theologians of Latvia Is Founded, August 1995; Klīve 1995, 124; Talonen 2003, 200; Talonen 2007, 260.

pressure of LWF and WCC in question about women ordination, it is significant to demonstrate that our women themselves understand Scripture and Confessions as the basis of their Ministry in the Church.³²²

Thus, both sides had their own women's organizations before the end of 1995. LELWA had close connections with the International Women's Missionary League.³²³ Being more conservative it was supported by the LCMS, whereas the more liberal ALWTL had the support of the Latvian Church abroad, the theological faculty at the University of Latvia, and perhaps also the LWF. The situation was becoming more and more polarized.

2.2.3 Lithuania – flattered by the approach

Missourian connections with Lithuanian Lutherans proceeded in a similar way as with the other Baltic Churches and the Ingrian Church. Although not an official LCMS approach, Wallace and Kathy Schulz of the ILLL were the first to make contact when they became acquainted with Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Sr. and made friends with him.³²⁴ This was apparently as early as 1991.

The first official meeting between the Missouri Synod representative and the Lithuanian Bishop was probably on 2 April 1992 when Mattson met Kalvanas in Taurage, Lithuania. The Bishop was highly flattered that Mattson had traveled such a great distance with a letter from the president of the LCMS, Dr. Bohlmann, to pay respects to him and the little Lithuanian Lutheran Church.³²⁵ As a research result it could be said that cooperation between the Missouri Synod and the Baltic and Ingrian Lutherans began in 1991 through auxiliaries, and in 1992 through the Synod's official mission channels. This pins down the start more precisely than some earlier research placing it generally the mid-1990s.³²⁶

It is clear that, at the time of Mattson's visit to Bishop Kalvanas, the Lithuanian Church had other foreign contacts apart from with the Schulzes. They had a Bible storybook for children published in Lithuanian with the assistance of the Norwegian Mission in the East, for example, and a reprint of the Lithuanian hymnal published with the assistance of the North Elbian Church. There was also one Lithuanian studying at the ELCA-based Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, South Carolina. Bishop Kalvanas had said that it was through the training of people that the Church could best be helped.³²⁷

³²² LELBA F1 A3 L 70 1995–1997 Vanags to Hartfield 1.12.1995.

³²³ Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011.

³²⁴ Wallace & Kathy Schulz interview 13.2.2011.

³²⁵ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Taurage and Kaunas April 2, 1992. At the time the ELCLi had ten pastors serving 40 congregations.

³²⁶ For example, according to Ketola (2009, 231), "Co-operation between the Baltic Lutherans and the LCMS started sometime in the mid-1990s."

³²⁷ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Taurage and Kaunas April 2, 1992.

Eastern European Churches in general were looking towards the West. Dr. Daniel Mattson had the impression on his trips, however, that the Baltic and Ingrian Lutherans were not focusing on the USA as much as on Germany and German Lutheranism, having sought theological guidance there for a long time. Mattson did not get the impression from the Eastern European Lutherans that they were motivated by the anti-Eastern sentiment, either: they were just trying to build up the Church with few or no resources.³²⁸ All help was welcome in restoring the churches from the ruins.

Despite the positive societal developments the Church was in a more difficult situation in some respects than it had been under the Marxist regime. The majority of the population was Roman Catholic, thus the Catholic Church expected to speak for religion in Lithuania and to dominate religion in public life. As the Lutherans saw it, Catholic property was handed back almost without question whereas they were required to submit extensive documentation and to go through lengthy administrative procedures. The situation of the ELCLi was somewhat closer to that of the Ingrian Church in Russia than to the Lutheran Churches in Estonia and Latvia, which were historic folk or people's churches. It seemed to Mattson that the Lithuanian Lutheran Church did not have much margin for survival because it still had to exist in a somewhat hostile environment, and did not appear to have an organized theological training program.³²⁹

Nevertheless, theological education in Lithuania was developing and a Theological Department was set up in 1992 at the University of Klaipėda, within the Faculty of Humanities. The department was profiled as a Lutheran and Reformed churches' education unit. Its stance was quite liberal in that it allowed both males and females to study evangelical theology to become pastors. The establishment of the department brought the Lithuanian Church, for the first time, into contact with "biblical criticism of a higher critical nature".³³⁰ At that point the Missouri Synod may not have had any contact with this particular education center.

The first meeting was important, but not fully convincing concerning the nature of Lutheranism in Lithuania, according to Mattson: "I cannot be certain how strong Confessional consciousness is in this church body".³³¹ The "assessment" of the degree of confessional or theological position was at the core of the Missourian mission's activities.

The uncertainty prevailed when Mattson made a second visit in May 1994. Bishop Kalvanas told him that the Lithuanian Church had 12 active pastors, and that only the Bishop had received formal theological education. Even though it had been sorting itself out since 1989, it did not have a training program of its own. Some students had been sent abroad to the USA (ELCA) and institutions in Europe, for example, and one student joined the Finnish training program in St. Petersburg. The Lithuanian Church made the decision to start a training program in Klaipėda, in an institution called the Klaipėda

³²⁸ Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011.

³²⁹ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Taurage and Kaunas April 2, 1992. For more on the Catholic Church in Lithuania after Communism see Hannele Harju: *Katolinen kirkko ja kommunismin jälkeinen murros Liettuassa 1990–2000* (2007).

³³⁰ Hermann 1998, 263; Petkūnas 2001, 29, 32; Petkūnas 2007, 18; Talonen 2010, 149.

³³¹ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Taurage and Kaunas April 2, 1992.

Evangelical Theological Center. Mattson wrote in his report that the Missouri Synod should keep in touch with this small and poor Church, but added that the LCMS World Mission was still in the information-gathering stage in Lithuania and it would probably take some time to figure out how to cooperate with the Lithuanian Lutheran Church.³³²

The Missouri Synod, at least on the official level, had stronger reservations about cooperating with the Lithuanians than with the Latvian and Ingrian Lutherans. One reason could have been, as already mentioned, that Dr. Mattson was not sure where the Lithuanian Lutherans stood on confessionalism.

Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Sr. died in 1995 and his son Jonas Kalvanas Jr. took his place. Kalvanas Jr. was elected Bishop at the July 1995 synod of the Lithuanian Church. There was also a discussion about the ordination of women, and a letter from the North Elbian Church was read aloud. The writer insisted that women should be allowed to become pastors and implied, according to Ketola (2009), that if the Lithuanians did not comply with the demands of the North Elbian Church it would make its own decisions. The potential threat was that it would withdraw its financial support to the Lithuanian Church. The synod decided to abstain from the vote on the issue and a theological commission was established to investigate the question of the ordination of women.³³³

On the whole, the diaspora churches of the Baltic Lutherans tended to lean more towards the Lutheran World Federation than towards the Missouri Synod. Despite the different theological settings the Churches in exile felt they could not cut off relations with “mainland” Churches. As in the Lithuanian case, the connections were considered worth maintaining because otherwise the Missouri Synod might fill the gap. This positioning became clear when Hans G. Dumpys, Bishop of the Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Diaspora (since 1993, earlier the Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Exile), following the old custom, reported to Dr. Tibor Görög, the LWF Secretary for Europe, on his trip to Lithuania in the summer of 1995:

Moreover, we should remain engaged in order to provide balance to the efforts by the Missouri Synod to actively propagate its views, such as opposition to women’s ordination, a wooden orthodoxy, a rigid confessionalism, and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. Some pastors and laypersons in Lithuania are quite receptive to this theological stance. If we disengage from Lithuania, Missouri surely will fill the ensuing vacuum.³³⁴

³³² ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Vilnius May 15, 1994. Darius Petkūnas graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree in Theology from The Theological Institute of Tallinn in June, 1994.

³³³ Hermann 1998, 257; Petkūnas 2007, 6; Ketola 2009, 232; Talonen 2010, 143. The role of the bishops was of special importance in the smallest Lutheran Church of the Baltic and Ingrian Churches. Bishops Kalvanas Sr. and junior were the most active in establishing connections from the Lithuanian side to the Missouri Synod at first. Many were active on the Missourian side, too, particularly Daniel Mattson and Timothy Quill. (Mindaugas Sabutis interview 28.9.2011) According to Quill (2002, 362), Bishop Kalvanas united the Lithuanian Church after it had gone through a period of strife and division in the early 1990s. He personally valued the study of theology, especially the Lutheran Confessions, and he also placed a high value on theological education for his pastors.

³³⁴ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Lithuania 1991–1997 Dumpys to Görög et al. 20.9.1995.

Here again, the influence of the Missouri Synod is clearly visible. Its presence had an impact on the decision-making on many levels, concerning not only the Lutheran Church on Lithuanian soil but also the Lithuanian Lutherans in exile.

2.3 The Global Lutheran Level

2.3.1 Gateway Arch over Riga? ELCA suspicions

Freelance writer Bill Yoder wrote an article, “Gateway Arch over Riga? Mission groups target Marxist turf” for the ELCA’s newspaper *The Lutheran* in February 1992. He claimed that the Missouri Synod had created “Luther Houses” with the intention of spreading Lutheran thought to Bratislava, Czechoslovakia and St. Petersburg, and potentially also to Budapest, Berlin and Warsaw. *The Lutheran* also revealed that the LCMS International Lutheran Laymen’s League had helped to establish a seminary in Latvia, and was beginning a Riga-based radio ministry under the direction of Reverend Wallace Schulz, a speaker for The Lutheran Hour.³³⁵

The work in Latvia was connected to Russia. According to Bill Yoder, the LCMS intended to use the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Soviet Union (DELKSU), or ELCROS as referred to in this research, as its vehicle of entry into the former Soviet Union. He cited Wallace Schulz: “There’s a German Lutheran infrastructure there. We’re using that as a stepping stone hopefully to get from there to the other peoples of the Soviet Union”.³³⁶ This merely confirms that Riga was a key city in the area.

Bill Yoder also wrote that non-ELCA Lutherans in the USA, referring to the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod, interpreted current trends as movements in their own favor. For example, in November 1991, LCMS officials had a cordial meeting with the head of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Alexy II, who had close connections with President Yeltsin. Missouri Synod representatives had said the two Churches held similar views on the role of women, and were skeptical about the ecumenical movement. In Thomas Sluberski’s words: “We found that we have very few problems with the kind of Lutherans we found there. Many of them are more conservative than we are”.³³⁷

Yoder concluded that the spirit of the times no longer favored the centralized approach of the Lutheran World Federation. The LWF General Secretary Gunnar Stålsett described Eastern European Churches as “institutions with their own integrity. They should not be bought by money or unduly influenced.” Stålsett went on to express his concern that some of the support was “easy money” that “will have an in-built controlling element”: “That bill will need to be paid later by the local churches.”³³⁸ Hence, there were certainly fears

³³⁵ Yoder 1992.

³³⁶ Yoder 1992.

³³⁷ Yoder 1992; Luukkanen 1997, 190.

³³⁸ Yoder 1992.

in the Lutheran World Federation that the Missouri Synod would expect theological returns on its investment in the long run.

Some people in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America were also concerned about the Missourian influence in Eastern Europe. ELCA officials believed that bilateral projects between North America and Eastern Europe would be likely to undercut the existing LWF programs. Reverend David Nelson of the ELCA Division for Global Mission had mixed feelings about the Missouri Synod's work in Eastern Europe. He realized that its "activity has been welcomed there", but "We are suspicious, wondering about their true intentions. But I can perfectly understand East European willingness to accept non-LWF funding when one needs to do everything at once." He also added that the LCMS "has the right to be in relationship with other Lutherans."³³⁹

On the other hand, Thomas Sluberski, Director of the Luther House in St. Petersburg, emphasized the LCMS' willingness to cooperate with other Lutheran missions, giving an example: "We are working with Martin-Luther-Bund in Erlangen, Germany... They are very friendly to us. They have a lot of money." The freelance writer Bill Yoder predicted that a coalition of Lutheran forces rivaling the LWF could yet come into existence in Eastern Europe,³⁴⁰ a prediction that came closer and closer to the reality in later years.

Not everybody was very happy about the way Yoder's article was written. Reverend Dr. Thomas R. Sluberski was saddened and angered at the tone and attitudes it reflected. He wrote privately to the editorial office of *The Lutheran*: "One would think you would rejoice that Lutherans of any stripe are doing mission work in Russia knowing how many cults are already there in force". He continued: "Instead you attempt to divide and denigrate the efforts of others". Sluberski explained why he thought he had been chosen to go to Russia: he had "worked for the LWF, was Executive Director of the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, have a German doctorate, have close friends among the Orthodox clergy, etc." Hence, "I do not fit into the perceived Missouri mold." All these things should have sent a message to the ELCA and the LWF.³⁴¹

It appears from Sluberski's response that Yoder had suggested in his article that only mainline Churches such as the ELCA were sending personnel who were highly trained and invited by the national Churches. Sluberski countered the accusation, insisting that others were highly trained and had been invited: "I think, for example, that I'm fairly highly trained for what I am to do and have three official invitations from different Russian organizations for myself with offers of more".³⁴²

Sluberski wrote that he had asked the LCMS Board for Mission Services and President Ralph Bohlmann some difficult questions before he took the post in Russia. They had assured him that they were not interested "in exporting church divisions, sectarianism, administrative waste, and foreign domination." Despite the fact that some ELCA people may have had some questions regarding Missouri work in Russia, Sluberski assured them:

³³⁹ Yoder 1992.

³⁴⁰ Yoder 1992.

³⁴¹ LWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Sluberski to The Lutheran 14.2.1992.

³⁴² LWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Sluberski to The Lutheran 14.2.1992.

“I think we can work together in the greatest mission opening Lutherans have seen since the end of WWII or the gathering of the ethnic Lutherans in the US.” He knew about the relations between the Missourians and both ELCA and the LWF: “I worked for the LWF in the days when the Missouri almost joined. I’m not sure what’s happened to that spirit now.”³⁴³

Thomas Sluberski sent his response to Yoder’s article to the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, with an explanation in which he pointed out that he had been chosen to work in Russia partly because of the “message” it would send to the ELCA and the LWF. But, he added: “Somehow the “message” didn’t get through”. He asked the General Secretary to contact President Bohlmann “before the damage gets any worse.”³⁴⁴ It therefore seems that, even before the work of the Missouri Synod had really started in Russia and the Baltic states, the situation was heated on the international inter-Lutheran level.

The President of the Missouri Synod, Ralph A. Bohlmann, even contacted the Lutheran World Federation European Missions Secretary Dr. Tibor Görög, expressing his pleasure that Dr. Daniel L. Mattson would have the opportunity to visit him and to give him a more detailed report on the activities of the Missouri Synod in Eastern Europe. He assured Dr. Görög: “We have no desire to establish congregations in competition with the churches in Eastern Europe,” adding that the desire of the Missouri Synod was to be of assistance to them by providing personnel or materials within the limitations of the resources that could be directed to Eastern Europe. Resource gathering had been quite successful, as Bohlmann said: “The appeal to our members for special contributions toward this end has been extremely gratifying.”³⁴⁵

In addition to these private responses Dr. Mattson wrote a public response to Bill Yoder’s article that was published two months later in *The Lutheran*. He pointed out that no matter how one evaluated the Missouri Synod’s efforts in the area, the needs were real, as was the request for help. He criticized Yoder’s article because he did not believe that it fairly represented the ELCA people, the Division for Global Mission or the LWF. Yoder appeared to attribute nervousness about strangers, distrust of motives and suspicion about intentions chiefly to people connected with the ELCA or the LWF. Mattson wrote that he was happy that the LCMS people apparently had talked to the reporter in an open and unguarded way, but they certainly could not be held responsible for the context in which their abbreviated remarks were placed. Mattson concluded his response: “May I suggest that people are more likely to be helped if we do not give free reign to our doubts and suspicions but are involved in open and honest dialogue?”³⁴⁶

All in all, Bill Yoder’s article revealed the deep suspiciousness of the ELCA, the LWF and the so-called mainstream Lutherans about the Missouri Synod. In the past the LCMS had used tactics that were not always creditable such as breaking up joint efforts and not

³⁴³ LWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Sluberski to The Lutheran 14.2.1992.

³⁴⁴ LWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Sluberski to the General Secretary of the LWF 14.2.1992.

³⁴⁵ LWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Bohlmann to the Görög 16.3.1992.

³⁴⁶ Mattson 1992.

joining the LWF, thus from this perspective the negative inter-Lutheran reaction was understandable. Perhaps the Missouri Synod was now ready and willing to develop a more functional relation: it was particularly important when its influence was rapidly increasing in Eastern Europe for it to establish contacts with many players in the area.

2.3.2 Sharing information with the LWF

The Lutheran World Federation was a major player in the Baltic and Russian area, being in contact with its member Churches during Soviet times and increasingly at the beginning of 1991. It expressed its solidarity with Baltic and Russian Lutherans on several occasions, and in an attempt to ensure the survival of the Lutheran Churches in turmoil, even sent telegrams to President Mikhail Gorbachev.³⁴⁷

However, as already noted, totally new contacts were made with Lutheran Churches outside the LWF following the huge upheavals in Eastern Europe, including the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod. The LWF was challenged as the non-LWF Churches strengthened their influence in the area.

Dr. Daniel Mattson's trip report gives an insider's view on how some of the Missourians saw the situation at the beginning of the 1990s:

I feel that is critical that we maximize our contacts with the Lutheran churches of Eastern Europe. These churches are probably closer to Missouri in theology than to the European churches of the LWF. The LWF would like them to believe that there is no alternative to the "communion" of Lutheran churches centering in Geneva and that the Missourians are contentious, divisive and hopelessly out of date. For too long a time, we have allowed those people who do not agree with the LCMS – including many who still bear the baggage of LCMS problems from the '70's – to define us.³⁴⁸

The above extract alludes to the long-rooted ideological conflict between the LCMS and the LWF. At least three aspects stand out. First, the fact that the Lutheran Churches in Eastern Europe were conservative, and therefore closer to the Missouri Synod in their theology, made it legitimate for the Missourians to become involved. Second, LCMS people felt they had to offer an alternative to LWF communion so as to give a broader picture of world Lutheranism. Third, it seems that many Missourians really wanted to give a "facelift" to their image in Europe and on the global Lutheran level. Their connections with the Baltic and Ingrian Lutherans gave them a strong platform on which to renew the role of the Missouri Synod and make it more active.

This need for a facelift came from the many prejudices against the Missouri Synod, some of which were more relevant than others. In many places LCMS followers had to listen to stories of "the Missouri's sins of the past". As Mattson said: "I mean Europeans have memories like elephants", and sometimes had to add, "that was then and that's not

³⁴⁷ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Lithuania 1991–1997 Görög to Zukauskas 8.2.1991.

³⁴⁸ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip report, Eastern Europe, Retrospect and Prospect.

now!” The Missourians, or at least Mattson/BFMS, wanted to wipe the slate clean, but that was not very easy.³⁴⁹

The danger inherent in the LWF/LCMS controversy to its mission work was recognized on the official levels of the Missouri Synod. Dr. Mattson, for example, had heard stories that territorial Churches in Europe were “furious and highly upset” because of the rumors that the Missouri Synod was going to establish a new LCMS Church there. He wondered whether he could do something to defuse some of the tensions, and therefore decided to go first to Geneva to talk to the people who were in charge of the LWF before visiting a single person in Central and Eastern Europe.³⁵⁰

As a result, Daniel Mattson and three Lutheran World Federation representatives met in Geneva, Switzerland, on 18 March 1992. The discussion was held in the office of Dr. Ishmael Noko, Director of the LWF/DMD. Dr. Tibor Görög, LWF/DMD Europe Secretary, and Dr. Olli-Pekka Lassila, LWF/DMD Associate Europe Secretary, were also present. Noko welcomed Mattson and gave him a brief overview of the work of the Department for Mission and Development. According to the Summary of Discussions, all the participants introduced themselves to each other, so this must have been the first meeting of the LWF and the LCMS within the Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran context. Mattson briefed the LWF staff on the Missouri Synod’s involvement in Eastern Europe.³⁵¹ Clearly the Synod was not trying to hide this from the Lutheran World Federation.

Interestingly, before visiting Geneva Dr. Mattson had formulated some principles to guide the Missouri Synod’s work in Central and Eastern Europe. One of these was that in situations in which there was no existing Lutheran Church and there appeared to be a need, congregations could be planted. He already knew that the LWF people would ask him about that, and “sure enough they did!”. However, Mattson apparently tried to emphasize at the meeting that, as a matter of policy, the Missouri Synod would work only through established Churches.³⁵²

Some concern was expressed in the discussions about how the Missouri Synod was perceived in Europe. It seems that its reputation was not stainless. Some mistakes must have been made, and it was agreed that the best way to deal with the problem would be to set up a process for sharing information for coordination purposes, and “to ensure that the churches are assisted in such a way that errors are not repeated”. Dr. Ishmael Noko noted that the two organizations had already cooperated along similar lines on matters concerning the Philippines and Papua New Guinea, for example. He expressed the hope that the LWF and the Missouri Synod would make suggestions on how to approach Eastern and Central Europe in a more coordinated way, remarking on the potential for internal conflict in the Churches in Eastern Europe. He suggested a deliberate and

³⁴⁹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Lassila to Görög, Noko & Stålsett 31.3.1993; Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011.

³⁵⁰ Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011.

³⁵¹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Summary of Discussions 18.3.1992; Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011; Hjelm 1997, 518.

³⁵² ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Summary of Discussions 18.3.1992; Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011.

integrated approach that might avoid such conflicts. Noko emphasized that the common heritage of the two organizations called for synchronization.³⁵³

One reason why Dr. Mattson went to Geneva was because the Missouri Synod recognized that it was a newcomer in Eastern Europe, and had no wish to repeat previous mistakes: Lutheranism would be best served if the LWF and the LCMS remained in constant contact to ensure that contributions would be made as part of a total program. The Synod wanted to work in the spirit of mutual knowledge sharing. It recognized that its activities in Eastern Europe were limited in terms of time and finance, and would be supported by special offerings and not at the expense of existing programs. The Missourians would also appreciate being involved in or informed about meetings concerning Eastern Europe sponsored by the LWF Department for Mission and Development.³⁵⁴

It was also agreed that the general direction of the LWF and the LCMS “would be to seek a modality for sharing information and to avoid duplication ... in the spirit of building up and assisting the Lutheran family in Central and Eastern Europe”. At the end of the meeting Dr. Noko thanked Dr. Mattson for his visit and expressed his wish that such positive exchanges between the LWF and the LCMS would continue in the future. The LWF staff thought it had been a good experience meeting Mattson, and had a very positive impression about cooperating with him.³⁵⁵ Daniel Mattson was undoubtedly a good choice for building bridges with mainstream Lutherans in Europe. All in all, information sharing between the LWF and the LCMS was at the core of a certain kind of “road map” drawn up at the meeting.

Starting from Mattson’s visit in March 1992, the sharing of information continued as agreed. The LWF coordination network for the Lutheran Churches in the Baltic States and the rest of the former Soviet Union met for the fourth time in Vilnius on 20–25 February 1993. The previous meetings had been held in Copenhagen (1990), Kiel (1991) and Uppsala (1992), hence the one in Vilnius was the first held in the area of the former Soviet Union. There were participants at least from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Germany, the USA, Finland, Sweden and Denmark.³⁵⁶

Interestingly, at the request of its officials the Missouri Synod was represented at the meeting even though it was for the LWF coordination network. That request aroused some mixed feelings among the other participants because the Missourian work in the area had not been problem-free from the LWF perspective. Nevertheless, and perhaps to the surprise of many, the Synod was readily accepted. The Missourians presented and openly

³⁵³ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Summary of Discussions 18.3.1992.

³⁵⁴ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Summary of Discussions 18.3.1992.

³⁵⁵ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Summary of Discussions 18.3.1992; ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Lassila to Görög, Noko & Stålsett 31.3.1993; Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011.

³⁵⁶ SKA SFRV F10G:2 Kiivit, Lahtinen, Nilsson & Raulo to the participants of the LWF coordinating meeting in Vilnius February 20–25, 1993; SKA SFRV F10G:2 Birgitta Handog: Rapport från Lutherska världsförbundets koordineringskonferens för samarbete med lutherska kyrkor i Baltikum och Ryssland, Vilnius den 20–25.2.1993; SKA SFRV F10G:2 Aarno Lahtinen, Sylvia Raulo: Raportti LML:n Baltian ja Venäjän luterilaisten kirkkojen koordinaatiokouksesta Vilnassa 20.–25.2.1993.

distributed their mission-strategy draft at the conference. More precisely, it was the mission strategy of the BFMS and the LLL for Russia, the substance of which is described in Chapter 2.1.1 of this work. David Nelson, the ELCA Europe Secretary and Mattson's counterpart, remarked to Olli-Pekka Lassila that the willingness of Allan Buckman to share the "Russian Strategy Statement" with the other participants at the meeting in Vilnius was a new feature.³⁵⁷ There certainly was an effort to share information on the part of both the LCMS and the LWF.

A bigger problem on the general level was that, over and over again, the Finns, Germans and Americans had many strategies, but no one would talk about them before carrying them out. For the *summum bonum*, the highest good, it would have been wiser to develop strategies in cooperation with all the major players, namely Churches and other organizations in the field. In addition, as already noted, the sharing of information was an internal problem among the Missourians and many others. Dr. Daniel Mattson mentions as an organizational example that the Lutheran Hour Ministries were "two miles down the road from us", and despite that "they would never talk about what they had planned until there suddenly appears a field and then you get all kinds of angry messages".³⁵⁸

Birgitta Handog, who was representing the Church of Sweden, wondered in her travel report if the Missourian engagement in Russia would eventually lead to a new Russian-speaking Lutheran Church. She feared this because of the stated plan in the Missourians' Mission Strategy to found new Russian-speaking congregations, a demand that the ethnic ELCIR and ELCROS Churches might not be able to meet. Handog suggested that a principle resolution should be made with other cooperating Churches on how to work together with the Missouri Synod. Finnish representatives Aarno Lahtinen and Sylvia Raulo had similar doubts, and anticipated that the work done by the Missouri Synod through Russian-speaking congregations would further the development of a Russian-language Church.³⁵⁹ Thus, although the information sharing was surprisingly open, the substance of the Mission Strategy raised problems everywhere. Without its "church planting" possibility the Missouri Synod might have had it easier in Europe, but could the Missourians have looked honestly at themselves in the mirror if that had been the case?

Daniel Mattson did the right thing in visiting the LWF before going anywhere else in Eastern Europe. The LWF's positions affected the national Churches. Even if it did not always have a great vision or plan, it was asked for guidance, as in 1993 when the German Lutherans pressed the LWF for information about the Missouri Synod. In November Friedrich Manske wrote to Tibor Görög and Ishmael Noko about the growing involvement

³⁵⁷ SKA SFRV F10G:2 Birgitta Handog: Rapport från Lutherska världsförbundets koordineringskonferens för samarbete med lutherska kyrkor i Baltikum och Ryssland, Vilnius den 20–25.2.1993; SKA SFRV F10G:2 Aarno Lahtinen, Sylvia Raulo: Raportti LML:n Baltian ja Venäjän luterilaisten kirkkojen koordinaatiokouksesta Vilnassa 20.–25.2.1993; ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Lassila to Görög, Noko & Stälsett 31.3.1993.

³⁵⁸ Daniel Mattson interview 11.2.2011.

³⁵⁹ SKA SFRV F10G:2 Birgitta Handog: Rapport från Lutherska världsförbundets koordineringskonferens för samarbete med lutherska kyrkor i Baltikum och Ryssland, Vilnius den 20–25.2.1993; SKA SFRV F10G:2 Aarno Lahtinen, Sylvia Raulo: Raportti LML:n Baltian ja Venäjän luterilaisten kirkkojen koordinaatiokouksesta Vilnassa 20.–25.2.1993.

of the Synod in Eastern Europe. According to Manske, the member Churches of the German National Committee (GNC) had expressed great concern about this development and asked about the position of the Lutheran World Federation in this context. It seemed to Manske that these German Churches were asking the LWF for counsel in dealing with the Missouri Synod. The GNC wanted to know how the LWF assessed this development, and also what its actual discussion position was in relation to the Missouri Synod.³⁶⁰

Daniel Mattson was not the only Missourian who actively shared information. Dr. Robert Kolb visited Geneva fairly early on, probably in 1994, during his stay in Europe. According to him, “the Hungarian”, probably referring to Tibor Görög, at the European Desk of the LWF did not know anything about the Missouri Synod, and “What he did know was negative.” Kolb said that he “Xeroxed a whole bunch of stuff on just a simple historical stuff for him.” Kolb visited him every year after that, and later he visited Olli-Pekka Lassila, Görög’s successor, a couple of times. According to Kolb, there were good, open and honest discussions with both of the LWF men.³⁶¹

Obviously many Missourian officials tried to play a “fair game” as they wanted to be open and reliable. Dr. Daniel Mattson supported this kind of attitude: “Because the Lutheran churches of Central and Eastern Europe are members of the LWF, the LCMS World Mission has made every effort to keep channels of communication open.”³⁶²

All in all, the information sharing between the Missouri Synod and the Lutheran World Federation, for the most part, worked out as agreed when Daniel Mattson visited the LWF staff for the first time in March 1992. The Synod shared its strategy plans and so forth, and the LWF invited or allowed Missourians to participate in the LWF coordination meetings regarding Eastern Europe.

2.3.3 From Antiqua to Adelaide – confessional contacts strengthened

The Lutheran World Federation was not the only international body connecting Lutheran Churches. Two completely independent Lutheran organizations were established on the global level, the larger one being the Lutheran World Federation and the other one the International Lutheran Conference/Council (ILC). Both of them brought Lutheran Churches together, but in their own specific ways. Reinhard Böttcher wrote about the relationship between the two organizations in his unpublished article *Lutheran Heritage in Contest: On the Relationship between the International Lutheran Council and the Lutheran World Federation* (2005). According to his analysis, the biblical and confessional foundations of self-understanding in both were similar, although the theological language was based on different hermeneutical premises.³⁶³

³⁶⁰ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Manske to Görög, Noko & al. 22.11.1993; ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Brand Interoffice Memorandum 6.12.1993; KKA Böttcher 2005, 3.

³⁶¹ Robert Kolb interview 11.2.2011.

³⁶² ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Geneva 4.–6.5.1994.

³⁶³ KKA Böttcher 2005, 1, 2; ILC History 2005. “The origins of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) can be traced to a meeting of leaders of confessional Lutheran churches in Uelzen, Germany in July 1952. A

The meeting of the International Lutheran Conference was held from 30 March to 1 April 1992. One of the recurring themes was the desire for closer ties among confessional Lutheran church bodies worldwide. The idea was to structure the ILC to facilitate more involvement of and cooperation among the bodies, rather than only among their leaders. It was not set up to allow mutual help between Churches. The need for a group of Churches and not just a group of leaders was mentioned in Hong Kong in 1991.³⁶⁴

The call for closer relations was answered when a new worldwide association of Lutheran Churches was founded on 9 September 1993, in Antigua, Guatemala, Central America. Representatives of Lutheran Churches from 18 countries who were attending the 15th International Lutheran Conference approved the constitution and guiding principles of the new body, and the name was changed from the “International Lutheran Conference” to the “International Lutheran Council”. The organization’s members were eager to work together to maintain strong confessional Lutheranism, although ILC membership did not imply full fellowship. President Barry summarized the position of the organization: “the ILC has committed itself to the inspired and infallible Holy Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions as the correct exposition of these Holy Scriptures”.³⁶⁵

The Missouri Synod has had a very strong role in the International Lutheran Council. It is the most influential of the conservative ILC Churches, and most of the participating Churches in all six continents are related to it. Many Lutheran free Churches have been “generally closely related in confessional stance and relationship to the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and the International Lutheran Council.” The International Lutheran Council “seeks to strengthen confessional Lutheran theology and practice in its member churches as well as closer relations between them.” There is no need to overemphasize the size of the ILC: it has a loose organizational structure and meets biennially.³⁶⁶

The International Lutheran Council was in contact with the Lutheran World Federation. Edwin Lehman, Chair of ILC and President of the Lutheran Church – Canada, visited the LWF in November 1993. He met Gunnar Stålsett, Ishmael Noko and Eugene Brand, LWF Director of the Department of Studies and Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, Worship and Research on Church Questions. Lehman maintained that the ILC

second meeting was held in 1959 in Oakland, California to discuss the topic “The Fellowship Between our Churches.” This was followed in 1963 by a third meeting in Cambridge, England, where the name “International Lutheran Theological Conference” was chosen for these informal international gatherings. During the next three decades eleven more informal gatherings of the heads of confessional Lutheran Churches took place. The ILC as a council of Church bodies officially came into existence in 1993 in Antigua, Guatemala with the adoption of a constitution by representatives from Lutheran Church bodies from all six continents.”

³⁶⁴ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Visit of Edwin Lehman 25.11.1993; Canadian Lutheran no.4 July 1992 Confessional Lutheran leaders seek closer church ties.

³⁶⁵ ALCMS International Lutheran Conference International Lutheran Council General Information ILC (1993-); Canadian Lutheran no.5 October 1993 International Lutheran Council formed; ILC SIC 2013; Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011. According to Pfabe (1998, 139) the Missouri Synod joined the ILC in 1995 “since membership in the ILC does not involve pulpit and altar fellowship where it has not been established, the LCMS declare that it is a member of the ILC.” The ILC clearly profiled itself as a federation, not as a communion like the LWF.

³⁶⁶ Meyer 1963, 24–25; Gassman 2001 j, 125; Gassman 2001 k, 158.

was established as a successor body to the International Lutheran Conference, despite its insistence that it was not a mini-LWF, and that it did not have a negative self-understanding. Lehman pointed out that the ILC's agenda was not contra-LWF, and that it needed a more positive image. The LWF did not expect a formal relationship with the ILC of the kind it had with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.³⁶⁷

Interestingly, five of the ILC's member Churches were also members of the LWF: El Salvador, The Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Korea, and Nigeria. Lehman did not see double membership as a problem, although some people did. The issue had not arisen since 1991. The LWF General Secretary replied that dual membership was not a problem to the LWF. In fact, the Hong Kong Lutheran Church was the only one to leave following the LWF's Budapest declaration of pulpit and altar fellowship. Dual memberships could become a problem if the ILC was to set a course against the LWF, and the problem would be worse for those with dual membership. Lehman had some questions. What would happen when conciliation was needed in a Church with dual membership? If the LWF were to act, would it invite the LCMS or the ILC? The General Secretary replied that the LWF would not normally set up a three-part relationship and it was up to the Church to consult: the autonomy of its members was paramount. The General Secretary went on to say that a question had arisen among its member Churches concerning the strategy and the goals of the Missouri Synod in Eastern Europe. A comment was added to the notes of the meeting afterwards: it was Brand's impression that at several points Lehman seemed to suggest that the ILC and the LCMS did not necessarily have the same general agenda.³⁶⁸

The 16th Conference of the International Lutheran Council met in Adelaide, Australia, on 23–30 September 1995. The delegates were representatives of confessional Lutheran Churches in 22 countries. What is relevant for this research is the fact that the Archbishop of the Latvian Lutheran Church, Jānis Vanags, was specially invited to the conference, which he attended for the first time. Dr. Samuel Nafzger, who was asked to serve as the executive secretary to the ILC in 1994, had recommended that Vanags be invited to the meeting and to give a report on Lutheranism in the Baltic countries following glasnost. This was the first time Nafzger had met anyone from the Baltic countries. The conference encouraged the Latvian church and its archbishop to solve the problems the Latvian Lutherans faced in establishing the Church following national independence. Furthermore, the conference “invited the Archbishop to call upon ILC member churches for whatever help they can provide.”³⁶⁹

Attending the meeting made Archbishop Vanags and the Latvian Church better known in confessional circles, and ever since the Adelaide conference the ILC has invited

³⁶⁷ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Visit of Edwin Lehman 25.11.1993.

³⁶⁸ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Visit of Edwin Lehman 25.11.1993. On the development of women's ministry in the Lutheran Church of El Salvador, a Church that arose from LCMS missionary work, see Heli Aaltonen: *Fe y esperanza : women's road to leadership and ministry in the Lutheran Church of El Salvador 1952–2009* (2013).

³⁶⁹ Pfabe 1998, 136; LA no. 6 November 1995 Confessional Lutheran Churches met in Australia; ILC SIC 2013; Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011.

Lutheran bishops not only from Latvia but also from Lithuania and Ingria to the meetings.³⁷⁰ Vanags' presence at the ILC conference opened the door to the Lithuanians and the Ingrians, allowing them to share their experiences with other conservative Lutherans on the global level.

Overall, the ILC functioned "as a form of mutual encouragement" because the LWF was seen to be going more and more liberal. The ILC responded to the need for mutual fellowship and encouragement because of the developments in mainstream Lutheranism.³⁷¹ Conservative or confessional Lutherans tried to engage in international cooperation to help them face the changes in mainstream Lutheran thinking worldwide. This confessional Lutheran internationalization reached the Ingrian, Latvian and Lithuanian Lutherans during the mid-1990s.

³⁷⁰ Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011.

³⁷¹ Leif Camp interview 10.6.2011.

III Balancing between doctrine and church politics, 1996–1998

3.1 Drawing the line

3.1.1 The case of the Augsburg Institute – support for the historic people’s church

The activities and teachings of the Missouri Synod and other American Lutherans aroused controversy in the Latvian Church in 1996. Latvians who were strict supporters of the confessional Lutheran line ran into problems with the leadership of the Latvian Lutherans. The problems related to the Augsburg Institute, which was founded in 1995 and was connected to the LCMS-affiliated Lutheran Heritage Foundation.³⁷²

Dark clouds were gathering to threaten the cooperation between the Missouri Synod and the Latvian Church when Dr. Daniel Mattson met Archbishop Jānis Vanags, who was elected to serve for a second term at the beginning of 1996. The Archbishop raised a number of problematic issues. He did not doubt the Missouri Synod’s integrity in dealing with the Latvian Church, but he wanted to make sure it was aware of the fact that some of its people were using their supposed connections with the Synod to pursue their own agendas. He was also concerned about the lack of information from the Lutheran Heritage Foundation and its plans for the Augsburg Institute. Mattson described the polarized situation of the Latvian Church and the Archbishop’s difficult position in mediating “those on the left who would tear the church apart because it does not ordain women” and “some on the right who would divide the church because it does not move fast enough to resolve all controversial issues”.³⁷³

Daniel Mattson also visited the headquarters of the Lutheran Heritage Foundation and the Augsburg Institute, where he met, among others, Reverend Ilars Plūme, the LHF Latvia President. They believed that the Augsburg Institute intended to offer an alternative theological education to Latvian students, that classes had already begun, and that real training was set to begin in a couple of years. Mattson, in particular, asked Plūme and others whether the Augsburg Institute was a project of the Lutheran Heritage Foundation.

³⁷² Talonen 2007, 264; Talonen 2010, 154. “LHF received Recognized Service Organization within the LCMS in 1998.” (LHF FF 2013)

³⁷³ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia January 30 - February 2, 1996. “In Latvia archbishop retains his title for life, but he is elected to serve for a three-year term”. The General Secretary of the LWF, Ishmael Noko, had visited Latvia and deliberately wanted to show his support to Vanags. Vanags’ determinate post depended on the voting of the Church assembly, but fortunately he had the majority behind him. If this had not happened, according to Olli-Pekka Lassila, the Latvian Church could have been split. (ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 FINLAND 1991 Lassila to Pinola 26.1.1996) One earlier reason for the controversy was the discussion about the Porvoo Agreement in 1995. There was growing opposition to it and Archbishop Vanags, wanting to avoid the split, decided not to sign it. (Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Stålsett 2005, x)

The reply was that in fact the two organizations were separate and were connected only by the fact that some people worked for both.³⁷⁴

Controversies with the Augsburg Institute in Riga continued and the leaders of the Latvian Church were coming to the conclusion that it was the intention of the Institute to split it up. At that time, according to Mattson, they assumed that it was trying to influence as many people as possible, claiming to be a loyal servant of the Church so that it would be able to serve as many congregations as possible when it revealed its whole agenda. Its newspaper was cited, for example, because it appeared to support the Church in its editorial policy but attacked the Archbishop through the publication of interviews. Mattson explained in his trip report that the reason why these issues were raised within the LCMS was that the Augsburg Institute was located in the same building as the Lutheran Heritage Foundation and that “the staff of the Institute is also the staff of the Lutheran Heritage Foundation.” These two organizations were probably separate, but one of them, the LHF, at least facilitated the existence of the other, the Augsburg Institute.³⁷⁵

The situation with the Augsburg Institute and the LHF was difficult for the Missouri Synod. The LHF therefore began to sever its links with the Augsburg Institute and some of its staff. This was the kind of development the Latvian Church was looking for. After some changes it promised to welcome closer connections with the LHF and expressed an interest in being even more involved in its work, being well aware of the importance of having properly translated materials. The Lutheran Heritage Foundation was very adept at publishing books and also at promoting Lutheran theology and education. Especially at first, developments in cooperation, meaning translation, printing and distributing Lutheran books, were considered positive by both counterparts, the LHF and the Latvian Church.³⁷⁶

People who were connected with the Augsburg Institute also had very close contacts with some of the Missourians, and some of them asked if they could start a scholarship program for Latvian students at Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne. However, the Missouri Synod contacted the Latvian Church on the matter, which decided it would be good to ask potential students to sign a four-point agreement: 1) to study diligently and honorably represent the Latvian Church; 2) to keep the Church regularly informed about their progress in their studies; 3) to return to Latvia at a time decided by the Church’s board of directors; and 4) to serve the Latvian Church for five years or to pay back the money that had been spent on the scholarship. What is very interesting is that the potential students refused to sign the agreement, which raised all kinds of questions within the Latvian Church and fuelled the suspicion that a split was envisioned. Nevertheless, the idea of sending students to Ft. Wayne was still welcomed.³⁷⁷

The LHF was also used as a base for the activities of these dissidents, who gradually distanced themselves from the Church. They started their own seminary and their own

³⁷⁴ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia January 30 - February 2, 1996; Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011.

³⁷⁵ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia July 20–23, 1996.

³⁷⁶ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia July 20–23, 1996; Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011.

³⁷⁷ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia July 20–23, 1996.

newspaper *Latvijas Luterānis*, and found themselves in the position of no longer being in fellowship with other pastors and the Church. There were demands for those who wanted to be in fellowship with them to be tested in their faith and doctrine.³⁷⁸

According to Reverend Plūme, closed communion had been practiced in several Latvian Lutheran congregations for a while, and confessional awareness had become more firmly established. When Plūme was studying in St. Louis in 1994–1995 he read literature on church fellowship, and understood that “we need to come to a kind of unity or conclusion what really is Lutheran faith”. However, the situation got out of hand. Plūme, who was relatively young at the time, thought they were aiming to start serious theological discussions, but the “devil is always a very tricky guy and he somehow changed it all to kind of church politics. It was a sad end of it.”³⁷⁹

The split could be not avoided, and as a result of the controversy Ilars Plūme was expelled from the national Church in Latvia in 1996 because he had begun to practice so-called closed communion³⁸⁰ among the Kekava congregation. The model for this teaching and practice came from the Missouri Synod. At the same time, Plūme gave up the Presidency of the LHF Latvia and left the Church in a split with some other theologians.³⁸¹ The number of people leaving was not big, but the case had other, perhaps much wider implications.

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church was blamed for the incident as, according to Brug (2010), even some LWF publications “were bad-mouthing” this small group for being too “narrowly confessional” and blamed the WELS for the problems, even though “the WELS was unaware of the existence of any of these people or congregations and had exerted no influence on them.”³⁸² It might be true that the Wisconsin Synod people had nothing to do with Plūme’s group, but it seems that its closest partner Church, the ELS, had been active and thus would have been the right target of the blame.

³⁷⁸ Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Talonen 2007, 265.

³⁷⁹ Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011.

³⁸⁰ Close(d) Communion is used in the Missouri Synod. The term used was “closed” and it reflects a strict practice concerning who are allowed to participate in Holy Communion. Nowadays Missourians prefer the term “close communion”, referring to closeness. The term “closed” is a negative limitation of participants and the term “close” is a positive limitation. Protestant churches in North America rarely practice close communion, hence its use is not always unproblematic. The LCMS justify its use, for example, as being in line with the history of Christianity, adding that most Christians nowadays have this close(d) communion. (Kuusniemi 2007, 80–81) Hence, LCMS teaching on admission to the Lord’s Supper is about the same as that of mainstream Lutheranism, the only difference being its slightly stricter policy.

There is a wide spectrum of views in the LCMS on the question of who should be allowed to commune. At one end are those who think that it should only be open to “card-carrying members”, and at the other end are those who would welcome all baptized Christians who understand and believe the meaning of the Lord’s Supper, even if they are not LCMS members. (Kieschnick 2009, 43)

³⁸¹ Brug 2010, 38; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011; Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014; Talonen 2010, 129–130.

³⁸² Brug 2010, 38–39.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS)³⁸³, a small Church of Norwegian origin, was active. It had suspended its fellowship with the Missouri Synod as early as in 1955, and took a very strict position on church fellowship. Its people were active in coming to Latvia, giving lectures and making contacts with students and some pastors. In the background they might have had the idea of creating their own Church in Latvia. The ELS had been in fellowship with and a sister synod of the WELS, and together they were in competition with the LCMS. It was in this context that John Sepherd and Erling Teigen from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod were active in Latvia. Plūme's interpretation was that the Missouri Synod was more actively involved in church politics, at least later on, than the WELS and the ELS people.³⁸⁴

Professor Erling Teigen, who taught in the ELS-operated Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato Minnesota, played a very decisive role in the split. He was presented as, or was thought to be, a member of the Missouri Synod and was, at first, highly respected as a Missourian. Later, however, the Latvians found out that he was not a member of the LCMS: even after many years of international contacts the Latvians were still not very knowledgeable about global Lutheranism. As Archbishop Vanags described it: "In that period I had no idea actually, not much understanding who is who in the American Lutheranism and what the consequences might be".³⁸⁵

Most importantly, the case of the Augsburg Institute forced the Missouri Synod to choose its side in the inner conflict of the Latvian Church. It would "work through the official structures of the church," and support Archbishop Vanags' attempt "to lead the church in a Confessionally responsible way". Furthermore, as Mattson pointed out back then, Vanags "appreciates the efforts the LCMS had made to support his position. I believe that the synod has acted with complete integrity."³⁸⁶

As a result of the support he received, Archbishop Vanags told Dr. Mattson that he would appreciate an invitation to visit the Missouri Synod and to get to know it better, and he would welcome the opportunity to discuss the road ahead for the two church bodies. Mattson described the situation between the Synod and the Latvian Church:

All in all, I think that we are on the way to closer relationships with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia. We have been supportive of Archbishop Vanags and we have worked through regular church structures. We have done what we have said we should do. As a result, our levels of trust and confidence in each other are

³⁸³ The Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The Synod regards itself as the spiritual successor of the Norwegian Synod that was organized 1853 in the USA. (Ylvisaker 1975, 282) The ELS has also been called the "Little Norwegian" synod. (Todd 2003, 33)

³⁸⁴ Brug 2010, 16, 71; Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Schuetze 2000, 383.

³⁸⁵ Brug 2010, 178; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Todd 2003, 39; Talonen 2007, 265. Talonen (2007, 265) also names other men who influenced the strengthening of this kind of confessional approach. Dr. Tom G. Hardt from Sweden was active, for example, one of the leading theologians of the LCMS Robert Preus' visit to Riga in 1994 was influential, and medical doctor-theologian Gunnar Bākulis studied in Mankato, Minnesota, in the early 1990s.

³⁸⁶ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia July 20–23, 1996. The Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland also supported the decision of the Missouri Synod concerning the Latvian Church in the case of the Augsburg Institute. (Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014)

quite high. No one can say what the future will bring, but we have every reason to hope that the foundations we have laid will result in more opportunities for service in the years ahead.³⁸⁷

A belief that was sometimes held in mainstream Lutheranism was that the Missouri Synod was only a divisive actor, but that is not the whole truth. As evidenced here in the case of the Augsburg Institute, Missourian activities were, in a way, both divisive and cohesive, but in the end the LCMS decided to support regular church structures and leaders.

The people at the Augsburg Institute were astonished at the position the Missouri Synod took in the controversy. As Ilars Plūme suggested, the Missourians may have “thought they would convince the Archbishop to become a confessional Lutheran”. Moreover, they tried to exert their influence by financial and intellectual means.³⁸⁸ Some people may have been of the opinion that the Archbishop could have been persuaded to become a full-blooded confessional in Missourian terms, although it looks as if he and the leadership of the Latvian Church were surprisingly independent in their decisions. Furthermore, many Missourians may already have regarded Vanags as a confessional, so there was no need to change him or to support dissidents.

The Missouri Synod chose to support the Latvians on the official level, thus leaving room for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Wisconsin Synod. The Institute of Augsburg Confession chose to cooperate first with the ELS and later with the WELS, which gave financial support to people who were separated from the Latvian Church and from cooperation with the Missouri Synod.³⁸⁹

The Missouri Synod had influence in the Latvian Church and therefore also tried to continue working in “confidence-building ways”, so that it would give “an opportunity in northern Europe to demonstrate the strength and vitality of Confessional Lutheranism”. The influence was not a one-way street, however. Dr. Mattson, Director of Theological Studies with the Synod’s Board for Mission Services, realized the possible influence of the Latvian Church on the Missourian concept of ecumenism. He wrote: “At the same time, since the church has a long and distinguished history of its own and its own set of relationships, it can teach us much.” Furthermore, “its desire to share what it knows with other churches gives the LCMS an opportunity for ecumenical involvement that could be invaluable”.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia July 20–23, 1996.

³⁸⁸ Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011.

³⁸⁹ Brug 2010, 38; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014.

³⁹⁰ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Russia and Latvia trip reports August 9, 1996; ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Havinga to DMD-PRS et al. LCMS News Release 6.12.1996. The position of supporting confessional Lutheranism was generally accepted in the Missouri Synod, as is also evident in President Alvin Barry’s comment: “I really believe that The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod is in a unique position to offer leadership and influence when it comes to holding high and promoting Confessional Lutheranism around the world.” However, according to Dr. Mattson: “At the same time, the LCMS has been frozen out of the ecumenical dialogues and has had little opportunity to share its insights outside of the community of its traditional friends.” (ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Havinga to DMD-PRS et al. LCMS News Release 6.12.1996)

Dr. Mattson's attitude towards the traditional connections of the Latvian Church was respectful. Relations with the Missouri Synod were tested in 1996. The result was that the official church structure would be supported and "separatists" should not. As a consequence, the "separatists", who were formerly in contact with the Missouri Synod, began to switch over to the Wisconsin Synod.³⁹¹ What is of particular note here is the fact that the LCMS did not want to support the separatist Augsburg Institute, even though people in the Institute tried to follow Missourian teachings very carefully, including the practice of closed communion. The Synod chose to portray itself as a loyal ally, but at the same time it had to stretch its understanding of closed communion and the doctrine of fellowship.

To further strengthen relations with the regular church structures, Archbishop Jānis Vanags received an honorary degree (*honoris causa*) from the Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne on 23 May 1997. He wrote to the CTS President Dean O. Wenthe thanking him for the award: "Your decision means not only honor but also entrusts with duty which I will try to treat with all earnestness." President Wenthe replied: "It was a real thrill for us to receive your letter that you can be with us to receive the Doctor of Divinity Degree". Wenthe informed Vanags about the speech he should give at the ceremony: "Our people are very interested in supporting confessional Lutheranism around the globe and your presence will heighten their dedication to that goal".³⁹²

The Missouri Synod had proved itself to be a good partner, but that did not make it the only partner of the Latvian Church, which still did not shift exclusively to the Missourian camp. Relations with the Lutheran World Federation and its members were still active. Was this a result of a wider ecumenical understanding or of a more opportunistic attitude towards church relations? The answer is that there were elements of both. Some Latvians were opportunists, considering both camps, the Missouri Synod/non-LWF and the LWF. According to Ilars Plūme, some believed that a dual partnership could serve their own interests: if they had relations with both sides they could use both sets of resources.³⁹³ For the Latvian Church the double commitment reflected a relatively wider ecumenical perspective, with the benefit of access to all possible resources for the use of the Church.

The Lutheran Heritage Foundation was reorganized as the Latvia Heritage Foundation on 30 September 1997, and had to start from scratch. At the same time the Lutheran group that split from the Latvian Church was trying to become registered as a Church. Pastors

³⁹¹ Talonen 2007, 265; Talonen 2010, 154. The "stretching of doctrines" was potentially dangerous for the mission effort. The Missouri Synod had bad memories of situations when doctrinal conflict turned the focus from the mission. Pastor Herbert Meyer wrote about his observations of LCMS mission work. He was 88 years old in 1996, having been in pastoral ministry for 65 years, and a missionary for 15 years. He connected the new mission interest and the Seminex controversy: "With the 90s, thank God, has come a revival of interest and concern for missions. As the conflict became history, missions had moved to the front burner." He continued: "if we can avoid doctrinal conflict we may be able, under God's grace and blessing, to experience both at home and on the world front similar to that following WW II. World opportunities are tremendous." (ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary June 1996)

³⁹² LELBA F1 A3 L 70 1995–1997 Vanags to Wenthe 5.5.1997; LELB Wenthe to Vanags 6.5.1997; KM "Arkkipiispa Jānis Vanagsille kunniatorhtorin arvo" 35/29.8.1997; SR "Gratulācija" 11/ 8.6.1997.

³⁹³ Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011.

who played leading roles in the Lutheran Heritage Foundation in Riga were now leading this new body.³⁹⁴

All in all, the case of the Augsburg Institute forced the Missouri Synod to choose its side in the inner conflict of the Latvian Lutheran Church, and it chose to support the leadership of the historical folk or people's Church. The Synod, or at least its administration in St. Louis, wanted to prove that it was a loyal and trustworthy ally.³⁹⁵

3.1.2 The Estonians chose a different path

When Estonia's independence was restored the Estonian Lutheran Church was able to resume its theological discussions. According to Riho Altnurme (2009), its position was different from that of the other Baltic Lutheran churches: "While Latvian and Lithuanian Lutheran churches have clearly chosen a conservative theological path, the EELC has been closer to the liberal Lutheran churches in Germany and Scandinavia". As a sign of this more liberal or not-so-conservative line, the ordination of women continued in Estonia during the independence period.³⁹⁶ The position of the Estonian Church was somewhere between the conservative Latvian, Lithuanian and Ingrian Churches and the more liberal Nordic and German Churches.

Even though contacts between the Missouri Synod and the Estonian Church had not developed in the same way as in Latvia, Lithuania and Ingria, there was still some interaction. The Synod's strong education system also played a role in Estonia. In 1996 there was a schism between Concordia International University Estonia and Concordia University Wisconsin, and serious contractual problems. The Missouri Synod was the owner and operator of Concordia University Wisconsin, which was why Mart Susi, the former Rector of Concordia International University Estonia (1991–1993) and Legal Council to the Archbishop of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (1995–2004), wrote a letter to A. L. Barry, the President of the LCMS. Susi's aim was to obtain the assistance of President Barry in facilitating a reasonable solution between the two universities. He asked Archbishop Jaan Kiivit to forward the letter to President Barry, which he did, together with his own accompanying letter, thereby proving that Rector Susi had his trust. The Archbishop asked President Barry to mediate a solution that would cause the least harm to the students and the reputation of Concordia International

³⁹⁴ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia trip report October 29–31, 1997; LMFA Nodibinājuma reģistrācijas apliecība "Luterisma Mantojuma Fonds"; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011.

³⁹⁵ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia trip report October 29–31, 1997. It is interesting that the President of the LCMS, Alvin Barry, was not a native Missourian, but before coming to the Missouri Synod he had attended a Wisconsin Synod seminary and served a Wisconsin Synod parish. (Todd 2003, 40) From this perspective, taking a stance on the Latvian "separatists" and at the same time on the ELS and the WELS might also have challenged the LCMS leadership.

³⁹⁶ Altnurme 2009, 236.

University Estonia.³⁹⁷ A channel of communication between the respective leaders was opening.

The above-mentioned letter may have had some influence because Missouri Synod President A. L. Barry sent an official letter to the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church in October 1996. He wrote: “With this letter, I am beginning a process of regular communication between our Synod and your church.” As “a gesture of good will” President Barry promised that the Estonian Church would in the future receive the LMCS’s publications, both the *Concordia Journal* in St. Louis and the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* in Ft. Wayne. He also promised to put it on the mailing list of the lay journal *The Lutheran Witness*. He wrote; “We hope that in the process you will gain a better understanding of our church. We would like to hear from you, and would welcome a chance to get to know you better”.³⁹⁸ The Missouri Synod was clearly trying to establish more connections with the Estonian Lutheran Church.

In addition, an agreement between the Estonian Church and the International Lutheran Laymen’s League was signed in Tallinn on 22 October. The signatories were Archbishop Jaan Kiivit from the EELC, Dusan Toth, International Development Counsellor, and Walt Winters, Director of the International Lutheran Hour Ministries, on behalf of the ILLL. The ILLL initiated, organized and registered an organization called The Estonian Lutheran Hour, the aim of which was to work as an independent service organization cooperating with the EELC and the ILLL to serve as a bridge linking people to the Church. Through this the ILLL sought to use the mass media to proclaim the Gospel to people who were not affiliated with the existing Estonian Church. The Estonian Lutheran Hour promised to fulfill its mission by coordinating media ministry with the Church’s ongoing ministry, for example, maintaining direct contact with the ILLL on matters of administration and finance, and with the EELC so that the programming content would enable follow-up ministry through the Church. Under the agreement concerning the Estonian Lutheran Hour the Estonian Church promised pastoral follow-up of listener contacts, suitable property to be used as an office, endorsement and moral support, promotion and sponsorship, and revision of the theological content of the programming by a responsible pastor or pastoral team.³⁹⁹

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America warned the Estonian Church about the Missouri Synod. Given the not-so-conservative position of the EELC it is not surprising that the ELCA was in contact with the Estonians. The conflicts among Lutherans in the USA also had an effect on the work in Europe and Russia. For example, ELCA Bishop George Paul Mocko wrote a letter to Archbishop Jaan Kiivit in 1997, congratulating him on the decision by the board of Suomi College, Hancock, Michigan to grant him an

³⁹⁷ EELKKA Toimik V-11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 1995 - 23.dets. 1997 Susi to Barry 11.2.1996; EELKKA Toimik V-11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 1995 - 23.dets. 1997 Kiivit to Barry 12.2.1996; JISusi 2014.

³⁹⁸ EELKKA Toimik V-11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 1995 - 23.dets. 1997 Barry to EELC October 1996.

³⁹⁹ EELKKA Toimik V-11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 1995 - 23.dets. 1997 Agreement EELC & ILLL 22.8.1996.

Honorary Doctor's degree, and informing him that Robert Ubbelohde, President of Suomi College would fly to Tallinn to confer it. Mocko mentioned that he was "distressed" that the Missouri Synod was "bringing our American divisions into your church." He continued: "This is not something you need. You need pastors and you need them male and female." Bishop Mocko and Archbishop Kiivit had obviously had some discussions about the LCMS and its attempts to influence by offering something in return. According to Mocko:

So for this honor, deserved and freely bestowed, there is no *quid pro quo*. I hope it will enable you to resist the *quid pro quo* honor offered by my Lutheran Church Missouri Synod brothers, for the price of distributing kind of divisive materials they suggested.⁴⁰⁰

The ELCA's distrust of the LCMS had not disappeared: Bishop Mocko, at least, tried to influence the way the Estonians were dealing with the Missouri Synod and its *quid pro quo*⁴⁰¹ offers.

Archbishop Jaan Kiivit wrote back to Bishop Mocko thanking him for his congratulations concerning the honorary degree and informing him that the Estonians were developing cooperation with the Missouri Synod to begin the radio broadcasting of the "Estonian Lutheran Hour". Despite this cooperation, or perhaps because of it, Kiivit stated: "The influence of the Missouri Synod to the Latvian Evangelical – Lutheran Church is a warning example to us".⁴⁰² It was left unclear what exactly he meant by the expression a "warning example". It may have referred to the case of the Augsburg Institute or the other controversy in the Latvian Church, which was going on at the same time and is presented in Chapter 3.2.1 below. In any case, it looks as if both Archbishop Kiivit and Bishop Mocko interpreted the actions taken by the Missouri Synod as very problematic.

Eventually, in September 1998, both Archbishop Jaan Kiivit and Archbishop John Vikström from the Finnish Church were awarded an Honorary Degree from Suomi College. The College President Dr. Ubbelohde stated: "Today we hope to begin a relationship with both the Estonian Evangelical – Lutheran Church and the people of Estonia". He concluded thus: "We look forward to a productive partnership with Archbishop Kiivit, the Estonian Church and the people of Estonia."⁴⁰³

The Estonian Church established closer contacts with the Porvoo Churches, joining the Anglican and Lutheran communion in 1996. The respective leaders signed the Porvoo Declaration in 1996 in Trondheim Cathedral in Norway, the Dome Church in Tallinn, and Westminster Abbey in London. Archbishop Jaan Kiivit signed it on behalf of the EELC in

⁴⁰⁰ EELKKA Toimik V-11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 1995 - 23.dets. 1997 Mocko to Kiivit 2.5.1997.

⁴⁰¹ *Quid pro quo* is often used to mean a favor for a favor.

⁴⁰² EELKKA Toimik V-11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 1995 - 23.dets. 1997 Kiivit to Mocko 4.7.1997.

⁴⁰³ EELKKA Toimik V-11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 16. jaan. 1998 - 20.dets. 1999 Suomi College to award Honorary Degrees 16.9.1998.

Tallinn on 8 September. A new ecumenical church communion of some 50 million members was born in Northern Europe. Furthermore, two years after the EELC signed the Porvoo Declaration, in 1998, Archbishop Kiivit set out the position of the Estonian Church when he stated that relations with the Anglican Churches in the context of the Porvoo Community were the most important foreign relations for the EELC.⁴⁰⁴ The aim was perhaps to make it clear to all to which camp the Estonian Church wanted to belong.

Further speculation as to why the Missouri Synod was not as influential in the Estonian Lutheran Church as in the other Baltic and the Ingrian Churches produced many possible reasons. The biggest problem from the Missourian side was probably that the Estonian Church had been ordaining female priests since the end of the 1960s and had practiced women's ordination for all these years. All in all, the Estonian Church was not theologically very close to the Missouri Synod, even though there were some similarities in socio-ethical issues such as in the condemning of abortion and same-sex relations. As an expression of its different theological position, Estonia joined the church communions of Leuenberg and Porvoo.⁴⁰⁵

Another possible problem for the Missourians was the good and very active relations between the Estonian and the Finnish or German Churches. Such relations might have been a problem for the Missourians, but not for the Estonians. As Reverend Veiko Vihuri observed, "confessional Lutheran theology, as it is represented by the LCMS, has not been very influential in Estonia." This was so because the Estonian Church had been seeking closer contacts with Nordic, especially Finnish, and German partners. The Estonians may not have wished to be considered East Europeans in the first place. They did not even want to be linked to the Baltic region. They wanted to be together with Finland and belong to North Europe, not to the East, according to Sandra Gintere.⁴⁰⁶ The influence of the Finnish Church on the official level might have made the leaders of the Estonian Church more reluctant to maintain contact with the Missouri Synod.

Furthermore, as mentioned, the Estonian Church was more advanced than the Churches in the other countries included in this research, which was probably one of the main reasons why the influence of the Missouri Synod did not spread to the same degree in Estonia.

It is interesting that the Estonians did not change their church leadership to the same extent as some other post-Soviet Union Lutherans. As a result they may have been less predisposed to the Missourians, judging them more by their previous acts. In addition, the Estonian Church under Bishop Kiivit was not as interested in forging deep connections with the Missouri Synod as the Latvian, Lithuanian and Ingrian Lutherans were.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴ Vihuri & Pilli 2009, 479, 483. However, according to McLeod & Saarinen (2006, 84) the EELC has belonged to the Porvoo Communion since 1995. Furthermore, according to the Porvoo Communion webpage, the EELC agreed to the Statement in 1994. (Porvoo Communion Statement 2014)

⁴⁰⁵ Andres Pöder interview 22.8.2011; Mindaugas Sabutis interview 28.9.2011; Veiko Vihuri email interview 12.3.2012.

⁴⁰⁶ Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Andres Pöder interview 22.8.2011; Veiko Vihuri email interview 12.3.2012; Lieven 1999, xviii.

⁴⁰⁷ Robert Kolb interview 11.2.2011; Risto Lehtonen interview 17.3.2011.

3.2 Strong support for confessional theology

3.2.1 Pastoral training in Latvia and the LWF Hong Kong Assembly – church-political turmoil

The Missouri Synod's emphasis on supporting respectable theological education was most visible in Latvia. The extensive education system "has always been a priority" of the LCMS and was defined as "unusually complete". The LCMS was profiled as a skilled educator, having always tried to maintain a high standard of academic research and study, and therefore naturally emphasized theological education in its cooperation with the Baltic and Russian Lutheran Churches.⁴⁰⁸ The Missouri Synod had the capability and the willingness to support the Latvian Lutheran Church in its need to develop theological training.

As mentioned in the case of the Augsburg Institute, the years 1996–1998 saw very intense political divisions and the drawing of lines in the Latvian Lutheran Church. The Missouri Synod played an essential role in the discussions and controversies. In addition to the Augsburg Institution controversy, there was also conflict between the university's theological department and the Latvian Lutheran Church about the training program for pastors. The Faculty had close connections with the Church for about half a decade, but then they grew apart.⁴⁰⁹

When the Theological Faculty was opened again in 1990 the Church seminary provided resources including a library, furniture and even premises. Students, teachers and the Faculty Dean also came from the seminary. After the transformation, however, the teachers from the seminary, including Jānis Vanags, were gradually pushed out of the faculty. The new teachers came from the exile church, and so "the training of our pastors went over in the hands of the exile church", according to Vanags.⁴¹⁰

The ties between the Latvian Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod strengthened and increased from the beginning of the 1990s, and for the whole of that time the Latvians had needed support in theological education. The Latvian Church was developing its own program, of which Reverend Guntis Kalme was in charge. Kalme had studied at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, where he obtained his M.Div. degree. He was the first

⁴⁰⁸ Wesselschmidt 1998, 399; Kieschnick 2009, 133; Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Leif Camp interview 10.6.2011; Risto Saarinen interview 29.11.2011; Oldenburg 2001, 101. See also Mary E. Hilgendorf's dissertation "CFW.Walther and Education in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod", in which she examines Walther's life and the theological and philosophical principles that were the basis of his educational thought.

⁴⁰⁹ Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011. There were somewhat similar discussions in Latvia in the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s on whether the pastoral training should be arranged by the university or the Church. For more, see Jouko Talonen: *Latvian kansallisen teologian synty: Kiista teologian suunnasta ja taistelu pappiskoulutuksesta Latvian evankelis-luterilaisessa kirkossa 1918–1934* (2008 b).

⁴¹⁰ Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Talonen 2007, 259. However, not all of the teachers were from abroad: Professor Feldmanis, for example, continued to teach at the faculty. (Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014)

(1993–1994), and Ilars Plūme the second (1994–1995), from the Latvian Church to study in an LCMS seminary.⁴¹¹

Pastors of the Latvian Church had been trained in the theological faculty of the University of Latvia. The problem was that the university was seen as a state institution that operated without concern for the special needs of any church. As a result, from the perspectives of the Missouri Synod and the Latvian Church, the faculty produced men who were qualified to deal with theology as an academic discipline, which was not sufficient. The ELCL and the LCMS wanted the pastors also to be “able to use theological insight to nurture the life of a Christian congregation”. The leadership of the Theological Faculty aggravated the situation in explicitly opposing some positions of the Church, as Mattson wrote: “Top of the list is the faculty’s support for ordination of women, but there are other issues as well.”⁴¹²

The Latvian Lutheran Church and the Theological Faculty had traditionally had a close relationship. However, Vilis Vārsbergs was chosen to succeed Professor Roberts Akmentiņš (d. 1994) as the new Dean without Archbishop Jānis Vanags being informed beforehand.⁴¹³

The Riga Theological Faculty was in a difficult situation, and therefore Dr. Mattson met Vilis Vārsbergs, the Dean, at the beginning of 1996. Vārsbergs was one of the people Mattson contacted when the LCMS World Mission was trying to make initial contacts in Central and Eastern Europe in 1991–1992. At that time he was a pastor of the Latvian Lutheran Church in Exile congregation in Chicago, Illinois. He had a reputation as a “tough guy”, and he had shown some of that side to Mattson in their earlier discussions. As Mattson noted, because Vārsbergs was “an outspoken proponent of women’s ordination along with a number of other theological faculty members, his leadership of the theological faculty has been a particularly difficult problem for the Latvian church.” He considered it “unfortunate that much of the pressure for women’s ordination comes from the Latvians who lived in the West during the Marxist period.”⁴¹⁴

Vārsbergs was not against the pastoral training program being totally under the control of the Church with regard to preparation for ordination, at least as long as it was not apart from the university. The pre-ordination course would take place in university classrooms and it was hoped that the teachers would also do some teaching in the Theological Faculty, and that some members of the Faculty would offer courses in the pre-ordination program. At the same time, the Church was concerned about the influence that liberal university professors may have on future pastors, and had already put in place a program

⁴¹¹ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia January 30 - February 2, 1996; Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011; Juris Ulģis interview 6.4.2011; Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014; Talonen 2007, 26.

⁴¹² ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia January 30 - February 2, 1996.

⁴¹³ Talonen 2007, 266.

⁴¹⁴ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia January 30 - February 2, 1996. Dreifelds (1995,73) wrote: “In 1997 there were still issues of disunity between reformers and conservatives, the Latvian church and the emigré church, those supporting women’s ordination and those adamantly opposed.”

of weekly meetings with students who intended to become pastors in order to deal with questions arising from their university education.⁴¹⁵

The Faculty and the Church were not able to reach consensus on the different positions taken. In response, the ELCL began the process of forming a “preachers’ seminary”, a course completely under the control of the Church, which was supposed to be compulsory for all men who intended to enter the ordained ministry. There were hopes that, over time, this brief seminar course would evolve into a full-fledged residential seminary program, and Archbishop Vanags considered it very important that the first steps had been taken. He was very grateful for the help of the Missouri Synod with the program, and he hoped that Missourian assistance would continue. He also stated that the Missourians could freely communicate directly with Reverend Guntis Kalme on matters related to theological education, but he would like to be kept informed of the steps that were being taken.⁴¹⁶

The Latvian Church asked the Missouri Synod to supply two teachers for the newly organized pastors’ training program in Riga. Two professors, Dr. Dwaine Brandt of Concordia, Portland, and Dr. Edward Hackmann of the Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharine’s were sent, the first teachers supplied by the LCMS World Mission to inaugurate the program. The role of the Missouri Synod as providers of assistance was not uncomplicated. The Missourians had to recruit people on the basis of very hazy position descriptions, and the recruits would frequently find themselves teaching something totally different from what they had prepared. The Synod tried its best to recruit exceptionally flexible people, and at the same time was prepared to take a certain amount of criticism for failing to fulfill expectations. Mattson was realistic in saying: “Ultimately no theological training program can be effective if it depends heavily on short-term teachers from outside”, because outside teachers “can never know the real problems that confront the church and since we do not have the same history and culture as Latvians, or think like Latvians, our answers are always less than totally relevant.” For this reason the goal of the Synod was to work with the Latvian Church to develop “a strong, indigenous program” that LCMS teachers from the USA would be able to supplement.⁴¹⁷

Even though the Missouri Synod and the Latvian Church had some things in common in their theological understanding, the Synod was naturally not the only player on the theological field. The Lutheran World Federation, together with some of its member Churches also actively influenced the education and the theology, and was continuously active in the area. In March 1996, for example it arranged a symposium in Riga, Latvia, on the subject of “Church and Society in Russia and the Baltic States: Personal Faith – Social and Political Engagement”. The idea for the symposium came from a suggestion made by the former Ingrian Bishop Leino Hassinen that there should be cooperation among the Churches directly involved in analyzing the situation since the collapse of the

⁴¹⁵ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia January 30 - February 2, 1996.

⁴¹⁶ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia January 30 - February 2, 1996.

⁴¹⁷ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia January 30 - February 2, 1996; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011.

Soviet Union. It was pointed out that, “Whatever happened, a new division into “blocs” – with the “progressive West” on one side and the “conservative East” on the other – should be avoided”.⁴¹⁸ The dangers of blocs were realized, but it remained open to question whether or not the actions on the conservative or liberal side were mature enough to prevent their development.

There was also a heated discussion on the subject of homosexuality in the symposium. The Latvian archbishop stated his position that, according to the biblical evidence, the practice of homosexuality should be unequivocally defined as a sin and rejected. He received some support from the Lithuanian and Ingrian bishops.⁴¹⁹ Thus the theological lines of the newly freed former Soviet Lutherans became globally visible in the Lutheran world in 1996, if not earlier. The Latvians, Lithuanians and Ingrians were rather conservative on many theological questions, more so than the Estonians and the Russian Lutherans of German origin, for example. From this perspective it was no surprise to see which Churches later found themselves in deeper fellowship with the Missourians.

In any case, the Missouri Synod had to find a balance between the liberals and the conservatives inside the Latvian Church. It assumed the role of intermediary given the tensions that existed between the Theological Faculty at the University of Latvia and the Church. Dr. and Mrs. Dwaine Brandt and Dr. and Mrs. Edward Hackmann played a major role, and the Latvian Church was very pleased with their contributions. Their academic qualifications apparently helped to legitimate the seminary program in the eyes of the Faculty. Dr. Waldemar Degner from CTS Ft. Wayne and Dr. Horace Hummel from CSL St. Louis were recruited to teach in the Theological Faculty for the academic year 1996–97, which, according to Mattson, pleased both the Church and the Faculty. All parties, both the liberals and the conservatives, apparently appreciated the intermediary role of the Missouri Synod.⁴²⁰

The situation in Latvia was demanding in various ways for those running the theological education program. The amount of theological literature available was very limited, Latvian theologians still had no competency in Western languages, and the Latvian Church lacked an experienced educational administrator who could set up the program. There was also another problem, namely the question of facilities. The Church had re-possessed a property directly opposite the Lutheran Cathedral, which it proposed to use as the seminary building. It was a valuable property in the center of Riga, and the estimated cost of renovating it was \$500,000. At first the Latvian Church submitted this

⁴¹⁸ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Kirche und Gesellschaft in Russland und den baltischen Staaten. March 1996 Final Report. Lieven (1999, xxiv) describes the nature of the Baltic people: “The Latvians, like the Lithuanians, have a chronic tendency to relapse into romantic isolationism, declaring that they are different from and much better than the West, and will fight against the whole world if necessary; although in both cases, their deep underlying pragmatism means that, in a real crisis, they generally come to their senses. The Estonians by contrast are deeply and permanently committed to Europe, as well as having a cooler and more realistic view of their own position.”

⁴¹⁹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Kirche und Gesellschaft in Russland und den baltischen Staaten March 1996 Final Report.

⁴²⁰ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia July 20–23, 1996; Sandra Gintere 4.4.2011; Zanda Ohff email interview 16.5.2012.

proposal as a project to the Lutheran World Federation given that it was impossible to raise such a vast sum of money in Latvia. The Missourians at the time did not want to create too close economic ties with the Latvian Church regarding the seminary training program. Daniel Mattson told Guntis Kalme that the most that could be hoped for was support in the form of a project with definite time limits and some sort of plan as to how it would continue without Missouri Synod support.⁴²¹

The pastors' training program became known as the Luther Academy, which was established in 1997 and was a very significant milestone. It was established in opposition to the Theological Faculty in Riga, and after its establishment it was the Luther Academy that was mainly visited by Missourian lecturers.⁴²²

Archbishop Jānis Vanags was interviewed in *Called to Serve*, the official newsletter of the Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne, Indiana, in spring 1997. The article was entitled "The Latvian Church confessional and biblical". Invited by President Alvin Barry and the Board for Mission Services, the Archbishop had visited the seminary in January, and had spoken on a couple of occasions. He asked for academic support from the seminary, saying that it was not a good situation for pastors to be primarily educated in a publicly funded university. Nor were the six-month teaching visits by Missouri theologians long enough.⁴²³

The article cited Archbishop Vanags with reference to his positive experience of the Missourian theological approach from the start: "Then I got books published...by Concordia Publishing House that treated the Bible as God's own Word." He described the moral support as relevant: "For many people, (the Missouri Synod) was a help just with its existence." The role of the Missouri Synod was so important that even knowing of a Church "where the Bible is treated in a biblical way provided hope to Lutherans in Latvia who wanted to be faithful to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions". Vanags saw similarities in biblical interpretation: "I think we have much in common in our attitude towards the Bible... and our Confessions".⁴²⁴ The Biblicism and the similar way of understanding the Lutheran confession played a crucial role in the development of relations in the first years of the 1990s and beyond.

The Latvians initially wanted the Lutheran World Federation to support the Luther Academy project, and apparently some promises had been given that the LWF would fund it. However, any promises were dramatically overturned in the LWF Ninth Assembly, which was held in Hong Kong on 8–16 July 1997. This was a week after the return of the

⁴²¹ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia July 20–23, 1996.

⁴²² ASN 2001 Convention Proceedings To Formally Declare Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia Resolution 3-05A, 136; LA 2006; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Zanda Ohff email interview 16.5.2012; Talonen 2007, 269. According to Talonen (2007, 258, 266), the Luther Academy was established as early as in 1996, but began its activities on 9.9.1997.

⁴²³ *Called to Serve*, Spring 1997, Latvian Church confessional and biblical.

⁴²⁴ *Called to Serve*, Spring 1997, Latvian Church confessional and biblical.

British Crown Colony to the People's Republic of China, as well as the 50th anniversary of the LWF, which was established in 1947.⁴²⁵

The Hong Kong Assembly recalled the decisions made at the Assembly of Curitiba, Brazil (1990), and at the Council meeting in Windhoek, Namibia (1995), and voted, for example, "to reaffirm the commitment to women's ordination, as an expression of the communion of all baptized in Christ in giving witness to the gospel;" and "to call upon all member churches to provide and intensify theological education for women and to facilitate the ordination of women." The Assembly then called "on the Council to ensure that only those theological schools which provide equal access to theological education for both women and men receive funds from the LWF."⁴²⁶ Evidently the LWF did not have a neutral position on women's ordination: on the contrary, it was strongly supported in the LWF Assembly. In addition, as mentioned above, theological schools that did not give equal access to women were excluded from LWF funding.

It was in this kind of progressive atmosphere that the issue of funding the Luther Academy of the Latvian Church arose. The game changer was one Latvian woman, Ilze Ezerniece, who attended the LWF Hong Kong Assembly as a guest sent by the Ministry of Justice, having convinced someone in the Ministry, the Latvian state body responsible for cooperating with the various churches, that it was important for her to be present. As Archbishop Vanags related: "And she went there and in the corridor she distributed leaflets inviting the delegates to do something about this project". She spread pamphlets that questioned how the LWF could support a project that denied accessibility to women.⁴²⁷

Consequently, "Due to [the] intensive lobby[ing] of the Latvian feminist organization", the LWF General Assembly exceptionally considered one project of one Church, the Luther Academy project, and "A resolution was moved that [the] LWF will grant its financial support to the project only if the church of Latvia will agree to train women for pastoral ministry in [the] "Luther Academy"". According to Archbishop Vanags: "the support of 300,000 dollars was initially promised or approved and then the General Assembly somehow cancelled this." Financial support for the project had already been

⁴²⁵ Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Scherer 1997, 171; LWF Hong Kong 1997, 3, 7. The Missouri Synod had carried out mission work in China since the 1910s. See more in David G. Kohl, *Lutherans on the Yangtze: A Centenary Account of the Missouri Synod in China. Volume I. 1912–1952* (2013), and *Lutherans on the Yangtze: A Centenary Account of the Missouri Synod in China. Volume II. 1949–2013* (2013).

⁴²⁶ LWF Hong Kong 1997, 64. In contrast to the LWF, the Missouri Synod affirmed and reaffirmed its position that women were not eligible for any pastoral office: in 1971 "To Withhold Ordination of Women to the Pastoral Office"; in 1977 "To Reaffirm the Synod's Position on Women with Reference to the Pastoral Office"; in 1986 "To Reaffirm Position of LCMS on Service of Women in the Church" and "To Reaffirm Position of Synod on Ordination of Women"; in 1989 "To Study and Clarify Services of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices", and in 1998 "To Affirm Position of Synod That Only Men May Hold the Pastoral Office". (Kieschnick 2009, 55) Joersz (1998, 50) also concludes: "Throughout its history the LCMS has taken a firm position in opposition to the ordination of women into pastoral office. Synodical resolutions specifically addressing this issue have been adopted over the years."

⁴²⁷ LELBA F1 A3 L163 2001–2003 ELCL 20 Sinodes Protokols 11.6.2001 unedited; SR "Pasaules luterāņu federācijas asambleja Honkongā" 15/10.8.1997, 2; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Talonen 2007, 266.

decided, and could not be retracted, but they just stopped funding the Luther Academy. Dr. Stahl guessed that the non-funding was not the decision of the assembly, but in any case it was made clear there. The Danish Church was the only one, according to Archbishop Vanags, that later gave what they had promised, despite the LWF decision.⁴²⁸ It may be that the cooperation between the Missouri Synod and the Latvian Church pushed the LWF to take a stronger position on the exclusion of women from theological education.

The bad news had probably already spread to the LCMS St. Louis headquarters, given that the Missouri Synod had had observer status at the LWF since the Lund meeting of 1947. Dr. Samuel Nafzger was a guest at the assembly, having observed, as Vanags said, “this ugly procedure”. Nafzger had attended all the LWF Assemblies since the 1977 Dar-Es-Salaam Assembly, at first representing the Missouri Synod, and later, starting with the 1998 Hong Kong Assembly, the International Lutheran Council. The ILC also had observer status at the LWF Assemblies, and could address the meeting. As Nafzger saw it, the Latvian Church was being persecuted because of its Lutheran convictions, and for this reason he made some promises during the Hong Kong Assembly indicating that Missourians would take over the project. Vanags even sat next to Nafzger at the closing communion service because he wanted to sit next to someone else who was not going to enter into communion with people in the assembly who had condemned the Archbishop and his Church for not continuing to ordain women.⁴²⁹ In brief, in this case the Missourians did keep their promise, whereas the LWF and its member Churches did not.

Archbishop Vanags wrote to Dr. Mattson after the Hong Kong Assembly, informing him about events there as far as they concerned mutual interests between the ELCL and the LCMS. He did not think it was possible to change the course of the Luther Academy, “especially taking in account the strictly negative attitude of the designated rector Dr. Slenczka concerning this specific question.” The plan was for Professor Dr. Reinhard

⁴²⁸ LELBA F1 A3 L 70 1995–1997 Vanags to Mattson 25.7.1997; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Rainer Stahl interview 31.10.2012.

The Ninth Assembly of the LWF authorized the LWF Council to take action in the resolution “Luther Academy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia”. In the official Assembly report it says:

“The Council [considered the motion that support for the Luther Academy be granted only when it had been assured that men and women would be granted equal access to all educational opportunities at this institution. It was informed that the project had gone through the normal LWF screening channels and had been approved by the Project Committee for funding according to established criteria at the time, also that the Luther Academy did accept both male and female candidates. In view of this, and the opposition to withholding funds as a means of putting pressure on a church] VOTED:

- that it would not be appropriate to reopen discussions of projects already approved for funding, as was the case of the Luther Academy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia, and to apply new criteria in retrospect; and

- to ask the General Secretary to engage in dialogue with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia to discuss and advice on the implications of the Assembly resolutions concerning the empowerment of women as a means of full inclusion in society for any future support to Luther Academy.” (LWF Hong Kong 1997, 65)

⁴²⁹ Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Ilars Plūme interview 5.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Tomi Karttunen interview 9.3.2012; LWF Hong Kong 1997, 240; Nelson 1980, 511.

Slenczka to join the pre-ordination program in Riga soon after retiring from Erlangen in 1998. However, it seems that he joined the Luther Academy project earlier, and that he was its rector from 1997 onwards. He was a well-known conservative German professor, and had been Dean in the Heidelberg and Erlangen Theological Faculties.⁴³⁰

Vanags continued his letter to Mattson, writing that he was very distressed about the situation: "In my opinion it is a very disturbing development, that LWF is starting to use economical threats to compel the member churches to accept its ideology in controversial issues." He even felt that their LWF membership was at stake: "This confronts our church with a very serious question. Until now only the officially declared tolerance made our membership possible." However the LCMS was willing to help. The backup plan was developed when the Latvians and the Missourians implied beforehand that the LWF could turn its back on the Luther Academy project. Rev. Burgdorf confirmed that the Schwan foundation "would be ready to compensate whatever will be withdrawn by LWF or other partners on doctrinal basis. I think this is exactly what has happened."⁴³¹ They had the promise of possible compensation from the Schwan foundation if LWF support was withdrawn. Without this, would the pressure from the LWF have been effective enough to make the Latvians change their policy regarding the Luther Academy? Possibly, yes.

All in all, on this issue 1997 was a milestone in terms of relations between the Latvians and the Missourians. The Latvian Church was isolated in the LWF Hong Kong Assembly, abandoned by all except the Missouri Synod. The Synod's extra assistance with theological education came as a reaction to the situation faced by the Latvian Church when, because of its theology, some partners were ready to withdraw money they had promised.⁴³²

However, the Luther Academy project was not unproblematic to the Missouri Synod, either. This became clear when Daniel Mattson and Keith Boheim visited Latvia in October 1997. They wanted to see for themselves what progress had been made in organizing the pre-ordination course for Lutheran pastors. They also wanted to look at the building the Latvian Church proposed to renovate to function as a seminary building, to see some of the other projects supported by the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation, and to strengthen ties between the Latvian Church and the Missouri Synod.⁴³³

Mattson and Boheim met the builders and the Latvian Church's bankers to discuss how the seminary project could be implemented. The Church had moved forward in its planning of the seminary building and had accepted the offer of one of the building firms

⁴³⁰ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia trip report October 29–31, 1997; LELBA F1 A3 L 70 1995–1997 Vanags to Mattson 25.7.1997; SR "Baznīcai sava mācību iestāde" nro 17./14.9.1998; ASN 2001 Convention Proceedings To Formally Declare Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia Resolution 3-05A, 136; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011. According to Talonen (2005, 171), Slenczka was the Rector of the Luther Academy from 1997 until 2005. When asked later what had taken him to Riga he said playfully that the same thing happened to him as happened to old German cars. (Ketola 2002, 337–338)

⁴³¹ LELBA F1 A3 L 70 1995–1997 Vanags to Mattson 25.7.1997.

⁴³² Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Jānis Ginters interview 5.4.2011; Petkūnas 2007, 23; Talonen 2007, 266.

⁴³³ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia trip report October 29–31, 1997.

in Riga at a cost of about \$750,000. It was in a vulnerable position because it was too heavily dependent on outside resources to carry out its programs. Mattson's view was that the reconstruction of the seminary building was essential, and that the design was on a scale that the Latvian Church would be able to sustain having been funded by the LCMS. It was the kind of project the Missouri Synod should support. He added,

But projects which will encourage dependence or are not central to the life of the church (even though they would be nice to do or have) should be avoided. The other circumstances under which we should consider getting involved is when one of the other Latvian partner tries to use its financial resources to pressure the Latvian church. Even so, each project should be considered on its own merits. We surely do not want to get involved in a bidding war with other churches, and we know that we cannot buy loyalty. But we do have an obligation to use our resources to help our partners to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel.⁴³⁴

It looks as if the Missourians truly felt they had a moral responsibility to help the cruelly treated Latvian Church.

In conclusion, the Missouri Synod saved the Luther Academy project and eventually gave more support than the Latvian Church had expected from the Lutheran World Federation. Most of the money came from the Schwan Foundation. The turbulent Luther Academy project eventually convinced the Latvians that the Missouri Synod was a reliable partner who really cared, and strengthened the relationship between them. Archbishop Vanags believed that the Missourians had altruistic motives: "I don't believe this as for church politics or something but they truly support our position and our faith". Furthermore, "they never requested from us promises for instance not to ordain women or whatever else."⁴³⁵ It goes without saying that the non-ordaining of women was at the core of the support given to the Luther Academy, but on the other hand it may be that the support was not as much *quid pro quo* as many mainstream Lutherans thought. Perhaps surprisingly, the support promised and given by the Missouri Synod gave more independence to the Latvian Church because it reduced the pressure coming from the Lutheran World Federation and its member churches.

3.2.2 Participating in theological education in Russia

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia organized the International Consultation on Theological Education in Russia that took place in January 1996. The aim of the meeting was to negotiate how to arrange theological education for both churches. The attendees from the LCMS

⁴³⁴ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia trip report October 29–31, 1997. Archbishop Vanags estimated the total costs of the Luther Academy at USD 773,936 at the end of 1998. (LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Vanags to Burgdorf 12.11.1998)

⁴³⁵ LELBA F1 A3 L163 2001–2003 ELCL 20 Sinodes Protokols 11.6.2001 unedited; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011.

side were Fred Schielke, Milton Rudnick and Daniel Mattson. ELCROS Bishop Georg Kretschmar specifically noted at the beginning of the meeting that although the Missouri Synod was not a member of the Lutheran World Federation it had played an important role in Russia, and its representatives should take part in the discussions. Daniel Mattson stated: “We have made progress in showing that Missouri has something to offer. We act in responsible ways, and so there is no need to be afraid of us.” He continued: “We have reasons for the decisions we make which we can explain clearly, and we listen carefully to others.” He was also confident that the Missourians would have increasing opportunities to share their views.⁴³⁶ It was important for them to gain trust because of the bad memories many European and mainstream Lutherans had of previous Missourian actions.

The meeting participants were divided into two camps, and according to Mattson the Americans had a mediating role in trying to maintain good relationships with the Finns, who supported the Ingrian Church, and the Germans, who supported the ELCROS. On the German side of the table were Dr. Kalrheinz Schmale, Oberkirchenrat of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD), Michael Mildenerger, Oberkirchenrat of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)⁴³⁷, and the retired Bishop of Schaumburg-Lippe, Dr. Joachim Heubach, of Martin Luther Bund. The Finnish side included Olli-Pekka Lassila from the Central European Desk of the Lutheran World Federation and Risto Lehtonen.⁴³⁸

Representing the American side were the ELCA representatives David Nelson, who the Central Europe Secretary, and Richard Lescher, President of the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. Mattson suspected that the organizers would have felt uncomfortable if a non-LWF member had been the sole representative of American Lutheranism. The ELCA representatives were supportive of what the Missourians were doing and planning to do with regard to theological education in Russia. What was remarkable, according to Mattson, was that the LCMS, not the ELCA, was actively doing work in Russia.⁴³⁹

Even though the focus of the Missouri Synod had shifted from the German Church to the Ingrian Church, the Missourians were still working with both the ELCIR and the ELCROS in 1996, for example. They had been involved in short-term relief work for some time, and just tried to help the people and churches they had found to survive. With the appointment of a theological consultant for Russia, however, they were beginning to

⁴³⁶ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report St. Petersburg January 16–30, 1996; Risto Lehtonen interview 17.3.2011.

⁴³⁷ Since the early 1990s EKD had been “organizing and financing the reconstruction of a Lutheran Church in the former Soviet Union”. (Stricker 2004, 254)

⁴³⁸ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report St. Petersburg January 16–30, 1996. Mattson wrote about the role taken by Risto Lehtonen:

“I suspect, however that the Germans were taken by surprise at the effectiveness of Dr. Risto Lehtonen, a retired member of the LWF staff, as a bomb thrower. His announcement halfway through the meeting, “I have here a list of seven reasons why this consultation must fail”, I am quite certain, was intended to take control of the agenda (and perhaps settle a few scores at the same time).” There was certainly some tension in the meeting.

⁴³⁹ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report St. Petersburg January 16–30, 1996.

move toward long-term development. At that stage they attempted to start working with local people to develop self-sustaining and locally managed programs. The situation in Russia was complicated by the fact that the Missourians had to deal with independent churches that had other partners with different expectations. Nevertheless, Mattson wrote: “I think LCMS World Mission is ready for the challenge, and we are entering a door God has opened for us.”⁴⁴⁰

Daniel Mattson’s optimism about future possibilities was not shared very widely among the mainstream counterparts of the Ingrian Church. Many Finns had suspicions concerning the Missouri Synod’s presence. Reverend Sakari Pinola from the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission wrote to Olli-Pekka Lassila giving his views on the Ingrian situation: the two men had met in St. Petersburg. Pinola wrote that the ordination of women was quite a big taboo in the Ingrian Church, and hoped that the LWF would not actively promote the issue. The LWF had actively taken up the issue with various national churches, but Pinola suggested that it should make an exception of the Ingrian Church. He was of the opinion that the Missouri Synod would do what it could to torpedo all kinds of Lutheran efforts to establish contacts, and would probably use this very question as one of its tools. He was afraid that if the LWF turned up the pressure about women’s ordination, the Ingrian Church could fall into the hands of the Missouri Synod like a ripe fruit. He believed that the Synod had enough financial resources to take care of the Ingrians without help from the Finns. Moreover, if this happened all talk of uniting the Lutherans could be forgotten, although it could only happen if the Missouri Synod also took over the German Church. Pinola thought the LWF should be more active in building up scholarship activities with the Ingrians.⁴⁴¹

Olli-Pekka Lassila commented on Pinola’s cogitations, pointing out that the LWF line on the ordination of women was based on experience. The LWF supported the position of women in church and society in many ways, and pastoral work was part of that field. On the other hand, both the Europe Desk and the General Secretary seriously believed that the churches themselves should make the decisions and develop possible new theological settlements. Lassila recognized that pushing some agendas could be counterproductive. He wrote that Pinola was right in seeing the Missouri Synod as an alternative partner for some of the churches, and that Latvia was an example.⁴⁴² This was apparently quite widely thought to be the case at least among some Estonians, Finns and LWF staff. In a way they were quite right, but the Missouri Synod was not exclusive in its partnership, nor did the Ingrian Church want to exclude other partner churches.

Lassila continued: they would have to defend, on the LWF side, some of the member churches from the exile churches, and from some Germans who tended to dictate “truths” from the outside all too actively.⁴⁴³ The most dictatorial Lutherans as far as the Baltic and Ingrian Churches were concerned seemed to be the Germans.

⁴⁴⁰ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report St. Petersburg January 16–30, 1996.

⁴⁴¹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 FINLAND 1991 Pinola to Lassila 23.1.1996.

⁴⁴² ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 FINLAND 1991 Lassila to Pinola 26.1.1996.

⁴⁴³ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 FINLAND 1991 Lassila to Pinola 26.1.1996.

With regard to the Ingrian Church, Lassila wrote that the LWF had tried to make contact with Aarre Kuukauppi, asking him to visit Geneva. The Missouri Synod was very active towards the Ingrian church, and also tried to play the role of host at the ELCIR Training Center in Koltushi, donated by the Finnish parish in Espoo and consecrated in 1995. It was true that the Synod was actively involved in the theological training of the Ingrian Church, and held extensive discussions with the leadership of the Ingrian seminary program about the curriculum content. The curriculum planning was criticized in Finland, and it was realized that Finnish organizations had been so passive in the development of the training program that it had left the field open for the Missouri Synod. However, compared with the work done by the Finns in the Ingrian Church, the Missourians made a small contribution.⁴⁴⁴ All in all, with regard to the Koltushi training center, the Missouri Synod and the Finnish Church both tried to find channels and methods through which to influence and guide the Ingrian Church along the “right path”.

One way of supporting confessional theology was to award degrees to the church leaders. Bishop Emeritus Leino Hassinen received a letter in February 1996 informing him that the Ft. Wayne seminary had decided to give him an honorary doctorate. The conferral ceremony was held in May 1996 in Concordia Theological Seminary Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and Hassinen was awarded a *doctoris honoris causa*. This was his first visit to the seminary. He knew that the Missouri Synod was not a member of the Lutheran World Federation, and that it worked in cooperation with both of the Russian Lutheran churches, the ELCIR and the ELCROS. The LCMS World Mission had suggested to the seminaries that an award should be given to Bishop Hassinen in recognition of his service to the Lutheran Church in Russia. Hassinen felt that the award was given in recognition of the Ingrian Church for its fraternal and reliable partnership in Russia.⁴⁴⁵

Bishop Hassinen strongly emphasized in the speech he gave at the conferral ceremony that the Lutheran churches should carry the responsibility of the interpretation of faith together, referring to those who were members of the Lutheran World Federation and those who were not.⁴⁴⁶ In this respect the Ingrian, Latvian and Lithuanian Lutheran Churches were more ecumenical than many of their Lutheran counterparts inside and outside the LWF.

Bishop Hassinen further thanked the Missourians for their fast move when times changed in Russia, saying that it was what Christians who are awake do. At the same time, he pointed out the need to keep church-denominational interests under control.⁴⁴⁷ His apparent aim was to make it clear that it was not acceptable to bring the existing divisions

⁴⁴⁴ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 FINLAND 1991 Lassila to Pinola 26.1.1996; RLA Inkeri Pöytäkirja Kirkon järjestöjen Inkeri –neuvottelukunnan valmisteluryhmä 14.2.1996; Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011; Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011; Ylönen 1997, 112; Stricker 2000, 9; Jokinen 2015, 11.

⁴⁴⁵ RLA Inkeri Mattson to Lehtonen 11.12.1995; RLA Inkeri Leino Hassinen; Going Forward in a new Situation. At the Graduation Ceremony in Fort Wayne, Indiana May 17th, 1996; Hassinen 1997, 156–157, 191–192; Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011.

⁴⁴⁶ Hassinen 1997, 193.

⁴⁴⁷ Hassinen 1997, 194.

among the LCMS, the ELCA and the WELS, in other words the LWF/non-LWF conflict, to Russia.

It seemed to Bishop Hassinen that in giving him the honorary degree the Missourians were confirming that the Ingrians and the Missourians were working together. The situation was remarkable for the Americans, too, because Hassinen represented the old archenemy, Russia, even though he was a Finn. He had mentioned that Eero Saarinen, whose father was Eliel Saarinen and whose grandfather was Juho Saarinen, planned the campus of the Ft. Wayne Seminary. Interestingly, Juho Saarinen had been a pastor in the Ingrian Church. In doing this Hassinen wanted to point out that Ingria and Russia, or the whole of Eastern Europe, were not totally backward. In general he wanted to support the independence of the Ingrians and the Slavic Lutherans, thinking that the Slavs could find new forms of the Evangelical Lutheran faith.⁴⁴⁸ In forging a deeper connection between the Ingrian Church and the Missouri Synod, Bishop Emeritus Hassinen wanted to highlight the independence of the church, as he had done from the very beginning.

The leadership of the Ingrian Church changed when a native Ingrian, Aarre Kuukauppi, replaced Hassinen as its bishop from the beginning of 1996, although he was elected by the Synod in 1995. His predecessor, Bishop Hassinen, strongly believed that the Ingrian church should not have another Finnish, Swedish or German bishop as had happened many times before. He had always felt that he and other Finns were just giving the Church some sort of “first aid”.⁴⁴⁹

The Missouri Synod issued a press release in June 1996 announcing that the Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne had received a million-dollar gift, which was to be used for the theological education of students from the former Soviet Union. The donor wished to remain anonymous. Seminary President Dean O. Wenthe said: “God has richly blessed us through this gift and provided a marvelous opportunity to reach out to fellow Lutherans in Russia”. He went on: “We will teach these young men, but we will also learn from them about holding to the Gospel in a hostile culture”. Dr. William Weinrich, academic dean, commented: “There’s a sense of standing before an open door right now, but no one knows how long the opportunity to provide theological training will remain.”⁴⁵⁰

According to the LCMS press release, the Fort Wayne seminary had been giving theological education to Russian students on a limited scale for the previous two years. Ten students from Latvia and Estonia studied at the seminary for two weeks in 1994. The next year, 1995, 35 Russian students spent two weeks on campus for theological training.

⁴⁴⁸ RLA Inkeri Leino Hassinen: Löytöretkelle kohti slaavilaista luterilaisuutta 15.9.1995; Hassinen 2002, 81; Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011.

⁴⁴⁹ Leino Hassinen interview 14.12.2011; Väliaho 2004, 51; Seppänen 2009, 138; Sihvo 2000, 353; Stricker 2000, 9; Kahle 2002, 167.

⁴⁵⁰ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Havinga to [Görög] et al. LCMS Press Release 3.6.1996. Missionary to Missionary (March 1996) sheds light on relations between the Schwan Foundation and the LCMS: “Staff is convinced, on the basis of dialogue with the foundation’s leaders, that their goal is to help, to strengthen, to enhance, to enlarge –not to own mission.” Furthermore, “The foundation is eager to work with us to achieve World Mission’s goals.” (ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary March 1996) These comments give a hint that the Schwan Foundation may have been interfering too much with the mission, or in any case, some fears of interference had arisen.

It was thought that the million-dollar grant would provide funds to educate 10 or more students for two full years, and would cover travel, tuition, housing, food and one full-time staff member to oversee the program.⁴⁵¹

Issues concerning theological education were continuously being discussed. In 1998 Bishop Kuukauppi asked if it would be possible for students to study in St. Louis as well as Ft. Wayne, and Mattson replied that scholarship funds could be made available. Bishop Kuukauppi raised the question of whether the distribution of scholarships could be centralized to prevent inequities in funding, to which Mattson replied that that would be difficult for the LCMS World Mission because it would be asked to support a fund instead of students. Nevertheless, Mattson supported the idea of charging fees, which could then be paid from scholarships, because it would help to remind students that theological education was not free. The Ingrian Church informed the LCMS that it would seek the Missouri's participation in the construction of the second phase of the Koltushi seminary, namely dormitory and classroom space, at an estimated cost of USD 350,000. Other partners would also be sought.⁴⁵²

From a broader perspective, the Missouri Synod's contacts with the LWF continued, in particular with regard to theological education. For example, the Director of the Institute for Mission Studies at Concordia Seminary, Robert Kolb, contacted LWF Europe Secretary, Dr. Olli-Pekka Lassila in May 1998. Kolb suggested that they could discuss his activities in Central and Eastern Europe on behalf of his seminary, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He explained that he had obtained his position at the Institute four-and-a-half years earlier, and as a part of his duties he had spent some time each summer and fall since then offering workshops, seminars, and the like for pastors and lay people in churches in Central and Eastern Europe. Kolb's visits had taken him to Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. He first visited Lassila's predecessor Dr. Görög four years earlier, at the suggestion of Pastor Fred Schielke and Dr. Daniel Mattson, and after that they met each year for an hour or two, sharing experiences and perspectives.⁴⁵³

Dr. Olli-Pekka Lassila replied to Dr. Robert Kolb the next day. He believed they had not yet met, but Dr. Tibor Görög had mentioned Kolb's name on several occasions. Lassila continued: "I appreciate your willingness to continue the contacts and information sharing also with the new LWF Europe Secretary." Lassila emphasized the high priority of theological education and mission studies on the LWF agenda in its contacts with member churches in Europe, and especially Eastern Europe. He informed Kolb that they had sent a letter to Reverend Allan Buckman in St. Louis inviting one person to the next coordination meeting for the Lutheran churches in the Baltic countries and Russia, which was to be held in Vilnius, Lithuania, in October 1998.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Havinga to [Görög] et al. LCMS Press Release 3.6.1996.

⁴⁵² ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Russia September 24, 1998.

⁴⁵³ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Kolb to Lassila 13.5.1998.

⁴⁵⁴ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Lassila to Kolb 14.5.1998.

One background reason for the willingness of the LWF to include the LCMS in the coordination talks was that the Curitiba Assembly of 1990 had recognized the need to foster unity among Lutheran churches worldwide. In line with this, the LWF Ninth Assembly held in Hong Kong in 1997 pledged to “engage in constructive dialogue with Lutheran churches outside LWF”.⁴⁵⁵ In conclusion, the Missouri Synod continued to participate in the coordination meetings concerning theological education in the post-Soviet era. In a way, this came close to being a structured channel of communication between the LCMS, the LWF and the Ingrian and Baltic Churches.

3.3 Breakthrough – agreement with the Ingrians

3.3.1 The road to altar and pulpit agreement

After half a decade of cooperation between the Ingrians and the Missourians the idea of more structured fellowship became more and more relevant. The discussions had begun as early as 1995, as noted in Chapter 2.1.3. This development was especially interesting because the Lutheran mainstream had a totally different idea of how relations with the Ingrian and Baltic Lutheran Churches should evolve. The LWF General Secretary Ishmael Noko was asked in an interview he gave in 1996 he if he could mention some major goals that had not been reached. He replied:

The Lutheran World Federation as an expression of the global Lutheran Communion does not at this point in time represent all Lutherans in the whole world. There are three million Lutherans “not yet” in this fellowship. This means that while the LWF speaks on behalf of the majority of Lutherans worldwide, it cannot claim at all times to speak on behalf of those who do not yet find it possible to be in this global fellowship. It is nonetheless my prayerful hope for the sake of the integrity of our witness and for the one ecumenical movement that we shall achieve the goal of inter-Lutheran unity.⁴⁵⁶

It seems that developments in Eastern Europe, especially in the Baltic countries and Ingria, had brought the question of inter-Lutheran unity back onto the agenda. The aim of the Missouri Synod, however, was to support confessional theology, not to unify Lutheranism.

The Ingrian Church was inclining a little further towards the non-LWF camp when the International Lutheran Council came in more strongly in 1996. The Missouri Synod had recommended to the ILC that the Ingrian Church be invited to join it. Apart from strengthening Lutheran identity, the Ingrians felt that membership of the ILC would give them a very useful forum. Although the meetings were not very frequent, one week every

⁴⁵⁵ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 LATVIA 2002 Noko to Vanags 9.11.2002.

⁴⁵⁶ Hjelm 1997, 518–519.

two years, there were discussions about major theological questions that touched on Lutheran identity.⁴⁵⁷ There was a need for deeper mutual connections from both sides, the Ingrian and the Missourian.

From the perspective of the Missouri Synod moving towards a more official partnership with the Ingrian Church raised a significant problem. How would they cope with the Missourian understanding of fellowship as possible only with orthodox Churches that only have orthodox partners? On the other hand there were potential benefits and opportunities to be gained from forging deeper connections with the Ingrian and maybe other church bodies as well. There were many positive elements in pursuing fellowship, including the developments in Russian law, Missourian churchly ambitions, and a genuine desire to support confessional Lutheranism.

The Russian law on religion raised concerns. The 1990 law was considered too liberal in allowing too much freedom to all kinds of religious organizations. President Boris Yeltsin signed a bill tightening up the law in September 1997. At that time the head of the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church was Metropolitan Kirill, who was not very enthusiastic about foreign mission work. As the editor of the *Missionary to Missionary* newsletter wrote in the October 1997 issue, the new law would restrict religious freedom in Russia: “This will almost certainly make our work more difficult.” He continued: “We have positioned ourselves to, if necessary, work under the Ingrian Church, a church with which we are in dialogue concerning pulpit and altar fellowship.” Furthermore the dialogues aimed at achieving altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS were generally quite comprehensive. Hence, one of the main reasons for deepening the structural relationship between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church was the Russian law, which reflected a bigger change in the attitudes of Russians towards many kinds of suspicious foreign religious influences.⁴⁵⁸

The new law forced the LCMS to work through the ELCIR. The Missouri Synod conducted church services, which is always a religious activity, and according to the 1997

⁴⁵⁷ Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011. According to the *Constitution/Guiding Principles of the ILC* (adopted 1993 and revised 2007), “The ILC provides a “forum” to which member churches may bring their theological and practical needs and challenges for mutual responsibility.” (ILC Constitution 2007) Unlike the Ingrian Church, the Latvian Lutheran Church did not join the ILC and remained an observer. Archbishop Vanags suggested two reasons for this: first, the membership fee was very high and the Latvian Church could not afford it, and second, the Latvian Church had a rather “bulky” procedure for joining such fellowship or organizations. Hence the Latvians were invited to participate as observers or guests, but not as full members. Vanags explained the significance of the ILC to Latvians, it being “quite clear” that “this organization helped us to come to contacts with different confessional churches in Europe and in the world. We would otherwise not know even that much.” (Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011)

⁴⁵⁸ ALCMS BFMS *Missionary to Missionary* October 1997; Kieschnick 2009, 32; Religious Tolerance 5.3.2013; Kääriäinen 1998, 137; Sherat 2000, 239; Kääriäinen 2004, 67–69. Elliot (2001, 73) describes Metropolitan Kirill’s attitude in 1996 towards some of the foreign missionaries and their work: “In 1996 Metropolitan Ky[i]rill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad bitterly complained to a World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism meeting in Brazil about the “hordes of missionaries” in Russia who “came from abroad with dollars” in a “crusade...against the Russian Church,” preaching on radio and television “in order to buy people.” As Metropolitan Kirill contended, “This work is not Christian mission, it is spiritual colonialism.”

law on religion this kind of confessional group should work independently for at least 15 years before gaining the full rights of a legal personality. With regard to its services, therefore, the Missouri Synod's situation was such that it would not have the status of a Church for many years, because the counting started from when it began its official activities in the Russian area. Rather than working only as a supportive missionary organization for the benefit of some Churches, the Missourians believed it would be more purposeful to work towards being able to participate in church services at the altar and to receive and share sacraments. Thus the potential negative implications of the 1997 Law on religion in fact sowed the seeds of the altar and pulpit fellowship.⁴⁵⁹

Furthermore, when the new law was passed it just became more and more troublesome to deal with the government. Its attitude fluctuated depending on whom one talked with, and the different Russian federations had some local laws on religion that made the situation even more complex. A certain kind of xenophobia blossomed, and foreign support for local congregations sometimes created problems. Frank Imhoff cited Lawrence A. Uzzel's Religion News Service report from Moscow in which he wrote that a Lutheran congregation in the Siberian Republic of Khakassia had been ordered to close. The local authorities cited the new law as the reason for their action. In addition, some of the congregation members had been accused of being American spies. According to the reports, the church was affiliated with the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church but had received substantial help from the Missouri Synod.⁴⁶⁰ This atmosphere pushed the fellowship process forward.

Preceding the altar and pulpit fellowship agreement, a Joint Statement of Agreement between the Ingrian Church and the Missouri Synod was signed on 15, October 1997. Bishop Aarre Kuukauppi, Sergei Preiman and Isto Pihkala signed on behalf of the Ingrian Church, and President Robert T. Kuhn, Samuel H. Nafzger and Raymond L. Hartwig on behalf of the Missouri Synod. Overall there had been three rounds of discussion. The preliminary conversations took place between 31 March and 1 April 1995, in St. Petersburg. Two years later, on 10–12 March 1997, there was a second round of talks in St. Louis. Before concluding the agreement the representatives met for a third time on 13–15, October 1997, this time in St. Petersburg. The talks covered issues such as the doctrines of the Scriptures and of the ministry, the role of women, and ethical issues such as homosexuality and abortion. Both Churches found that they were in doctrinal agreement in the official discussion.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012; Kääriäinen 1998, 136–137; Sherat 2000, 225; Kääriäinen 2004, 70–71; Turunen 2005, 32–33. The associations that could prove they had been working for at least 15 years were called organizations and those that could not were called groups. “Not having status of a legal personality severely hampers the group's ability to conduct a normal religious life as it cannot own property, have bank accounts, enjoy tax-exempt status, invite preachers from abroad, or set up educational institutions.” (Sherat 2000, 240) Furthermore, “The rule of 15 years of existence is problematic since during the Soviet period religious groups may have existed without registration.” (Turunen 2005, 33)

⁴⁶⁰ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Imhoff to Janhonen 9.10.1997; Jeffrey Thormodson interview 12.2.2011; Kääriäinen 1998, 137–138; Kääriäinen 2004, 74–76.

⁴⁶¹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Joint Statement of Agreement; LCMSIC CTCR Joint Statement of Agreement: LW *Ingrian church votes fellowship with Synod Dec/1997*, 13. Risto Lehtonen

The Joint Statement of Agreement consisted of two main parts: a) A Statement of Confessional Agreement and b) A Statement of Mutual Commitment. The Confessional Agreement stated: “Our discussions together revealed that agreement in doctrine exists between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria and The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.” The Scriptures were confessed together as “the inspired and inerrant written Word of God”, and the parties accepted “without qualification the ecumenical creeds and also the Lutheran Confessions as a true and faithful exposition of Holy Scripture.”⁴⁶²

The Statement of Mutual Commitment recommended that the Ingrian Church and the Missouri Synod should enter into altar and pulpit fellowship “In order that our church bodies may work together in Christian harmony, peace and joy, and in all order and decency”. The agreement emphasizes the role of the leadership, the bishop and the president, in having the “Ultimate responsibility for overseeing all contacts and operational agreements in mission and ministry endeavors between our two churches”.⁴⁶³

From the ecumenical perspective it was stated, as later in the altar and pulpit fellowship agreement:

We the representatives of our respective churches, moreover, recognize that each of our churches, for a variety of historical, geographical and governmental reasons, stands in a number of already existing church fellowship relationships with other churches. Not all of these relationships are characterized by complete agreement in doctrine and practice. This recommendation that our respective church bodies declare themselves to be in church fellowship, therefore, is made with the mutual commitment to each other that each of us in our own churches rejects all those doctrinal positions as stated above on which this joint statement is based.⁴⁶⁴

The above passage was an effort to deal with the difficult question of the Missouri Synod’s teaching on church fellowship, and the fact that the Ingrian Church had so-called heterodox partner churches such as the Finnish Church, and had been a member of the Lutheran World Federation since 1994. Arguments countering these facts referred to earlier fellowships formed for historical, geographical and governmental reasons, which undermined the doctrinal level. As a result, the Ingrian Church re-positioned itself among the Churches with which it was already in fellowship, as well as the LWF.

Overall, it was difficult for the Missourians to understand why the Ingrian Church was also a member of the Lutheran World Federation and the International Lutheran Council. Some would have wanted them to choose a clearly conservative line, but the Ingrians tried

considered the doctrinal agreement in a critical light. He had warned the Missourians earlier that even though the Ingrians shared some doctrinal similarities with them, their decisions were based largely on pragmatism. Their conservatism was different from Missourian conservatism, and its Russian cultural heritage, and the closeness of the East and the Russian Orthodox Church gave the Ingrian Church its own tone. The Missourians should not, therefore, expect the Ingrian Church to be easily integrated into the Missouri Synod. According to Lehtonen, some Missourians did not take these things into consideration, although others did. (Risto Lehtonen interview 17.3.2011)

⁴⁶² ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Joint Statement of Agreement.

⁴⁶³ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Joint Statement of Agreement.

⁴⁶⁴ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Joint Statement of Agreement.

to explain that they had their own backgrounds and their own reasons for wanting dual membership. However, Bishop Kuukauppi felt that President Barry was open about the Ingrian Church, and, to some extent, understood its situation. The Ingrians managed to convince the Missourians that even though they were members of the LWF they did not approve of all aspects of its liberal policies, especially its theology: it was a small but feisty Church in its relations with the LWF. The Ingrians saw themselves as not being afraid to express their own thoughts, and the Missourians somehow learned to respect the position of this small Church in two camps. Bishop Kuukauppi said he believed that they had influenced the ecumenical line of the Missourians to some extent.⁴⁶⁵

Thus, in that sense the dual memberships of the Ingrian, Latvian and Lithuanian Churches in the LWF and the LCMS were not out of the ordinary, but still brought something new and challenging to the global Lutheran community, and to the Missouri Synod.

The Missourians did understand the missionary situation in which the Ingrian Church found itself, and that it was opening the door to Russian work as a whole. It also became clear to them that it was possible to work through the Ingrian Church, in which there was wide acceptance of mutual relations, and this made them sympathetic towards it. Kuukauppi said he believed that 99 percent of its members supported the establishment of connections with the LCMS.⁴⁶⁶

All in all, the Joint Statement of Agreement recommended fellowship declarations. The Interim Agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia and The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod was also signed on the same day, 15 October 1997. The signatories were Bishop Aarre Kuukauppi and James Dimitroff, LCMS Missionary Counselor, Russia. Of utmost importance is the section in which it is stated that the Missouri Synod “works in Russia as a missionary organization together with other Lutheran Churches existing here and does not intend to organize a new Lutheran Church”. On the Ingrian side it “guarantees within the limits of its possibilities the rights of the Missouri Synod to work in Russia”. The territorial principle was also important: “The Church of Ingria and Missouri Synod shall always agree ahead of time about various projects of construction, development and training etc. on the territory of Russia”.⁴⁶⁷ Given this territorial principle in the Interim Agreement and the claim that the Missouri Synod “does not intend to organize a new Lutheran Church” in Russia, later developments in Siberia are of special interest.

Annual meetings of the Church leaders were also to be maintained, in which “the performance of the present agreement in Russia is evaluated and future co-operation is planned”. Even the procedure for terminating the agreement was laid down: talks covering the reason for the possible breaking off of relations shall precede the termination, after

⁴⁶⁵ Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011. To give a wider perspective, it is very common for ecumenical agreements to be partially overlapping. (Risto Saarinen interview 29.11.2011)

⁴⁶⁶ Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011.

⁴⁶⁷ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Interim Agreement 15.8.1997; LW *Ingrian church votes fellowship with Synod* Dec/1997, 13; Reporter *Ingrians vote fellowship with Synod* Nov/1997, 1.

which the agreement could be terminated unilaterally. The deadline for termination was agreed to be one year.⁴⁶⁸

The Ingrian Church declared itself to be in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Missouri Synod on 25 October 1997. The declaration came less than two weeks after each party had agreed to recommend that its Church declare fellowship toward the other. First Vice President Robert T. Kuhn noted in *The Lutheran Witness* (Dec/1997) that this more formal fellowship with the Ingrian Church came at an opportune time because the new Russian law restricted religious activity there. The Missourians had no idea when they started the negotiations that the Russian Duma would pass a law restricting religious activity, and especially for non-Russian Churches to work independently in Russia: its relationship with the Ingrian Church suddenly became “our entrée to continue work in Russia.”⁴⁶⁹

Many Finns criticized the agreements. Questions were raised about why the Ingrians were doing it and if it was clever. Furthermore, some interactions or tensions between the Missouri Synod and some Finnish mission societies had produced some reservations among the Ingrian Church’s Finnish partners about the Missouri Synod’s signing such a relationship agreement. In response, the Ingrians reminded the Finns that the Ingrian Church was an independent body and could make agreements with whomever it wanted to if it was right and necessary. Isto Pihkala, for example, said he was happy that agreement had been reached, thereby creating order in the Ingrian Church, but he was attacked in Finland for his part in the ELCIR decision.⁴⁷⁰

The Ingrian Church was “the real test case” for the Missouri Synod because it was a church body, already a member of the LWF and wanting to become a partner Church of the LCMS. It was not clear how that would work. As Mattson said: “at a church body level, that’s probably the greatest kind of obstacle that we had.” According to Raymond Hartwig, chairman of the convention committee that drafted the fellowship resolution, during the fellowship talks the committee had received inquiries about the ELCIR’s relationship with other Lutherans.⁴⁷¹

Thus, in a way, the agreement process was a test case on whether the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church could be both confessional and at least to a certain extent ecumenical. Both chose the hard way, trying to combine relatively strict confessionalism

⁴⁶⁸ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Interim Agreement 15.8.1997. The Missouri Synod had terminated fellowships before, at least in 1981 when it ended altar and pulpit fellowship with the American Lutheran Church because of doctrinal differences. (Schuetze 2000, 400)

⁴⁶⁹ IKA LCMS + ILC Press release, 12.7.1998; LW *Ingrian church votes fellowship with Synod* Dec/1997, 13. Reporter *Ingrians vote fellowship with Synod* Nov/1997, 1, 4. *The Lutheran Witness* and *Der Lutheraner* have been described as the two leading Missouri Synod publications: e.g., Ruotsila 2008, 91.

⁴⁷⁰ Jukka Paananen interview 9.6.2011; John Mehl email interview 19.2.2012; Isto Pihkala 2.3.2012. Pihkala: “Sitten mut pestään täällä mennän tullen”.

⁴⁷¹ IKA LCMS + ILC Press release 12.7.1998; Daniel Mattson interview 11.2.2011. According to Daniel Mattson, the LWF procedures for joining the Federation were not fully comparable to the careful considerations of the Missouri Synod in the fellowship negotiations. The Churches involved in the negotiations with the LCMS were asked many questions, whereas the LWF may have refrained from asking too much. (Daniel Mattson interview 11.2.2011)

with ecumenical elements. As Robert W. Bertram wrote, it seemed that the easier way would to “either be ecumenical and sub-confessional or be confessional and separatistic”.⁴⁷²

All in all, the process was quite complicated on the Missourian side. First there was the elaborate exchanging of documents and arranging meetings, then recommendations were made to the president, who asked the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to look at everything, and then the CTRC made the recommendation to the convention of the Missouri Synod.⁴⁷³

3.3.2 Agreement and reception

As mentioned, the altar and pulpit fellowship agreement was first signed in the Ingrian Church in October 1997, but it was not effective before it had been signed in the USA.⁴⁷⁴

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod declared itself to be in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia on 12 July 1998, in accordance with the decision made by the Missouri Synod’s 60th Regular Convention. The LCMS synodical convention adopted Resolution 3–01: To Declare Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia. Bishop Aarre Kuukauppi was given the opportunity to address the assembly: he described the decision as “the culmination of our dreams”.⁴⁷⁵

In the following I discuss the most important aspects of the Protocol Document, which lists the objectives of partnership between the ELCIR and the LCMS:

In our efforts to fulfill Christ’s mission we will cooperate and share resources in

1. Higher Education to provide adequate facilities and faculties for properly educating the people who are needed to fill full-time positions in our two churches;

⁴⁷² RLA Bertram to Lehtonen 2.6.1998.

⁴⁷³ Daniel Mattson interview 11.2.2011.

⁴⁷⁴ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012. The Ingrians signed the agreement only one month after the 1997 law on religion came into force in September. (Kääriäinen 2004, 69)

⁴⁷⁵ IKA LCMS + ILC Press release, 12.7.1998; ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary August 1998. The Ingrian Church was independent enough to make agreements with the Missouri Synod, but taking a position on the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), signed eventually on Reformation day, 1999 with the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, was considered too difficult. The Ingrian Church had a meeting of pastors and deacons in early 1998 under the leadership of Bishop Aarre Kuukauppi. The conclusion was that it was “not able to make a profound theological analysis on the Justification document”, and that there were no “resources or possibilities for a wider discussion on the §40 and §41. Therefore we do not take any position on this matter.” (HY-EKU/L-RC JD-Kok. 2/7 Kuukauppi to LWF 30.4.1998; Todd 2003, 37) Neither the Missouri Synod nor the Wisconsin Synod in America recognized the JDDJ. (Mattox & Roeber 2012, 12) Given that the ELCIR made the agreement in 1997, and the LCMS in 1998, one could refer to the agreement of 1997/1998, as Spieth (2014, 244) does, for example: “Für die ELKIR ist diese Beziehung weiterhin von erheblicher Bedeutung, zumal eine offizielle Kirchenpartnerschaft bereits seit 1997/1998 besteht.”

2. Opening of new fields, congregations, or stations in order to faithfully proclaim the Gospel to all people whom we can reach in our home areas;
3. World mission outreach so that we may plan and share resources to bring the Gospel to the whole world, including those areas far away from us;
4. Programs that help our members grow “to mature manhood” (Ephesians 4:13) in their faith in Christ;
5. Programs which enable our members to put their faith in action by reaching out with genuine love and concern to serve people who are in every kind of need; and
6. Mass media and literature projects in cooperation with the organizations and agencies of our churches which enable our members to grow in faith and which support the mission outreach of our churches.⁴⁷⁶

Higher education had risen to the top of the agenda in comparison with the mission strategy papers from the beginning of the 1990s, which was not a surprise given that much of the work and cooperation focused on theological education in particular. What is significant is that the term “planting new congregations” only features on the list in a softer form: “Opening of new fields, congregations, or stations”.

Both Churches agreed to communicate officially through the office of the President/Bishop.⁴⁷⁷ Thus, this protocol document also supported the official church structures. This was necessary on the Ingrian side because the Church was still under construction and Russia was enormous. On the Missourian side there was a need to support official communication channels because of its synodical⁴⁷⁸ nature: it had frequently been very difficult to control the mission’s efforts.

With regard to fellowships with other church bodies the document stated that the churches agreed “that we will consult each other before entering into church fellowship or partnership with another church body or church federation.” However, this promise of consultation was softened as follows: “We also agree, however, that each of us is finally responsible to the Lord of the church for decisions taken in this matter.”⁴⁷⁹

The full fellowship agreement between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church was very important from the global Lutheran perspective. This was apparently the very first LWF member Church that went on to sign a fellowship agreement with the Missouri Synod. Some had done the opposite - becoming partners with the LCMS and then joining the LWF. The Missouri Synod started to work in Nigeria in 1936, for example, and the Lutheran Church of Nigeria became a partner in 1963, and then joined the LWF in

⁴⁷⁶ IKA LCMS + ILC Protocol Document ELCIR & LCMS 12.7.1998.

⁴⁷⁷ IKA LCMS + ILC Protocol Document ELCIR & LCMS 12.7.1998.

⁴⁷⁸ For more about the synodical organizational development in the Missouri Synod see Sueflow 1998, 145–170.

⁴⁷⁹ IKA LCMS + ILC Protocol Document ELCIR & LCMS 12.7.1998.

1973.⁴⁸⁰ This shows how the LWF accepted Churches that were already connected to the LCMS, and that the Missouri Synod was willing to do the same.

Two days after the signing of the agreement Dr. Daniel Mattson of the Missouri Synod wrote to Dr. Olli-Pekka Lassila of the Lutheran World Federation, that he was happy to report that the convention of the Missouri Synod had approved the proposal to declare altar and pulpit fellowship with the Ingrian Church. He added: “We live in interesting times.” Olli-Pekka Lassila responded: “I recall our previous contacts and your sympathetic and constructive approach to different matters.” On the subject of fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church he wrote honestly: “I really hope that the Ingrian church could develop its international contacts in an open and positive way and possible conflicts of loyalty could be avoided. I am concerned about the situation, to tell the truth.” Mattson wrote back, sharing Lassila’s hope about how the Ingrian Church would develop its international contacts. He continued: “I know that my colleagues feel the same way.”⁴⁸¹

John and Susan Mehl wrote in the *Missionary to Missionary* (Nov/1998) newsletter about how the new relationship between the LCMS and the ELCIR would change the work of Missourian missionaries in Russia: “We in Russian mission field are pleased to have an indigenous “partner church” with whom we can work” and: “Our strategy will change now. Our focus will be to work alongside our Ingrian brothers and sisters”. This change in strategy was a significant outcome of the agreement: now the work was to be done “alongside” the Ingrians. The ELCIR became the only official partner Church of the LCMS in Russia, which is why the “LCMS World Mission began from 1998 to direct its resources and energies toward helping Ingria achieve her goals in the work of spreading the Gospel.”⁴⁸²

Before 1998 the Missourians relied on contact with individuals, groups and organizations. As Dr. Nafzger recalled, “We were in that part of the world but at that point there were no churchbody-to-churchbody relationships.” However, Reverend Leif Camp questioned the impact of the fellowship agreement because the Missourians were unofficial partners of the Ingrians and worked with them anyway. The agreement only made the situation more official.⁴⁸³ As far as both leaders were concerned, the formalizing of relations may have brought more stability and control to the somewhat chaotic mission field.

Furthermore, the agreement made it possible to arrange the Missouri Synod’s mission work in a safer way so as to comply more fully with the Russian law. In September 1998 Mattson had a two-part meeting involving Bishop Kuukauppi, Fred Schielke, James Dimitroff and two lawyers. The first part of the meeting concerned the issue of how LCMS mission work in Russia should be reorganized to bring it in line with Russian law,

⁴⁸⁰ Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011; Risto Lehtonen interview 17.3.2011; Schjørring & Kumari & Hjelm 1997, 536; LCMS Nigeria 2003.

⁴⁸¹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Mattson to Lassila and DMD 14.7.1998; ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Lassila to Mattson 6.8.1998; ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Mattson to Lassila 10.8.1998.

⁴⁸² ALCMS BFMS Missionary to Missionary November 1998; IKA EELK Mehl to Kugappi 4.11.2004.

⁴⁸³ Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011; Leif Camp interview 10.6.2011.

and the second part focused on LCMS World Mission activities in Russia. Mattson commented: “in both parts of our meetings, relationship between the LCMS and the Ingrians appear to be uniformly excellent.” In the same meeting Bishop Kuukauppi handed over the signed and sealed fellowship documents in English and Russian, so that the Russian copies could be signed and sealed in the USA and then returned to Russia.⁴⁸⁴

Bishop Kuukauppi wanted the LCMS mission to be registered so as to relate it as closely as possible to the Ingrian Church. It should be registered as a “religious organization” to allow it to apply for visas and to employ its own workers, engage in projects and so on. Any congregations established after the registration would then be Ingrian. According to Mattson, “This kind of arrangement would build on the foundation that already exists”. Bishop Kuukauppi had no objection to the Missourians establishing an independent organization on the federal level to take care of business matters under the umbrella of the Ingrian Church, with the right to work in areas where the Ingrians worked: it would coordinate its work with that of the Ingrian Church.⁴⁸⁵

It was assumed that the registration would affect only those who were officially sent by the LCMS: the Ingrian Church did not want to be held legally responsible for the actions of people who were free-lancing. The Protocol Document was intended to control the relationship between the two Churches. It was also assumed that the organizational center of the mission would be in St. Petersburg. This was a very significant time for the ELCIR because it had to be registered under the new law before it became an officially registered Church.⁴⁸⁶

Furthermore, it was the right time to sign the agreement because the economic situation in Russia was not the best in the fall of 1998. The Ingrian Church warned LCMS World Relief that assistance might be needed to enable people to get through the winter, and that cooperation with Finn Church Aid was a possibility. The Missourians also reported that anti-Protestant articles had appeared in the press and that nationalism was on the rise, even within the Church. One reason for this was the collapse of the economy in August 1998, which made life more difficult.⁴⁸⁷

Reactions to the altar and pulpit fellowship agreement were not entirely positive, even among some LCMS people. For example, Bishop Kuukauppi received a letter from Reverend Herman Otten, a Missourian “hardliner” and editor of *Christian News*, the unofficial weekly journal of the LCMS, demanding that the ELCIR leave the LWF and break fellowship with the Finnish Church.⁴⁸⁸

The agreement was perceived in Finland in terms of Western Church politics. The Finnish Lutheran Church officially respected the sovereignty of the Ingrian Church. Generally speaking, the decision met with some disapproval, and caused surprise and speculation about where the Ingrian Church was going. The stipulation that it was not

⁴⁸⁴ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Russia September 24, 1998.

⁴⁸⁵ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Russia September 24, 1998.

⁴⁸⁶ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Russia September 24, 1998.

⁴⁸⁷ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Russia September 24, 1998; Luukkanen 2008, 53–56.

⁴⁸⁸ QNN Pastor Herman Otten 2012; Lagerquist 1999, 150; Braun 2003, 277; Todd 2003, 31.

automatically an extension of the Finnish Church was very important to the Ingrians, and the agreement was the strongest message of that kind.⁴⁸⁹ At least on the official level the Church in Finland adopted a correct and moderate attitude on the matter, but the mainline membership may not have been pleased with it.

The agreement with the Missouri Synod was of high significance in the independence process of the Ingrian Church. As always when it is a question of independence, it was very important to receive recognition from other entities. The Missouri Synod strengthened the identity of the Ingrian Church by recognizing its position and independence, and this symbolically cut the umbilical cord linking it to the Finnish Church.⁴⁹⁰

Not everyone in Finland could necessarily separate the desire for independence in the Ingrian Church from the Missouri Synod's influence on it. According to Isto Pihkala, there was some sort of obsession to put the blame on the Missouri Synod: whenever there was a problem, it was the fault of the Synod. According to Pihkala, ecumenical tension was behind all this. This basic tension was in the background of many interpretations, together with a reluctance to consider multiple factors. Pihkala did not quite understand why the Ingrians were said to be antiecumenical in some way, because he saw the simultaneous connections with the Missouri Synod and the Lutheran World Federation as an ecumenical achievement. He also wondered how it was possible to monopolize ecumenical work.⁴⁹¹

It is also worth comparing the fellowship agreements concluded by the Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In 1997 the ELCA entered into full communion⁴⁹² with the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ.⁴⁹³ In this context the decision of two Lutheran Churches, the LCMS and the ELCIR, to enter into full communion with one another cannot be considered very progressive ecumenically.

What made the agreement with the Ingrian Church even more significant was that it was the first time the Missouri Synod had entered into church fellowship with a body that was already in fellowship with Churches with which the LCMS was not. As Brug (2010) critically sums it up: the Missouri Synod “has tolerated membership in the LWF by some of its sister churches who chose to join that group”, but what had changed was the fact that the Missouri Synod began to declare “new fellowships with churches that already belong to the LWF.” The first time this happened was when the agreement was made with the Ingrian Church. Brug continues: in 1998 the Missouri Synod “told Stateside congregations that they could not be in fellowship with both the ELCA and LCMS”, but elsewhere “the

⁴⁸⁹ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

⁴⁹⁰ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

⁴⁹¹ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

⁴⁹² Vajta (1963, 225) defines “Full Communion”, based on the concept defined by the Conference of Faith and Order in 1952, in general use as “where churches in doctrinal agreement, or of the same confessional family, allow communicant members freely to communicate at the altars of each, and where there is freedom of ministers to officiate sacramentally in either church (i.e., intercelebration), e.g., the Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed (Presbyterian) “families” of churches, respectively.”

⁴⁹³ A Formula of Agreement 1997; Lagerquist 1999, 162; Schuetze 2000, 398; Cimino 2003 c, 86.

LCMS entered fellowship with the Ingrian Church, which belongs to the LWF; and thus is in fellowship with the ELCA.”⁴⁹⁴

All in all, altar and pulpit fellowship clarified the Lutheran identity of the Ingrian Church, as Aleksandr Prilutskij interpreted the agreement: “Generally it was a clear proclamation of our theological position.”⁴⁹⁵ It might have been the opposite for the Missouri Synod, whose theological position was changing. The mission work done in the former Soviet Union and the breakthrough agreement with the Ingrian Church had perhaps changed it, or at least revealed what it had become: “an international Lutheran Church”.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁴ Brug 2010, 37, 40; Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011; Leif Camp interview 10.6.2011. The situation with the Ingrian Church was different, but the Missouri Synod had been in “triangular fellowship situations” before, with the LWF, but also with the Wisconsin Synod. With regard to the WELS, when The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, established in the USA in 1872, split apart in the 1960s some of the old partner Churches of the Conference in Europe and Africa maintained fellowship with the WELS and the LCMS, even though these two synods had severed their fellowship. (Schuetze 2000, 1 & Fredrich 2000, 233)

⁴⁹⁵ Aleksandr Prilutskij interview 7.6.2011; Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

⁴⁹⁶ Todd 2000, 260. According to Todd, the name of the LCMS was again discussed in connection with the 1998 synodical convention, and there was a claim “that the synod’s name should reflect what it has become, an international Lutheran church.”

IV Gaining a strong foothold in theology and Church relations, 1999–2001

4.1 Arranging theological education in Russia, Latvia and Lithuania

4.1.1 Lutheran education centers in Russia

Following the agreement of 1998, the international partners had to get used to the new situation of the Ingrian Church, which was now in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Missouri Synod. In fact, in terms of church politics its position was ambiguous with its relations to the Missouri Synod and the Lutheran World Federation.⁴⁹⁷ This situation did not make it less relevant to coordinate theological education among Russian Lutherans.

There was a continuous need to coordinate efforts aimed at supporting theological education. As an example, a workshop on theological education at Lutheran seminaries in the Commonwealth of Independent States was arranged near St. Petersburg in March 1999. This was the first time such a workshop had been held in post-Communist Russia.⁴⁹⁸

The major training institutions, including the Theological Seminary of the ELCROS (Novorosatovka/St. Petersburg), the Training Center of the ELCIR (Koltushi/St. Petersburg), and the Lutheran Theological Seminary (Novosibirsk) sent representatives to the meeting, and there were also representatives from theological seminaries in Kazakhstan and Ukraine. The Theological Institute in Tallinn (EELC) was also represented, but as a guest and a partner institution.⁴⁹⁹

Dr. Olli-Pekka Lassila of the LWF suggested in his travel report that the seminaries in Novosaratovska and Koltushi were fairly well established in terms of training programs and infrastructure, and in that sense were the leading Lutheran training institutions in Russia. However, he considered the institute in Tallinn to be more highly developed and on a higher academic level.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁷ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Kramsu to LWF Europe Desk 12.10.1999.

⁴⁹⁸ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Olli-Pekka Lassila: Travel Report St. Petersburg 23.–26.3.1999; Stricker 2000,1.

⁴⁹⁹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Olli-Pekka Lassila: Travel Report St. Petersburg 23.–26.3.1999. The Missourians were also actively supporting theological education in other parts of the former Soviet Union. According to Lassila, the Missouri Synod had been active in Kazakhstan for five years, with church planting and leadership training its main focus. The director of the Seminar in Almaty, Hans Spalteholz, made some reference to the agreement between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church to the effect that perhaps something similar could be done in Kazakhstan. According to Stricker, the project in Almaty began in 1997 and was sponsored by the LCMS, specifically the Department of World Mission. (ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Olli-Pekka Lassila: Travel Report St. Petersburg 23.–26.3.1999; Stricker 2000, 13)

⁵⁰⁰ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Olli-Pekka Lassila: Travel Report St. Petersburg 23.–26.3.1999.

The ELCROS Novosaratovska Seminary started functioning in 1997, supported by the ELCA. Interestingly, although in 1999 it had female students who would potentially be ordained, the Missouri Synod participated in the education. There were four permanent teachers, three from Germany and one from the Missouri Synod, and some guest lecturers from both countries. In addition to that, there was a plan to supply Koltushi and Novosaratovska with a common visiting professor from the ELCA, Chicago.⁵⁰¹ The active involvement of the Missouri Synod in the program of the ELCROS seminary, where women could study to become pastors, was evidence of its increased tolerance, at least in the exceptional circumstances of the post-Soviet era. It even tolerated the presence of the ELCA. In general, however, the situation in Russia developed such that American Lutheran conservatives tended to support the Ingrian Church, and American Lutheran liberals to support the ELCROS.

The “struggle for power” continued regarding the Ingrian Church’s Koltushi training center. Alone it could not manage the center financially and needed support from other Churches. The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission had invested “a lot of financial resources”, and was continuing to do so. Olli-Pekka Lassila thought this was good “because the FELM also helps to balance the theological positions of the ELCIR, in relation to the LCMS and to some anti ecumenical tendencies in the church of Finland.” According to Stricker (2000), the Finns and the Americans, more precisely the LCMS, “provide the most assistance.”⁵⁰² Competition among the different theological positions was constant. Many church bodies, organizations and individuals had their own visions of proper theological training.

Given the number of partners involved, the building of the Koltushi institute was rather difficult for the Missouri Synod. The Missourians had to work mainly on their own projects because they could not meet funding targets in the USA with the Lutheran World Federation as a partner. According to Isto Pihkala, the LCMS wanted to be involved in Koltushi, but because it was already so heavily funded by the Finns the Missourians could not be so visible because they did not wish to be seen to be working too closely with them. Missourian activities in Koltushi included sending lecturers and expertise literature and participating in some singular projects, but overall they left Koltushi to the Finns.⁵⁰³

The Training Centre in Koltushi was also of significance in establishing the theological line for coming generations of Ingrian church workers. The influence of the Finnish Lutherans was very strong, but as has become clear by now, the Missourians also wanted to exert their influence. There were times, for example, when important posts had to be

⁵⁰¹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Jokinen to Lassila 3.3.1999; ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Olli-Pekka Lassila: Travel Report St. Petersburg 23.–26.3.1999; Stricker 2000, 6.

⁵⁰² ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Jokinen to Lassila 3.3.1999; ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Olli-Pekka Lassila: Travel Report St. Petersburg 23.–26.3.1999; Stricker 2000, 10. The Ingrians were also trying to get some money from the ELCA for reparations in Koltushi. (ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 RUSSIA 2000- Kramsu to [Lassila] 8.6.2000; Pelkonen 2009, 77)

⁵⁰³ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

filled and both Finns and Missourians showed an interest. A Missourian was seen as an option, at least when there was not a competent Finnish applicant.⁵⁰⁴

Finns were not as active in Siberia as in European Russia, whereas Ft. Wayne people in particular, or more precisely Concordia Theological College supported the Novosibirsk seminary. Dr. Olli-Pekka Lassila suggested in his travel report that Novosibirsk was a problem in Russia on the ecclesiological level. It was assumed that the seminary and church would be a place for Russian urban intellectuals, which might partly explain their tendency to keep a distance from the ELCROS and the ELCIR. The Novosibirsk seminary moved into a new building in 1998, thanks to its generous donors. Reverend Timothy Quill from the Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne was also present at the meeting in March 1999 in which theological education was discussed, invited by Bishop Kuukauppi. Dr. Quill reported on his seminary's cooperation with the seminary in Novosibirsk, and on its theological programs for foreign students.⁵⁰⁵ The problematic Siberian situation is discussed later in Chapter 4.2.2.

Dr. Olli-Pekka Lassila pointed out in the March 1999 meeting that theological education was a high priority for the Lutheran World Federation.⁵⁰⁶ Its importance even increased within the work of the Missouri Synod and the LWF, according to the research material, because both wanted to support their own theological view. This competition gave their Russian counterparts the opportunity to take bids.

Dr. Olli-Pekka Lassila thought it was good to gather all the Lutheran training institutions around the table: "There are considerable differences between them, and the involvement of the LCMS in this field is strong". He also mentioned that cooperation between the Lutheran Federation member Churches, and both the ELCROS and the ELCIR seemed to be developing, but not very fast. They already shared the same computer system for their libraries, and from 1999 on they planned to share a visiting professor from the ELCA. Furthermore, "ELCROS is training women for the ordained ministry, the ELCIR, for the time being, does not".⁵⁰⁷ The basic theological difference between the two biggest Lutheran Churches in Russia concerned the ordination of women, and quite remarkably, the situation was very similar to that between the two largest Lutheran Churches in the USA, the ELCA and the LCMS.

Dr. Lassila mentioned the reduced funding in his presentation. Reverend Frederick Schielke from the Missouri Synod, a regular participant in LWF/DMD coordination meetings, was also present. To Lassila's great surprise, Schielke told him, "This applies

⁵⁰⁴ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Kramsu to Lassila 13.8.1999.

⁵⁰⁵ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Olli-Pekka Lassila: Travel Report St. Petersburg 23.–26.3.1999; FLW Oct. 1999, 15.

⁵⁰⁶ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Olli-Pekka Lassila: Travel Report St. Petersburg 23.–26.3.1999.

⁵⁰⁷ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Olli-Pekka Lassila: Travel Report St. Petersburg 23.–26.3.1999.

also to our work. We have been forced to cut three million USD in Europe”. According to Lassila, this was partly due to some restructuring of the Schwan Foundation.⁵⁰⁸

Theological education was “the first and second” priority in the Missouri Synod’s field of influence in Russia. In terms of theology the Synod was strongly conservative, which was positively welcomed in the Ingrian Church. The Missourian theological concept was suitable in many respects, but specifically with its emphasis on congregationalism. This was among the most difficult challenges as far as LCMS influence was concerned because the Eastern European Episcopalian churches did not feel very comfortable with the idea of practically sovereign congregations, which is understandable especially in Russia, the world’s geographically largest country. There were fears in the Ingrian Church that if the central governance was weakened and if congregations were given more independence the result could be anarchy.⁵⁰⁹

Stricker (2000) pointed out that the Missouri Synod’s financial support of activities in the former Soviet Union was “welcomed and has been accepted with thanks”. However, its support of the Ingrian Church and the ELCROS caused some concern among their other counterparts. The Lutherans in Germany in particular considered its role “problematic, because they see it as tied to the agenda of spreading conservative principles of the Missouri Synod in Eastern Europe and Asia.” Moreover, it “results in conflicts with the somewhat more liberal principles of the European Lutherans.”⁵¹⁰ Stricker’s analysis was correct at least in that the confessionalism or conservatism of the Missouri Synod’s theology was indeed in contradiction with the more progressive/liberal views of many Western European Lutherans, Germans in particular.

4.1.2 The Luther Academy in Riga and the Department for Evangelical Theology in Klaipėda

The Luther Academy project changed hands in the Hong Kong meeting of 1997 from the Lutheran World Federation and its member churches to the Missouri Synod, which funded it from then onwards. However, some Missourians began to wonder whether the donated funds were used appropriately in Latvia. In January 1999 Archbishop Jānis Vanags sent a message to Dr. Daniel Mattson, Director for Theological Studies at the LCMS World Mission, about the funding of the Luther Academy building. Mattson was self-critical for not having controlled the project more effectively, but Vanags assured him that “all the problems have been caused by the bad condition of the building. Neither yours, nor my closer

⁵⁰⁸ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Olli-Pekka Lassila: Travel Report St. Petersburg 23.–26.3.1999.

⁵⁰⁹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 RUSSIA 2000- Kramsu to [Lassila] 8.6.2000; Aleksandr Prilutskij interview 7.6.2011; Todd 2000, 6. Todd (2000, 6) explains that in the LCMS there is “a unique form of congregationalism by which an advisory synod in convention declares policy and theology for the church at large while individual congregations are left to interpret those rulings locally.” According to Sueflow & Nelson (1980, 227), “The Missourian emphasis on a congregational ecclesiology was in a large measure a reaction to the episcopal pretentions [pretensions] of the deposed Stephan.”

⁵¹⁰ Stricker 2000, 13–14.

supervision would have improved anything.” Vanags also had to convince him that no money had been used wrongly: I “assure that you do not have to be worried about the destiny of the investments you have made.” There had been no misuse of funds and all the money had been put to the reconstruction of the building.⁵¹¹

At the time Dr. Olli-Pekka Lassila, the Europe Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, was also interested in the projects of the Latvian Church. He asked for information about projects supported by bodies other than the Lutheran World Federation. Ilvija Stolina, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs from the Latvian Church, gave his response: financial support had come from many churches and organizations. The Gustav Adolf Werk was funding renovation projects; *Lutherhjälpen*, the Church of Sweden Aid, was supporting a self-reliance project and the Riga 800-years-celebration project; a proposal to establish a salary-equalization foundation had been submitted to the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church; and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sachsen was supporting Sunday-school teaching and the publishing of three books for Sunday schools.⁵¹²

The list continued. The Missouri Synod was reported as having funded the Luther Academy project with the Lutheran World Federation. Apparently the LWF still supported it to some extent, despite the Hong Kong Assembly’s negative attitude towards the project and the withdrawal of funding. In any case and according to the Latvian Church, Missouri funding for this project was \$75,000 in the Fiscal Year of 1998/99, and was set at \$60,000 and \$40,000 in 1999/2000 and 2000/2001, respectively.⁵¹³ This gives an insight into the funding from the Missouri Synod, or at any rate how it was presented to the LWF.

However, the Synod’s officials had a different understanding of the funding given to the Luther Academy building project. Robert Hartfield, Fred Schielke, Keith Boheim and Daniel Mattson met with Archbishop Vanags and two members of the Church consistory, Jānis Ginters and Erberts Bikše, in Riga in March 1999. The main purpose of the Missourians’ visit was to discuss the additional funding needed to complete the project: the original cost estimate was about \$750,000, but a further request for \$350,000 had been received to ensure its completion. When reservations were expressed about the whole project a further request for \$507,000 was received. There were many reasons for these demands. One was the ambition of the Latvian Church consistory, which wanted the seminary building to be located not far from its offices and the cathedral in the historical part of Riga close to the national parliament. Another issue was the historic role of the Lutheran Church as the protector of Latvian culture.⁵¹⁴ Whatever the reasons, there was a huge gap between the numbers given to the Lutheran World Federation and the numbers known by the Missouri Synod’s officials. The support given by the LCMS, according to the information given to the LWF, consisted of only five-figure numbers, whereas the

⁵¹¹ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Vanags to Mattson 12.1.1999.

⁵¹² LELBA Stolina to Lassila 2.3.1999.

⁵¹³ LELBA Stolina to Lassila 2.3.1999.

⁵¹⁴ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia March 29, 1999. Overall, the Missouri Synod and its affiliates gave something like one million dollars for the academy project. This was a huge amount of money, especially in the Latvian context. (Juris Uļģis interview 6.4.2011)

Missouri Synod's official Dr. Daniel Mattson gave six-figure numbers in his personal report. This gives room for speculation. Was it possible that if the real numbers had been presented to the LWF there would have been some consequences, such as a reduction in the funding given to the Latvian Church?

Jouko Talonen (2006, 19) describes the Ingrian, Latvian and Lithuanian Churches as "bridge builders" between the Lutheran World Federation and the Missouri Synod's church family, adding that finding a balance between "mainstream" and "confessionalism" was not painless.⁵¹⁵ I would further add, based on the research and the above-mentioned confusion in numbers, that the Latvian Church was seemingly not only an altruistic bridge builder between the LWF and non-LWF/LCMS groups, but also had a calculative side that emerged in some cases when it was apparently seeking funding from both camps.

Dr. Mattson was not fully convinced about the direction in which the building project was going: "If the training of pastors were the only concern, it would have made far more sense to construct new buildings on a new site or to repair buildings in a different part of Riga." In his view, "A mistake was made in how loosely this project was drawn." Some people had made changes after the project request had been approved and funded: it was simply assumed that additional resources would cover the costs. Mattson thought this was not responsible behavior on the Latvians' side, as he wrote: "I have no doubt that it is easier to change plans when the bill can be sent to someone else and your own resources are not involved." He continued on a strict note: "I think it is critical that a condition of the next grant must be that this sum is absolutely final and that no changes are to be made at the expense of LCMS World Mission."⁵¹⁶ It could be concluded from Mattson's comments in his trip report that the Latvians were taking all they could from the Missourians.

The seminary building raised questions in the World Mission about how to improve the management of this kind of capital project. Mattson suggested some guidelines for avoiding such problems in the future. He thought that in the case of costly projects, an architect should be required to make a site visit and give a report to the World Mission. In addition, it had to be clear that once a large-scale project had been accepted changes could not be made without the consent of the donor.⁵¹⁷

Despite some disagreement between the partners, Mattson strongly felt that the Missourians should support the Luther Academy building project, and therefore campaigned for funding to buy the building and get it renovated. Many projects went through him, including this one for which he was the leading person from the Missourian side. As a cross-cultural project it was very complicated and the rules of the game were not always followed. All in all, Mattson described the project as "an extremely difficult and painful experience." He continued: "It wasn't easy but we did manage to do that".⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁵ Talonen 2006, 19. Jokinen (2015, 10) also describes the role of the Ingrian church as a bridge builder among Lutheran churches.

⁵¹⁶ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia March 29, 1999.

⁵¹⁷ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia March 29, 1999.

⁵¹⁸ Daniel Mattson interview 10.2.2011; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011.

Preparations were underway for the opening ceremony, although the building had been in use since 1999. Archbishop Vanags was disappointed that President Barry was not coming due to other responsibilities, and highlighted the role of the president and the Missouri Synod in the Luther Academy project: “I deeply regret that your duties do not permit you to join us on this occasion, because LCMS, its assistance and your personal support were decisive in carrying out the project”. This was an important matter for Archbishop Vanags because the Luther Academy was his project in particular. On the Latvian side, Guntis Kalme was instrumental in its establishment.⁵¹⁹

Although the Missouri Synod strongly supported theological education, other counterparts were involved as well. Not all partners of the Latvian Church approved of the theological line it had taken. The teaching in the Luther Academy was conservative, and one could say that it was confessional in the Missouriian sense, given the decisive influence of the Missouri Synod. The North Elbians in Germany were particularly critical of the theology of the Latvian Church. They had concluded an agreement to set up a trust fund that could be used to subsidize the salaries of Latvian pastors. The NEK kept control of the original amount invested (principal) so that the agreement could be changed. The problem was that no way of dealing with questions regarding the ordination of women had been found. On the theological level the issue was significant with regard to relations between the Latvian and North Elbian Churches, even to the degree that it was made clear that if the Latvians continued to object to women’s ordination, the North Elbians would see no way in which the two could cooperate.⁵²⁰ At least this was how Mattson and probably some Latvians understood North Elbian thinking.

Mattson commented on the situation: “Needless to say, this exerts enormous pressure on the leadership of the Latvian church”. He concluded that the best way to avoid this kind of situation would be for the Latvian Church to reach self-sufficiency: “As long as the Latvian church is so dependent on outside resources, it will always be vulnerable to this kind of blackmail”.⁵²¹ The North Elbians continued to put pressure on the Latvians, reaching its peak in the subsequent fellowship agreement between the ELCL and the LCMS, as will become clear later.

Friday, 5 May 2000 was the day of the dedication of the Luther Academy building in Riga. The long and complex process from the pastors’ training program to the opening of the building was finally complete. Samuel Nafzger, William Weinrich, Dean Wenthe, Frederick Schielke, Robert Rahn, and Timothy Quill represented the LCMS. Professor Dr. Slenczka continued as the Rector of the Luther Academy: Nafzger and Weinrich described him as “an impressive man and appears to be giving sound theological leadership to this church”. Classes were held in the building for a couple of years before it was officially opened in 2001. All in all, helping to establish the Luther Academy may have been the

⁵¹⁹ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Vanags to Barry 28.4.2000; Guntis Kalme email interview 29.3.2011; Jānis Ginters interview 5.4.2011; Talonen 2007, 266.

⁵²⁰ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia March 29, 1999 b; LKAK Bestand 11.03 Nr. 955 Henning Kramer: Bericht: Über die Partnerschaftsarbeit mit den ev.-luth. Kirchen im Baltikum. Berichtszeitraum 1999/2000.

⁵²¹ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia March 29, 1999 b.

most important single thing the Missouri Synod did in Latvia. The project was not over yet, however: the LCMS continued to cover a lot of the expenses, although on a declining scale, starting from full financial support for running the Academy.⁵²²

Apparently the Missourians made an effort to become heavily involved in Lutheran theological training in the whole Baltic area. Ft. Wayne had a substantial influence on Lithuanian theological education. A partnership agreement was concluded among the Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, USA, the Department for Evangelical Theology, Klaipėda, Lithuania, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania. The signatories to the agreement, which was signed on 19 May 1999 in Fort Wayne, were Ft. Wayne President Dean O. Wenthe, Bishop Jonas Kalvanas and Klaipėda University Rector Stasys Vaitekūnas.⁵²³ All three participants stated that the “foundations of their theological doctrine, teaching and their attitude towards the Lutheran Church are in accordance”, and agreed, “to continue and broaden their cooperation on a formal basis”. The fields of cooperation included student education, theological research, material assistance, and ordinary Lutheran mission work.⁵²⁴

Dr. William Weinrich, Academic Dean at Fort Wayne seminary, stated in *For the Life of the World* (July 1999) that the agreement presented an opportunity “for us and for the Missouri Synod to be vigorous supporters of the Lutheran confessional theology and practice in this area of the world, which has been Lutheran for a long time.”⁵²⁵

President Wenthe also invited Estonian Archbishop Jaan Kiivit and his Church to enter into an agreement with Concordia Theological Seminary in the same way as the Lithuanian Lutheran Church and the Department of Evangelical Theology had done.⁵²⁶ If the Missourians’ plans had worked out, a network of Lutheran theological training institutions deeply connected with the Missouri Synod would have spread throughout the Baltic countries. However, the Estonians had never been as enthusiastic about the Missourians as the Latvians and the Lithuanians, hence the level of Missourian involvement in Estonian theological training remained on a fairly low level.

In any case, the Lithuanians did not have many reservations about theological cooperation. Bishop Kalvanas approached Fort Wayne Seminary President Dean Wenthe in 1999 with a request for the full-time deployment of Dr. Charles Evanson to Lithuania. Evanson duly started to serve as a professor in the Department of Theology in Klaipėda,

⁵²² ASN 2001 Convention Proceedings To Formally Declare Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia Resolution 3-05A, 136; JTA Slenczka [2000]; JTA Slenczka [2001]; LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger & Weinrich Report on discussions with Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia 6. & 8.5.2000; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Juris Ulģis interview 6.4.2011. According to Sandra Gintere, the Missourians financed the first three years 100%, fourth year 75%, fifth year 50%, and gave some support in later years.

⁵²³ EELKKA Toimik V-11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 16. jaan. 1998 - 20.dets. 1999 Agreement about partnership 19.5.1999; FLW July 1999, 19.

⁵²⁴ EELKKA Toimik V-11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 16. jaan. 1998 - 20.dets. 1999 Agreement about partnership 19.5.1999; FLW July 1999, 19.

⁵²⁵ FLW July 1999, 19.

⁵²⁶ EELKKA Toimik V- 11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 16. jaan. 1998 - 20.dets. 1999 Wenthe to Kiivit 27.5.1999.

where most of the pastors and schoolteachers attached to the Lithuanian Lutheran Church were educated. The role of Dr. Evanson was remarkable in that Kalvanas set up monthly pastoral meetings at which the clergy studied theology with him.⁵²⁷

Even though the Ft. Wayne seminary had quite a slow start, it became the main counterpart in theological contacts with the Latvian Church in 1999–2001. In April 2000, for example, Archbishop Vanags sent a letter to President Barry thanking him for their stay with the Missouri Synod. The delegation had attended a symposium in Ft. Wayne. Vanags had a lot of respect for the CTS, Ft. Wayne: the seminary had “expressed particular interest in Latvia”. He thought it was a very good place for representatives of the Latvian Church to become acquainted with the Missouri Synod. There were also other strong influences that brought Ft. Wayne closer. Vanags felt that much of Ft. Wayne’s “liturgical practise” and “church feeling” as well as the theological line were very much in line with those of the Latvian Church, and that “this Seminary in general has a great outreach potential towards Europe with its particular traditions.”⁵²⁸ These may have been some of the reasons why Ft. Wayne became a closer partner to the Latvian Church than St. Louis, which was the main educational partner at the beginning of the 1990s.

All in all, perhaps the Ft. Wayne seminary “showed more initiative” than the St. Louis seminary with regard to working with the Lithuanians and the Latvians. There were not necessarily any theological reasons for this, at least not on the Lithuanian side. On the other hand, the Latvian Church did have some theological reasons for working more closely with Ft. Wayne: the “church feeling” was closer. One could describe the Fort Wayne people as more high-church and the St. Louis people as more low church. As John F. Brug (2010) pointed out, the two chief “political” divisions of the Missouri Synod have been defined “by some” as traditionalists and progressives/moderates. Traditionalists emphasize a “reverent approach to worship” and a “conservative doctrine” and progressives/moderates emphasize “contextualized worship” and a “softening or blurring” of traditional doctrinal positions.⁵²⁹ It seems from these definitions that the St. Louis

⁵²⁷ Quill 2002, 362; Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011.

⁵²⁸ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Vanags to Barry 28.4.2000. Symposiums in Ft. Wayne were important. For example, in October 1998 President Dean O. Wenthe of Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, invited the Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran bishops to the symposium on Lutheran Theology, 19–22 January 1999. The invitation was for Archbishop Kiivit, Bishop Einar Soone, Archbishop Jānis Vanags, Bishop Jonas Kalvanas and Bishop Aarre Kuukauppi. Wenthe wrote that in addition to meeting the faculty and learning about the seminar community, he would have an opportunity to meet President Barry for informal discussions. The seminary would cover all costs. (EELKKA Toimik V-11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 16. jaan. 1998 - 20.dets. 1999 Wenthe to Kiivit 2.10.1998)

⁵²⁹ Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; Mindaugas Sabutis interview 28.9.2011; Brug 2010, 56. Todd (2003, 38–39) argues that the “high view” of the ministry “perspective is most often repented by men associated with the Fort Wayne seminary, some of whom even appear to treat ordination as a sacrament.” However there is also a strong tendency in the opposite direction, as is clear in the words of recognized theologian Jaroslav Pelikan: “When the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS) has become Baptist and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has become Methodist, I’ll be Orthodox.” According to Mattox and Roeber, “This observation notes ironically that the prevailing trajectories in American Lutheranism are toward low-church evangelicalism on the one hand and mainline liberal Protestantism on the other.” In fact, Pelikan did become Orthodox in 1998. (Mattox & Roeber 2012, 8)

people or progressives/moderates may not have been theologically and practically in tune with the leaders of the Latvian and Lithuanian Lutherans.

The Lithuanians received support from Ft. Wayne in particular, at this point, but they also tried to support Ft. Wayne people, such as when Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Jr. sent a letter to the Board for Mission Services and Timothy Quill in May 2001 in support of Dr. Quill's election to the position of Executive Director of Missions. Bishop Kalvanas Jr. summarized the connections between the ELCLi and the LCMS, and especially between himself and Timothy Quill. He had known Quill for five years, and since that time six students from the Lithuanian Church had embarked on degree programs at Fort Wayne through Prof. T. Quill's efforts. Kalvanas also recalled how their personal contact continued in connection with the dialogue between the Churches: "In fact, we have come to know each other very well and it is clear that we and our churches share a common theological commitment."⁵³⁰ Now the position of the Lithuanian Church was clear: like the Latvian and Ingrian Churches it wanted to be a confessional body.

4.2 A complexity of relations

4.2.1 The CLCF – in crisis with the LCMS

The Confessional Lutheran Church in Finland was critical of the Missouri Synod's endeavors in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1990s. The situation had gradually but substantially changed since the beginning of the decade when some of the first LCMS mission work in the former Soviet countries was done through the Confessional Lutheran Church.

Some Finns were critical of the Missouri Synod even before it entered into altar and pulpit fellowship with the Ingrian Church. Reverend Kimmo Närhi had some doubts when he attended the 150th anniversary celebrations and the meeting of the International Lutheran Council in St. Louis in August 1997 because the LCMS was cooperating with the Churches with which the CLCF had no cooperative ties. Närhi believed that cooperation between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church on future decisions regarding the CLCF was crucial. The problem was that the ELCIR differed from the CLCF in also cooperating with the larger Finnish people's Church.⁵³¹

Reverend Markku Särelä, leader of the CLCF in 1969–1999, wrote an article in *Luterilainen* (2/1999): *Mikä riittää ja mitä vaaditaan kirkon yhteyteen: Satis est*, in which he considered what was enough and what was required for union or fellowship in the Church. His concluding argument was that a connection without true doctrinal unity but

⁵³⁰ LELBVR Bishop's Council. Kalvanas to BFMS & Quill 20.5.2001.

⁵³¹ Närhi 1997, 288–289.

established for some other purpose, as was the case with the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church, was not a case of *adiaphora*, but a “doctrinal fall”.⁵³²

Perhaps because of the above-mentioned problems Daniel Mattson, together with Robert Hartfield and Fred Schielke, visited Kimmo Pälikkö, the vice president of the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland, in Helsinki in March 1999. At the time the CLCF was still an LCMS partner Church. Mattson and Schielke talked with the President of the CLCF, Reverend Dr. Markku Särelä, too. Särelä emphasized his unhappiness with the decision of the Missouri Synod to enter into fellowship with the Ingrian Church. He was less than happy with the route the Missouri Synod had decided to take.⁵³³

Referring to these developments, Mattson commented: “It is only a matter of time, I suspect, until we have to deal with the hurt feelings of people with whom the LCMS is in fellowship”. Mattson concluded from his trip to Finland that it was important for the Missourians to maintain contacts in Finland because of “those people who are committed to taking the Scriptures and the Confessions seriously and who encourage them to see that they are not alone.”⁵³⁴

The Confessional Lutheran Church in Finland made the decision to sever its relationships with the Missouri Synod, the Ingrian Church and also the International Lutheran Council, thereby breaking up the fellowship without even informing the LCMS in advance. It decided in a meeting held on 22 May 1999 that there would be no relations with the Missouri Synod, a decision that resulted from the altar and pulpit fellowship between the Ingrian Church and the Missouri Synod. The argument was that the Ingrian Church had connections with the Finnish national Church and it belonged to the Lutheran World Federation. Thus, when the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church entered into a fellowship agreement the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland felt that it had to draw the direct and inevitable conclusion that there was no full unanimity in doctrine and in practice. The CLCF people “thought that the Missourians were too liberal ecumenically.”⁵³⁵

The Confessional Lutheran Church in Finland thus made the decision to break the fellowship agreement with the LCMS for the second time. The first break lasted from 1969 until the 1980s, then the fellowship resumed when the LCMS severed relations with the ALC (1981). The second break in 1999 was criticized in conservative Lutheran circles.

⁵³² *Luterilainen 6/1999 37. kirkkokunnankokous pidetty, 185; Särelä 1999, 45–49. ”opillinen lankeemus”.*

⁵³³ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Finland March 27–28, 1999. The Wisconsin Synod was becoming active in Finland (ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Finland March 27–28, 1999) In those times the CLCF and the WELS had joint doctrinal discussions. (Väkeväinen 2007, 58–59)

⁵³⁴ ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Finland March 27–28, 1999.

⁵³⁵ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 STLK:n XXXVII kirkkokunnankokouksen päätös 22.5.1999; ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCIR 1991–1999 Kramsu to Lassila 13.8.1999; *Luterilainen 5/1999*, 143 Tunnustuksellinen Luterilainen kirkko 70 vuotta; *Luterilainen 6/1999*, 185 37. kirkkokunnankokous pidetty; Reporter February 2002 Kieschnick meets European partner-church leaders; Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011; Juris Uļģis interview 6.4.2011; Arkkila 2014, 255. Markku Särelä’s book *Martti Luther: Vähä katekismus ja kristinoppi (Martin Luther: Small Catechism and an Explanation of Christian Doctrine)* has been translated into Russian, English (1999), Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian (1999), Ukrainian (1996) and Swedish (2008). (STLK Kristinoppi 2014; Arkkila 2014, 240)

Kimmo Närhi attended two meetings and reported on them: the first was a meeting of the European Lutheran Conference (ELC) held in June in le Petite-Pierre, France, and the second one in August was the International Lutheran Council meeting in Cambridge, England. In both meetings the comments made on the CLCF's decision were mainly negative. Närhi expressed his concern that the Missouri Synod had distanced itself from its earlier teaching of the doctrine of the Church. However, the Synod representative dismissed Närhi's statement as groundless, suggesting that the decision of the CLCF had not been necessary. The SELK representatives supported the position of the LCMS. In Närhi's view the CLCF represented the same position as the LCMS took originally, which was evident in C.F.W. Walther's and F. Pieper's books, for example. Närhi was not sure about attending these conferences in the future, but on the other hand what he thought was good about the meetings was the possibility to establish and nurture personal contacts in a way that could not be done otherwise.⁵³⁶ It could be concluded from this research that the accusations of the CLCF were not totally groundless. There was some truth in them because it really seems that the Missouri Synod became more tolerant, at least in practice.

The altar and pulpit fellowship agreement between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church also forced the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland to rethink its relationship with the Ingrian Church. One outcome of this was the fellowship agreement between the Finnish Church and the Ingrian Church made on 30 April 2000 and signed by Archbishop Jukka Paarma and Bishop Aarre Kuukauppi.⁵³⁷ All in all the reactions of the two Finnish Churches to the LCMS & ELCIR fellowship agreement were totally opposite: the smaller one severed relations with the Synod and the larger one made an agreement with the Ingrians.

4.2.2 The Siberian situation

The situation with the Siberian Lutherans was a hot potato for many Churches. At least the ELCIR, the ELCROS, the EELC and the LCMS were involved in organizing Siberian Lutheranism. The people who were the most actively involved were Reverend Vsevolod Lytkin, Archbishop Kiivit and Bishop Kuukauppi. Everything hinged on the personal relations among the leaders as few or no theological issues were involved. It seems that Reverend Lytkin wanted to be a bishop and to have a Church of his own, Kuukauppi wanted to keep the Siberian Lutherans inside the Ingrian Church, and Kiivit supported the independence of Lutherans or congregations with Estonian origins. Some people from Ft. Wayne were also heavily involved. Kuukauppi observed, for example, that Timothy Quill

⁵³⁶ Pfabe 1998, 127–128; Närhi 10/1999, 282, 284–285; Nafzger 2003, 255; Arkkila 2014, 239–240, 255. According to Kimmo Närhi (1999, 282), the CLCF had also broken its fellowship agreement with the German SELK in 1997. According to Nafzger (2003, 255), in the ILC Cambridge meeting “Two days were spent in hearing papers and in participating in discussions on the topic “Fellowships/Inter-Church Relations” –once again!”

⁵³⁷ IKA Suomen kirkko/ neuvottelut ym. Yhteistyöasiakirja 30.4.2000; Pihkala 2002, 78.

did his all to help Lytkin become bishop and the Siberian Church to become independent.⁵³⁸

The background work on the Siberian question, according to Bishop Kiivit, was done even before the establishment of the Ingrian Church in the 1980s, when the missionary work of the Estonian Church commenced in Russia. Thus the ground for the Siberian Church was prepared by the Estonian Church beginning in the 1980s, and even to some degree as early as in the 1950s. As a result, there were several congregations. The Archbishop of the Estonian Church, Jaan Kiivit ordained Vsevolod Lytkin to serve in Novosibirsk. There had been a Lutheran Theological Seminary in Novosibirsk since 1997, and a Bible School in Novosibirsk and Yekaterinburg. There were also many diaconal institutions.⁵³⁹

The Missouri Synod's involvement took root in the mid-1990s, when its work expanded to Siberia, even though the first volunteers arrived in Novosibirsk as early as 1993, and Reverend Jeffrey Thormodson came to Russia/Siberia in 1995. The Ingrian Church was a newcomer in the Siberian area back then. Thormodson worked with any Lutherans, but primarily with Vsevolod Lytkin's group in the early years and later on with the Ingrian Church. During those early years the group had direct contacts with Missourians, and the Ft. Wayne seminary in particular. Lytkin and several young members of what later became the Siberian Evangelical Lutheran Church attended seminars on LCMS campuses.⁵⁴⁰

The Ft. Wayne seminary had a so-called Russian Project that was started in 1995, partly in response to Lytkin's appeal for theological training in Novosibirsk. The project provided the means for those who wanted to study to become a pastor to spend a two-year period in America. Students came from countries in the former Soviet Union such as Russia (Siberia, Ingria), Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. About ten Ingrians went to study in the US, but it became apparent that some of them no longer wanted to return to Russia. It was also proving too expensive to bring students to the US. The same could be done for less money by sending a few pastors and teachers to the area, and it was considered that it would be better to support training in Russia. The Russian Project handled the sending of teachers to the former Soviet Union. A lot of money came from the Schwan Foundation for that purpose, too. The Missourians generally supported theology, not so much financially but in sending teachers, especially professors, to teach in Russia.⁵⁴¹

However, the Ft. Wayne Seminary gradually began working exclusively with Pastor Lytkin, avoiding the Ingrian Church in Siberia.⁵⁴² The Missouri Synod was in a very

⁵³⁸ Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; Leif Camp interview 10.6.2011.

⁵³⁹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 ESTONIA 2000- Kiivit to Wöhle 7.10.2004; ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 ESTONIA 2000- Kiivit to Kuukauppi 7.10.2004; ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Olli-Pekka Lassila: Travel Report St. Petersburg 23.–26.3.1999; Stricker 2000, 12.

⁵⁴⁰ FLW Oct. 1999, 15; Jeffrey Thormodson interview 12.2.2011; Wallace & Kathy Schulz interview 13.2.2011; Alexander Furs interview 8.6.2011; Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; Urmas Viilma interview 22.8.2011.

⁵⁴¹ FLW Dec. 1997, 10; FLW April 1999, 17; Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011.

⁵⁴² Jeffrey Thormodson interview 12.2.2011; Wallace & Kathy Schulz interview 13.2.2011; SELC History 2013.

ambivalent position: on the one hand the Ft. Wayne seminary supported the Siberian Church and Lytkin financially, but on the other hand the Missourians were in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Ingrians and that obliged them to listen to the Ingrians on Russian soil. They had also promised, on several occasions, that they would not establish a new Lutheran Church in Russia.

The Siberian situation raised inter-Lutheran concerns in all of the counterparts. In an attempt to resolve the problematic situation a meeting was held in St. Petersburg in February 1999 involving the Ingrian Church, the German Church (ELCROS), the Missouri Synod, and the Estonian Church. It was agreed that the Estonian Church would not operate independently in Russia, and its members and congregations should be incorporated into and served by the Ingrian Church and the ELCROS.⁵⁴³

The Ft. Wayne people were major players and catalytic agents in establishing the Lutheran Church in Siberia. Officials of the Missouri Synod tried to balance the different interests of the others with its own internal interests. The Estonian Church and its leader Archbishop Jaan Kiivit cooperated with the Ft. Wayne people to settle the matter. The Russian Lutherans in Siberia were under the archbishop's canonical jurisdiction. Apparently Kiivit was "interested in working toward the day when there will be an autonomous Russian Lutheran Church in Siberia", in the same way as he had assisted the Ingrian Church earlier. Professor Timothy C. J. Quill from CTS, Ft. Wayne wrote to Kiivit in March, 2000: "President Wenthe, Dr. Weinrich and I are pleased with a policy which would lead toward autonomy for the Siberian Lutherans." He continued: "We appreciate your desire to follow a thoughtful and careful path which will establish a healthy and orderly new church." Kiivit replied, stating that the discussions on the Siberian situation were very important to the Estonian Church and that he was pleased there was an "atmosphere of understanding and trust." He added: "I hope we can develop our co-operation. Although several of these discussed issues are very complicated, I do believe we can work it out together."⁵⁴⁴ Interestingly, the above-mentioned theologians Dean Wenthe, William Weinrich and Timothy Quill all belonged to the Ft. Wayne camp. The Estonian Church and the Ft. Wayne people had similar aims in terms of resolving the situation of the Siberian Lutherans. It may be that the EELC Archbishop Kiivit was used as a tool enabling the Ft. Wayne Missourians to break promises made to Ingrians not to establish a new Lutheran Church in Russia. Kiivit, in turn, may have used the Ft. Wayne people to support his own idea of how to resolve the situation.

In the year 2000 the Missouri Synod had little contact with the Ingrian Church about the controversy over the seminary in Novosibirsk: it would be discussed at the Missouri's Synodical Convention in the autumn. The Ingrians were interested in what the Synod would decide on the matter. There had been some speculation that it purposefully kept a

⁵⁴³ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Russia ELCROS 1996–1999 Olli-Pekka Lassila: Travel Report St. Petersburg 23.–26.3.1999.

⁵⁴⁴ EELKKA Toimik V- 11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 10. jaan. 2000 - 18.dets. 2007 Quill to Kiivit 2.3.2000; EELKKA Toimik V- 11 Kirjavahetus Ameerika ja Kanadaga 10. jaan. 2000 - 18.dets. 2007 Kiivit to Wenthe 6.3.2000.

couple of small congregations so that, if necessary, they could register as a Church, which required three congregations under Russian law. The whole controversy was a mixture of confessional and nationalistic issues. The inner tensions of the Missouri Synod may have been quite high at the time, and the story goes that the mission board asked the Ingrian Church to take a harder line against Lytkin because the BFMS was in competition with CTS, Ft. Wayne. In this way the Missourians exported their internal politics to Russia.⁵⁴⁵

The Siberian question also concerned relations between the Estonian Church and the Ingrian Church. There were signs of an agreement between the ELCIR and the EELC in 2000, but the situation in Novosibirsk was making things somewhat more difficult. The solution the LCMS offered and wanted became clear when President Alvin Barry wrote to Bishop Kuukauppi, Archbishop Kiivit and Reverend Lytkin indicating that the Missouri Synod was ready to support the new Lutheran Church in Siberia. Financial support was already being given, and at the time a lot of money came from the USA to Novosibirsk. Some Ingrians even saw the Novosibirsk seminary just as a business venture, and some people were tempted to tap into the money that was coming through Novosibirsk.⁵⁴⁶

The breakup of the Ingrian Church seemed unavoidable at the beginning of 2001. There was also disagreement inside the Missouri Synod about how to solve the problem. Missourian workers in Russia and in the LCMS Headquarters were on different wavelengths. Some LCMS missionaries wanted the Ingrian Church to align more strongly with the Missouri Synod, but Bishop Aarre Kuukauppi did not want that: a new president would soon take office in the Missouri Synod and Kuukauppi was uncertain of what kind of opinions the new leader would have.⁵⁴⁷ This waiting for the new leader on the part of the Ingrians shows how the Missouri Synod had, in the previous ten years, established an influential position in the Ingrian Church, and in Russian Lutheranism on the whole.

However, the leadership of the Missouri Synod suddenly changed before the convention election when President Alvin L. Barry died in office on 23 March 2001. Barry was the president for almost the whole time span of this research, having been elected in 1992 and re-elected in 1995 and 1998. His immediate successor was Dr. Robert T. Kuhn, first vice-president of the Synod since 1995, who would lead the Missouri Synod until a new president was elected at the July convention. According to Mary Todd (2003, 41), the death of the LCMS president just months before the triennial convention left Missouri with “a leadership vacuum”.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁵ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 RUSSIA 2000- Kramsu to [Lassila] 8.6.2000; Leif Camp interview 10.6.2011. During its period of establishment the language of the Ingrian Church was Finnish, but Russian-language congregations were soon established. This development was first criticized because it was thought that the Russians had their own national Church, the Russian Orthodox Church. (Väliaho 2004, 164)

⁵⁴⁶ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 RUSSIA 2000- Kramsu to Lassila 29.11.2000 & Lassila to Noko, Rasolondraibe & Ucko 7.12.2000; Jeffrey Thormodson interview 12.2.2011. Stricker (2000, 12) wrote: “it is easy to understand the American orientation of the group, since the financial strength of the American church is also an attractive factor.”

⁵⁴⁷ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 RUSSIA 2000- Kramsu to Lassila 16.1.2001; Kramsu to Lassila 13.2.2001.

⁵⁴⁸ ALB 2001; RTK 2002; *Christian Century* April 11, 2001 LCMS leader A.L. Barry dies; Todd 2003, 41.

Archbishop Kiivit met with Reverend Lytkin and one of the deacons from Novosibirsk in Tallinn in April 2001, and afterwards reported the basic outcome of the meeting to the LWF Europe Secretary. Reverend Lytkin had sent an application to the authorities to register his Church as the “Lutheran Synod of Ural, Siberia and Far East”, and in the meeting did not support the idea of developing it in connection and cooperation with the Ingrian Church. Kiivit told Lytkin that they had to wait for the outcome of the registration and until the election of the new leadership at the Missouri Synod. Lytkin promised not to proceed with the ordination of deacons and pastors in this situation.⁵⁴⁹ The Missourian leadership also had a remarkable impact on the Estonian Church, which was clearly seen as a potential ally or a good friend. This is quite surprising, bearing in mind the Estonian contacts with the ELCA and the Finnish Church, and the Estonians’ slightly more moderate theological position than that of the other Baltic and Ingrian Churches.

Overall, the presidents of the Missouri Synod, Bohlmann, Barry and Kuhn, were the key persons in the Russian work carried out during the research period, and in Bishop Kuukauppi’s experience, for example, if the green light is given by the president, then many things begin to happen in practice, but if not you can only wonder why nothing is happening despite such good relations. It took the Ingrians a couple of years to realize what an important role the president played. Whoever it was, he was always very decisive regarding the line of development of the Church. His views and decisions had a direct impact on how the missionary work was done.⁵⁵⁰ All this makes it easier to understand why decisions concerning the Siberian situation were on hold until the new Missouri Synod president was elected.

According to Isto Pihkala, Secretary General of the Ingrian Church (1993–1999), there were at least three major reasons for the Siberian crisis: tensions between the Estonians and the Russians, divisive questions inside the Ingrian Church, and Missourian activities.⁵⁵¹

In contrast to what was perhaps the general interpretation, blaming the Missourians a little too eagerly, Isto Pihkala believed the Lytkin question was not only about the LCMS, but also concerned the Estonian Church. Overall, it was a question of the relations between Estonians and Russians. The Estonians had had a traumatic experience under Russian rule, and that was certainly in the background. Kiivit was a nationalist on this issue, and he did not give way. It was the politics of the Estonian Church that made it possible for the Siberian Church to succeed to the degree it did.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 ESTONIA 2000-. Lassila to Keller 26.4.2001.

⁵⁵⁰ Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; Jukka Paananen interview 9.6.2011.

⁵⁵¹ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

⁵⁵² Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012. See the background of Estonian Lutheran nationalism Mikko Ketola: *The Nationality Question in the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1918–1939* (2000). One of the main proponents of a national Estonian Church was Bishop Johan Köpp. (Ketola 2000, 326) Furthermore, Kiivit’s nationalistic position was different from the perhaps more common form of Estonian nationalism, namely a secular form, which tended to be adopted in the later 19th century. In the Estonian case the reason for secular nationalism was “links between the Lutheran church and the German landowning class”. (McLeod & Saarinen 2006, 12)

Ethnic tensions were among the reasons for the growth of the Siberian Church. There was an ethnic divide in the Ingrian Church. Finno-Ingrian-Carelian congregational people were in a very privileged position in that they received relatively more support from Finland than the Russians and other language groups. This inequity led to economic tensions and was an insult to most Great Russians. Other minority nationalities still felt sympathy towards the Ingrians. However, Great Russians were used to being given more respect, and therefore thought they could detach themselves from the Ingrian Church. Even when those inside the Ingrian Church realized the problem, at least to some degree, their Western friends still did not see it. The Missourians did not see it very clearly either, but the view of the Finns in particular was even more blurred. In Pihkala's opinion this kind of division was possible because the governance and authority structures in the Ingrian Church were not sufficiently strong. He compared the situation to the crisis during the time of the Apostles when the widows of the Hellenes were being neglected in the daily distribution of funds, and that gave rise to some complaints.⁵⁵³

According to Pihkala, the activities of the Missouri Synod contributed to the disunity to some extent, but they were not the main cause. Not all the mistakes made were the fault of the Synod, although many people accused the Missourians over the schism in Siberia. The tendency in Western discussions, for example, is to blame the crisis on the LCMS, but according to Pihkala this is an unreasonable claim.⁵⁵⁴

Not everyone, even in the Missouri Synod, was happy about the way things were handled. The Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne was a major catalyst in the complex developments in Siberia, and therefore was criticized by some Missourians. According to the critics, the CTS acted "in defiance of" the Ingrian Church. Moreover, the Missourians as a group did not act responsibly enough, although the Synod, the Lutheran World Mission, "acted very responsibly and in a churchman like way". Researching the Russian Project might unlock the shadows beneath. The LCMS work done in the Ingrian Church has even been described thus: The Missouri Synod comes to a place, messes things up, and then leaves. According to an LCMS internal critic, the "Missourians created a mess in Siberia", and that there was constant tension in the field: "It was a nightmare. The church polity was a nightmare".⁵⁵⁵ Many Missourians, who might have had more sympathy for the St. Louis camp, were not uncritical of the activities of their own Church in the former Soviet Union, especially in Russia.

Disagreements between the Ingrian Church and the Missouri Synod arose at the point when the Ingrians realized that the Synod was not united and that there were at least two parties, the party of St. Louis and the party of Ft. Wayne. They found it easier to work with the St. Louis people, with whom they had had more cooperation. The situation in Siberia was not the least of the reasons.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵³ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012. See Acts. 6:1–7.

⁵⁵⁴ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

⁵⁵⁵ Robert Kolb interview 11.2.2011; Jeffrey Thormodson interview 12.2.2011; Leif Camp interview 10.6.2011; Tomi Karttunen & Ari Ojell interview 9.3.2012.

⁵⁵⁶ Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; Tomi Karttunen interview 9.3.2012.

In the Siberian case the Missourians, or at least the Ft. Wayne people, supported the dissident group rather than the leadership of the Ingrian Church.⁵⁵⁷ This was not in line with the Missouri Synod's decisions in the case of the Augsburg Institute in 1996 to support the leadership of the Latvian Church against a dissident group. This non-support of the Ingrian leadership provoked criticism, at least among Ingrians, Finns and some Missourians. However, the Estonian Church did support Ft. Wayne's actions with regard to the Siberian Lutherans.

Despite the fact that the Siberian situation was not very well handled there are no special reasons to underestimate the value of the work done by the Missourians in Russia compared to the work done by the Finns, for instance. The LCMS people had certain problems and made mistakes, but generally there were many positive elements. Despite the problems, Bishop Kuukauppi emphasized that the Ingrians never regretted the agreement they made with the LCMS.⁵⁵⁸

4.3 Culmination – fellowship agreements

4.3.1 The process with Latvian Church – the German ultimatum

The Missouri Synod's breakthrough with the Ingrian Church in signing the altar and pulpit fellowship agreement in 1998 was very decisive with regard to later developments with the Latvian and Lithuanian Lutherans. It is worth stressing again the importance of the example set by the Ingrian Church, a member of the Lutheran World Federation, by signing the agreement. As Dr. Sandra Gintere remarked: "So they kind of opened doors for us."⁵⁵⁹ Until then, no other Church that was already a member of the LWF had entered into full fellowship with the LCMS.

In 1996, before reaching agreement with the Ingrian Church, the Missouri Synod decided to support the official structure of the Latvian Church in the case of the Augsburg Institute. Another factor that crucially affected relations between the Missouri Synod and the Latvian Church was the Missouriian decision to support it when the Lutheran World Federation denied its theological position and withdrew funding for the Luther Academy project in the Hong Kong Assembly of 1998. However, although the unclear situation with the Siberian Lutherans was probably not considered very positive, it was not directly linked with the Latvian Church. On the international level, the Latvian Church carried more weight in inter-Lutheran circles than any of the other Churches in the area with which the Missouri Synod had relations, namely those of Estonia, Lithuania and Ingria. It was a not a minority Church, and was historically a people's Church, hence its entering

⁵⁵⁷ Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

⁵⁵⁸ Robert Kolb interview 11.2.2011; Aarre Kuukauppi interview 8.6.2011; Isto Pihkala interview 2.3.2012.

⁵⁵⁹ Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011.

into fellowship with the Missouri Synod was far more significant for mainline LWF Lutherans than the agreement with the Ingrian Church.

The Latvians considered the whole idea of altar and pulpit fellowship a strange concept to start with. The Latvian Lutherans realized after the Soviet era that they did not share Communion with the Roman Catholics or the Baptists, but it was quite clear that they shared everything with all Lutherans. Information about altar and pulpit fellowship came to Latvia mostly through contacts with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in America, as well as the Missouri Synod. The whole concept was new to the Latvians, who thought that all Lutherans were in fellowship. Through establishing contact with the Missouri Synod they came to understand the position of the LCMS and what it meant by church fellowship.⁵⁶⁰

The agreement was a result of gradually strengthening relationships during the years of contact. As Archbishop Vanags stated: “We learned to know each other and we discovered a lot of things in common so that in some time it felt quite unnatural to not share the table of Lord.” It was not an issue for the Latvian Lutherans because they considered themselves to be in full fellowship with all Lutherans in the world except those who had separated themselves from the Latvian Church, such as the Augsburg group. In the circumstances the Latvians had no need to make any specific agreements with other Lutherans. However, they soon became aware the Missourians perceived a need for an official fellowship agreement when they started working with them. In fact, the Missourians did not think they could be in fellowship until an agreement was signed.⁵⁶¹

According to Archbishop Vanags, altar and pulpit fellowship with the Latvians was the initiative of President Barry, who suggested that they should start the deliberations. However, it seems from their mutual correspondence in the first months of 2000 that Vanags also played an active part. Vanags suggested to Barry that it would be valuable if the Latvians and Missourians “could enter into at least informal theological discussions which could point out the problematic issues,” and that “You, being the Chief Ecumenical Officer would have to determine who could participate in such discussions from the LCMS side.” Vanags gave his opinion and suggested a few theologians who were already familiar to the Latvian Church and had visited Latvia, such as Dr. Nafzger and Dr. Weinrich. He thanked Barry for the initiative and closed his letter: “I believe that this kind of dialogue between our Lutheran Churches cannot help but give us a sense of oneness in the mission which we share as Christians.”⁵⁶²

President Barry replied to Archbishop Vanags, agreeing “that we need to identify ways in which pastors and church leaders from your church body and pastors and church leaders from our church body can come to know each other better.” He continued: “For as we do this, I am certain that the Lord will lead us in the direction of closer fellowship ties. This would be a genuine blessing for both of our churches.” Overall, Barry and Vanags tried to

⁵⁶⁰ Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011.

⁵⁶¹ Jānis Ginters interview 5.4.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011

⁵⁶² LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Vanags to Barry 12.1.2000; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011.

“explore ways of entering into informal theological discussions which could help us better understand our church bodies’ respective positions on some issues.”⁵⁶³

As Vanags had hoped, Barry suggested that Nafzger and Weinrich both participate in the discussions, and they were duly appointed as the official representatives of the LCMS. Archbishop Vanags then wrote to the ILC Executive Secretary Samuel Nafzger about the coming discussions: “Our church is not very experienced in this sort of discussions and therefore your advice would be highly valuable”. Plans were made to arrange meetings after the dedication of the Luther Academy on 5 May 2000 among a group of theologians, including a couple of Latvians and a couple of Missourians. Nafzger and Weinrich replied, concerning the nature of the discussions, that one important element would be “simply to introduce our churches to each other including our respective histories and polity”.⁵⁶⁴

As the theological discussions came closer Archbishop Vanags wrote that he was “looking forward to these days with joy and also with a certain anxiety”, and that they would have to “analyze from the viewpoint of the science of theology the relationship between our churches, which until now had been left to good-faith naivety.”⁵⁶⁵

Some of the representatives met informally beforehand to formulate the agenda for the scheduled talks. The following themes were suggested as topics for further discussion:

1. How do our respective churches regard subscription to the Lutheran Confessions?
2. What are our respective relationships to other churches?
3. How do our respective churches understand the nature of church fellowship?
4. How does the ELCL regard its membership in the LWF?
5. How do our respective church bodies understand the doctrine of the ministry with special reference to the historic episcopate?
6. What are the major theological issues being discussed in our respective churches today?
7. What have been the responses of our respective church bodies to the *Declaration on Justification* signed last October by the LWF and the Vatican?⁵⁶⁶

There was discussion on most of the above items in the consistory of the Latvian Church on Monday 8 May from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. The Latvian participants included Archbishop Jānis Vanags, Pastor Jānis Ginters, Dr. Juris Rubenis, Professor

⁵⁶³ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Barry to Vanags 25.1.2000; LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Barry to Vanags 7.2.2000.

⁵⁶⁴ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Barry to Vanags 7.2.2000; LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Vanags to Nafzger 20.3.2000; LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger to Vanags 21.3.2000.

⁵⁶⁵ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Vanags to Barry 28.4.2000.

⁵⁶⁶ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger & Weinrich: Report on discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia 6. & 8.5.2000.

Rector Slenczka and Pastor Erberts Bikše. Nafzger and Weinrich wrote in their report: “Our discussions together went very well”. The Archbishop’s opening comment was that the Latvian Church did not have very many formal statements, primarily a couple of resolutions on homosexuality and the age for receiving the Lord’s Supper.⁵⁶⁷

The three main issues on the agenda were Confessional Subscription, Relationship to Other Lutheran Churches and Membership in the LWF. The issue of Confessional Subscription was not problematic, and it was soon realized that both Churches had a similar approach to the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions, although not all the documents in the Book of Concord had been translated into Latvian. Nafzger and Weinrich commented on this: “but there is a growing awareness among the pastors of the ELCL of these writings and they are regarded as normative for their teaching and practise”. The Missouri Synod had supported the confessional view in the Baltic and Ingrian areas since 1991, and apparently had also succeeded in Latvia. It appeared that there were no real doctrinal differences. Even though the Latvian Church had women pastors, they were ordained before Archbishop Vanags took office.⁵⁶⁸

There were interesting discussions on the second item, Relationship to Other Lutheran Churches. Nafzger and Weinrich wrote:

In accordance with historical development, the ELCL regards itself to be in church fellowship with other Lutheran churches including German Lutheran churches, the Church of Sweden, and the Latvian Lutheran Church in Exile. But it does not agree with the positions of many of these churches on a number of issues as the ordination of women, homosexuality, etc., and it does not hesitate to state this publicly.⁵⁶⁹

All the three Churches mentioned, the Germans, the Swedes and the Exiles, were theologically liberal in the sense that they represented the opposite end of the Lutheran spectrum from the Missouri Synod. Much tolerance was required, and the boundaries of Missourian thinking were again being stretched.

It was stated that the Latvian Church had not signed the Porvoo Statement or the Joint Declaration on Justification, which the Missouri Synod quickly condemned. However, the previous archbishop had signed the Leuenberg Concord/Agreement⁵⁷⁰, affirming that the

⁵⁶⁷ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger & Weinrich: Report on discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia 6.&8.5.2000.

⁵⁶⁸ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger & Weinrich: Report on discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia 6.& 8.5.2000. 31.5.2000; Guntis Kalme email interview 29.3.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011.

⁵⁶⁹ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger & Weinrich: Report on the discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia 6.& 8.5.2000.

⁵⁷⁰ Gassman 2001 h, 180. “Agreement declaring church fellowship between Lutheran, Reformed, and United churches in Europe. After several attempts to form a united evangelical movement had failed at the time of the Reformation, a new effort at reconciliation was made in the framework of the modern ecumenical movement. In the second half of the 20th century Lutheran-Reformed conversation in France, Germany and Holland set the stage for conversations on the European level. Three phases of Lutheran-Reformed dialogues – 1955–1960, 1964–1967, and 1969–1973 –led to the Leuenberg Agreement (Or Concord) of 1973 (since Leuenberg is a conference center near Basel, Switzerland).”

mutual doctrinal condemnations at the time of Reformation no longer applied, and declaring full fellowship among the Churches. It is no surprise that this was a problem to the confessionally aware Missouri Synod. However, Archbishop Vanags had explanations that allowed the Missourians to close their eyes to the Leuenberg Agreement and its implications for church fellowship. He said that most pastors in the Latvian Church had no idea what the Leuenberg Concord was about. In addition, the formal statements of the Latvian Church required pastoral conferences and, surprisingly, the Leuenberg Concord had not been addressed in such conferences. Nafzger and Weinrich therefore concluded: "it appears to us that this agreement has no formal significance for them".⁵⁷¹

The *successio apostolica* was the main issue discussed in the negotiations, largely because the Latvians practiced episcopal ordination and its bishops had apostolic succession. The representatives of the Missouri Synod were therefore interested in whether the Latvian Church recognized Missourian ministries even though they were not episcopally ordained: according to the teaching in the Missouri Synod, historic succession was not necessary for ordination. Archbishop Vanags replied that not all Latvian Lutheran bishops were in apostolic succession during the Soviet era, and no one had questioned the relevance of the ordinations then. Therefore the Latvians could not insist on apostolic succession. The Latvian Church recognized that it was "a valuable and beautiful sign of continuity of church", but it was not considered a precondition for the validity of the ordination.⁵⁷²

Historically the Latvian Church and the Church of Sweden had been particularly strongly connected since the time of the ecumenically oriented Archbishop Nathan Söderblom. The Church of Sweden brought apostolic succession to the Latvian Lutheran Church when the first LELC bishop Kārlis Irbe was installed in 1922, and since its bishops have been installing Latvian Lutheran archbishops. The Church of Sweden became the closest partner Church of the Latvian Lutherans, who even called it the "Mother Church".⁵⁷³ The probable aim of the Latvians in the discussion with the Missourians was to downplay the importance of apostolic succession somewhat so that the Missourians would feel that their ministry was adequate. At the same time, it indicates that the common roots, including apostolic succession, between the Latvian Church and the Church of Sweden may not have been emphasized as much as before. Confessionalism may have been replacing traditionalism in the Latvian Church, at least to some degree.

⁵⁷¹ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger & Weinrich Report on discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia 6.& 8.5.2000; Gassman 2001 h, 180; Todd 2003, 37; Stålsett 2005, x. The Lithuanian Lutheran Church had not signed the JDDJ, either (Petkūnas 2001, 32) It was rather viewed as evidence that the Western Lutheran Churches were inherently corrupt. (Ketola 2009, 232)

⁵⁷² LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger & Weinrich Report on discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia 6. & 8.5.2000; Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011. The Latvian Church was not alone in its view of apostolic succession. The Church of Norway's General Synod emphasized during the Porvoo Agreement negotiations that the church accepted historical episcopal succession as an important sign, but it could not be a condition, for church fellowship. (Heiene 2005, 138)

⁵⁷³ Dahlgren 1990, 122; Talonen 1985, 9; Talonen 1997, 7; Talonen 2002, 200; Ryman 2005, 16; Mankusa 2006, 320; Talonen 2008, 47, 54.

Moreover, there were differences in ecclesiology: the LCMS practiced congregationalism and the Latvian Church episcopatism. However, the Missourians had experience of an episcopal district, namely the English District, which is led by a bishop.⁵⁷⁴ So the model and rationale for including bishops in fellowship was already in the Missourian understanding.

The third topic for theological discussion was Membership in the LWF. Surprisingly, the membership of the Latvian Church was not much of an issue for the Missourians. Archbishop Vanags reported that “there was quite a lot of understanding”, and the membership in the LWF was considered “a historical fact”. The Latvian Church and the Missouri Synod differed in their understanding of the doctrine of fellowship, which the Missourians “were ready to respect”. Given the much longer history of the Eastern European Churches, when the Missourians came into contact with them, according to Vanags, “they were sort of tolerant enough to respect it”. With regard to the Missourian understanding of fellowship, “they have their place for the doctrine of fellowship but they are not also insisting on this as an article with which the church stands or falls.” Moreover, the Missouri Synod with its contacts in Eastern Europe “has entered a different soil or field where those ideas that work well in America, were not so helpful here.” The Latvian Church had a broader understanding of fellowship and did not see any inconsistency in keeping all its partnerships simultaneously. Fellowship with both the Missouri Synod and the LWF was not contradictory.⁵⁷⁵ The new mission fields and cooperation changed all those involved to some degree. The Missouri Synod may have become a little more tolerant, and the Latvian and other Baltic Churches, and the Ingrian Church, a little more confessional.

Nafzger and Weinrich reported that although the Latvian Church was a member of the Lutheran World Federation, most of its pastors did not know much about it or what it stood for. Moreover, it regarded the Federation documents and papers as part of the ongoing discussions rather than “rules”. The point of LWF membership for the Latvian Church was said to be for making contacts with other Lutherans globally, and also with the other Baltic Lutherans. Nafzger and Weinrich continued: “Some thought has been given in the past to the possibility of associate membership in the LWF”. As Archbishop Vanags stated in the discussions: “We do not feel it necessary to fulfill all of the commands of the LWF.” The fact that Vanags had raised concerns in the LWF was used “in justifying the declaration of fellowship”.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁴ Sandra Gintere interview 4.4.2011. According to Professor Risto Saarinen (interview 29.11.2011), it seems that episcopatism has been accepted quite widely in Lutheran Churches despite the low-church attitudes of the 1980s.

⁵⁷⁵ Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011; Zanda Ohff email interview 16.5.2012. The Missourian understanding of fellowship was clear in Samuel Nafzger’s lecture in 1998, “LWF Membership and the Understanding of Communion in the Lutheran Confessions”. Böttcher interpreted Nafzger’s lecture thus: “church fellowship (communion), which ultimately means pulpit and altar fellowship, presupposes fellowship in the true teaching of the Gospel. This again calls for agreement in all articles of faith...” (KKA Böttcher 2005, 5)

⁵⁷⁶ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger & Weinrich, Report on discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, 6.& 8.5.2000; Brug 2010, 40.

Although the Latvian Church regarded “itself in some sense as being in church fellowship with other Lutheran churches”, and although it was a member of the Lutheran World Federation, Nafzger and Weinrich described it as “standing firm in its doctrinal position regarding such issues as the ordination of women and homosexuality in spite of enormous pressure being placed on it by some of the leaders of these churches.” The negotiators were also under the impression that the Latvian Church’s general practice of church fellowship was conditioned by its “unique history and culture, and especially by its recent experience of oppression and persecution during the Soviet times.”⁵⁷⁷

Many other issues were touched upon during the discussions. Nafzger and Weinrich reported that they found the stance the Latvian Church took on “the authority of Scripture, on the binding nature of the Lutheran Confessions, on the doctrine of the ministry, on the ordination of women, on homosexuality and abortion to be in agreement with the position of the LCMS.” Dr. Nafzger referred to the policy of the Missouri Synod on the question of the ordination of women, which he described as a symptom of a problem and not a doctrinal problem in itself. It was rather a question of the basis on which the decisions were made, so it was more about the authority of the Scripture, and its inspiration and inerrancy.⁵⁷⁸ It seems that the Missouri Synod and the Latvian Church shared the same interpretation, Biblicism.

The Missourian representatives Nafzger and Weinrich were convinced that “there exists significant basis for fruitful further discussions”, and that there was hope and expectation that the talks would lead to fellowship with the Latvian Church. They also recommended the Missouri Synod to make the decision to enter into church fellowship with the Latvians at the same time as with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania. The mutual discussions were successful, as Nafzger wrote: “gratifying was the unity in spirit and confession which characterized our conversations with one another”. Given the success of these first official discussions, other rounds followed.⁵⁷⁹

The theological fellowship discussions continued in November 2000, the representatives from the Missourian side including First Vice President Dr. Robert Kuhn and Dr. Samuel Nafzger, executive director of the Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations. The discussions were held in Riga, Latvia.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁷ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger & Weinrich, Report on discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia 6.& 8.5.2000.

⁵⁷⁸ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger & Weinrich, Report on discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia 6.& 8.5.2000; Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011. According to Fackre (2004, 251), inerrancy was often used “as a litmus test for orthodoxy among some evangelical circles among Protestantism.” It could be assumed that this “litmus test” works similarly among some non-mainstream Lutherans to distinguish real, confessional/orthodox Lutherans from those who are heterodox. Furthermore, according to McDaniel (2001, 107) for example: “At the heart of every difficulty in the ELCA, at the heart of all the differences between the ELCA and the LCMS, is the question of the authority and reliability of the Word of God.”

⁵⁷⁹ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger & Weinrich, Report on discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia 6.& 8.5.2000; LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Resolution unedited, Nafzger to Vanags 15.6.2000; LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Resolution unedited, Nafzger to Vanags 28.4.2001.

⁵⁸⁰ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Barry to Vanags 11.10.2000; ASN 2001 Convention Proceedings To Formally Declare Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia Resolution 3-

The President of the Missouri Synod died in March 2001, during this discussion round. According to *Christian Century*, President Barry was known for voicing his strong views. The magazine did not portray Barry in a very positive way: “Under Barry, conversations with other denominations, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, ground to a near halt.” However, I would say that this was not the whole picture. The altar and pulpit fellowship with the Ingrians (1998) and the ongoing process of forging fellowship agreements with the Latvians and the Lithuanians prove that the conversations with other denominations and other Lutheran bodies did not grind to a near halt. There seems to have been a lack of objectivity in reporting the experiences of the ELCA with Barry and the Missouri Synod.⁵⁸¹

A third round of discussions took place on 22 April 2001 in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The LCMS representatives included Dr. Samuel Nafzger, Dr. Robert Kuhn, who was acting leader of the Missouri Synod until the election of a new president at the July convention, Dr. William Weinrich and Dr. Raymond Hartwig. The discussion was successful as all involved “came to the consensus that sufficient agreement in doctrine and practice existed to recommend that formal fellowship between the ELCL and the LCMS be established”. Still, the conclusion was: “we had complete agreement.”⁵⁸² The discussions were quite extensive, but on some issues the explanations for the absence of barriers to unity were perhaps somewhat modest. The phrasing “sufficient agreement” raises some questions as to whether the understanding of fellowship was changing in the Missouri Synod. However, the phrase “complete agreement”⁵⁸³ was needed, otherwise it would have been a question of unionism in the Missourian understanding.

John Brug (2010), at least, understood that “sufficient agreement” in doctrine and practice described the real position of the Missouri Synod concerning the necessary level of agreement when establishing altar and pulpit fellowship. However, the position of the Wisconsin Synod, as well as of Brug, was to oppose the Missouri Synod or to charge it with “unionism”.⁵⁸⁴

05A, 136; LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Resolution unedited, Nafzger to Vanags 28.4.2001; ASN 2001 Convention Proceedings To Formally Declare Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia Resolution 3-05A, 136.

⁵⁸¹ ALB 2001; *Christian Century* August 1–8, 2001 Missouri synod elects ‘moderate’ president; *Christian Century* April 11, 2001 LCMS leader A.L. Barry dies. Barry was also seen as a president who (*Christian Century*, August 1–8, 2001): “represented Missouri Synod Lutherans with a strong interest in holding strict doctrinal lines.”

⁵⁸² LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Resolution unedited, Nafzger to Vanags 28.4.2001; ASN 2001 Convention Proceedings To Formally Declare Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia Resolution 3-05A, 136; Brug 2010, 37; Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011.

⁵⁸³ The term “complete agreement” was important in the Missouri Synod’s teaching on fellowship. According to Pfäbe (1998, 84, for example: “In its relationships with other Lutheran bodies, the Missouri Synod has consistently asserted that complete agreement in doctrine and practice is necessary to establish fellowship.” Barry (2001) stated: “the basis for visible unity in the church is agreement in doctrine *and in all its articles*.” However, he continued: “Unfortunately, sometimes we find individuals omitting these last five words of our Lutheran Confessions. This is not appropriate.”

⁵⁸⁴ Meyer 1963, 27–28; Brug 2010, 37–38; Nelson 1980, 528.

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, with its Executive Director Samuel Nafzger, adopted a resolution recommending that the Missouri Synod declare altar and pulpit fellowship with the Latvian Church at its July 2001 convention. All commission members supported altar and pulpit fellowship, but according to Nafzger, two of the 16 voting members thought the resolution should be more detailed and therefore voted against it.⁵⁸⁵

Times were truly decisive for the Latvian Church, which had to decide whether to continue the process of fellowship agreement with the Missouri Synod and live with the possible implications, or to abandon its plans. The decisive LELC pastors' conference was postponed several times until it finally took place on 30 May 2001. Archbishop Vanags commented on the conference afterwards in his letter to President Robert Kuhn: "As I had foreseen, at the pastors' conference discussions which arose about the church fellowship with Missouri Synod, were not theological but sooner dealt with church policy".⁵⁸⁶

The Vice-president of the North Elbian Church Dr. Henning Kramer, who was present as an observer when Vanags was chosen as Archbishop in 1993, visited him on the day before the conference. Archbishop Vanags wrote in his letter to President Kuhn that Kramer had particularly stressed the need to omit the issue of church fellowship from the synod agenda, suggesting that it might constitute a reason for breaking up the relationship between the Latvian and Elbian Churches. Vanags informed the pastors at the conference about this, adding that the pastors and he were no doubt "concerned about relationship with North Elbian Church as they have lasted already 14 years and in the course of them we have experienced many good things". Despite the worry about breaking relations with the North Elbians, the great majority voted that the pastors' conference should recommend that the Latvian Church synod support the fellowship decision.⁵⁸⁷

It is worth stressing again the decisiveness of the fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church, which had an impact on many levels in later agreements. The Latvians and the Lithuanians followed the Ingrians, even in the details of the agreement. The resolution the ELCL pastors' conference supported was basically the first part of the LCMS-Ingrian Church protocol document. The second part was considered to be more a matter for the consistory.⁵⁸⁸

"Now, everything depends from the Synod vote and I want to place it in the hands of God", Vanags wrote in the middle of the negotiations and talks at the beginning of June 2001. There were many question marks concerning the fellowship decision. A number of pastors were not present at the conference in which the partnership agreement was discussed. The North Elbian Church had turned to the synod members of the Latvian

⁵⁸⁵ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Nafzger to Vanags 28.4.2001.

⁵⁸⁶ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Vanags to Kuhn 7.6.2001.

⁵⁸⁷ LKAK Bestand 11.03 Nr. 443 Kramer to Vanags and Synod 5.6.2001; LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Vanags to Kuhn 7.6.2001. Kramer was a church lawyer ("legal adviser") in the consistorium of the North Elbian Lutheran Church, and also the Vice-president. He started working with the Lutheran Churches in the Baltic states in 1989 and finished in the year 2002, except for a few projects. (Henning Kramer email interview 26.1.2015)

⁵⁸⁸ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Vanags to Kuhn 7.6.2001.

Church in an open letter inviting them not to support partnership with the Missouri Synod, and was also trying to involve wide circles of European Churches in the campaign. According to Vanags, the letter “might make a considerable pressure on the Synod”, which he hoped would follow the suggestion of the pastors’ conference. He suggested to President Kuhn that the Missourians could consider what their actions might be given various scenarios.⁵⁸⁹

The Latvians had a lot at stake. The North Elbian Church had invested four million DEM (about \$1.7m) in a pastors’ subsidy fund. The capital remained with the North Elbian Church, but the Latvians could use the interest, which amounted to about 200,000 DEM (about \$87,000) a year, for supporting pastors. This fund in particular would be at risk if the relationship with the Latvian and North Elbian Churches broke up. The financial dependence of the Latvian Church on other Churches made it more vulnerable, hence its plans to generate its own income system.⁵⁹⁰ The financial support of some LWF members, especially the Germans, influenced its decisions. A previous somewhat analogous case was the withdrawal of support for the Luther Academy in the LWF Hong Kong Assembly of 1998. The Latvian Church remained remarkably firm despite efforts to point its decisions in certain directions. The alternatives the Missouri Synod offered undoubtedly increased the independence of the Latvian Church. This conclusion goes against the understanding attributed to mainstream Lutheran public opinion that the Missourian influence rather hampered the decision-making and independence of its counterparts.

In terms of funding, it seems that the Missouri Synod was less strict regarding the use of its financial support than the North Elbian Church, for example. Some European LWF members may have thought that the Synod was playing questionable games, and in that illusion they perhaps allowed themselves to be more Machiavellian in some cases. The Missourians were apparently quite polite and sensitive, and according to Archbishop Vanags always said: “If we give something it is with no strings attached”. Vanags insisted that, “it really was so” and that “They never, never asked any services or some behaviors from our side because of their money or because of their support.”⁵⁹¹ In a way, then, the suspicion among mainstream Lutherans that the Missouri Synod was buying former Soviet Lutherans was not fully justified. I would argue that “*Cuius dollar eius religio*”⁵⁹² was not the decisive factor in this process between the Missouri Synod and the Baltic and Ingrian Churches.

The synod of the Latvian Church was held on 11 and 12 June 2001. The minutes of the fellowship discussions at the ELCL Assembly give an insider’s view of the situation. Archbishop Vanags stated: “We are in a situation, when children are put before choice: to

⁵⁸⁹ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Vanags to Kuhn 7.6.2001.

⁵⁹⁰ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Vanags to Kuhn 7.6.2001; STLFED 2006; Jānis Ginters interview 5.4.2011.

⁵⁹¹ Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011

⁵⁹² Nelson 1980, 478. Martin Niemöller meant by this phrase, “Religion is controlled by those who supply the money.”

choose between brother or sister, which one to keep.”⁵⁹³ The North Elbians had put the Latvians in a difficult position.

The reactions of the “Mother Church”, the Church of Sweden, were substantially more moderate than those of the North Elbian Church. Archbishop Vanags informed the synod that he had contacted the Archbishop of Sweden, who said that he was not very enthusiastic about the agreement. The already retired Bishop Henrik Svenungsson also sent a letter to Vanags telling him, as a friend, that he had expected Latvia to sign the Porvoo Agreement, but because the Missouri Synod did not accept the document, if there were an agreement with the Missourians then there would probably not be a Porvoo Agreement. Svenungsson also worried about the unclear position the Latvian Church might find itself in after entering into fellowship with the non-LWF Missouri Synod while still in fellowship with LWF member Churches.⁵⁹⁴ Apparently the Church of Sweden took quite a polite, somewhat reserved position with regard to the Latvian Church and its relations with the Missouri Synod.

There was discussion in the synod about the matter. Reverend Ingus Dauksts from St. John’s congregation in Riga said he realized that the Missourians deviated less from the Latvian Church’s common line than anybody else. He asked: “Are we to retreat in front of threats from our brothers in faith whose faith is closer to ours than that of the North Elbian church? We have to vote ‘for’.” This comment drew applause from his audience.⁵⁹⁵

As Luther Academy Rector Reinhard Slenczka put it, the question facing the synod was “if fellowship with the LCMS excludes the fellowship with the North Elbian church.” He added that if the North Elbians were convinced that ELCL “fellowship with the LCMS excludes fellowship with them, then it is their own matter.”⁵⁹⁶

Theologian Dr. Juris Cālītis, who was an exile of Canadian origin, spoke in the Assembly about how to discern spirits. Vanags answered: “There you have the spirit: that from one side we are put under ultimate requirements and from the other side (we receive) maximum benevolence.”⁵⁹⁷ The pressure from the North Elbian and LWF side had apparently given a negative impression to many people at the ELCL synod.

Reverend Rolands Eimanis was not happy about the North Elbians coming to Latvia to dictate and not to learn from a “martyr” Church:

If there is a Church in the world today, which wants to come, to dictate, to force on us, martyrs Church, in order to remake us, and not to come here and learn from our

⁵⁹³ LELBA F1 A3 L163 2001–2003 ELCL 20 Sinodes Protokols 11.6.2001.

⁵⁹⁴ LELBA F1 A3 L163 2001–2003 ELCL 20 Sinodes Protokols 11.6.2001. Kieschnick (2009, 74) was also aware of the problem that the Missouri Synod’s partner churches had partner churches with which it was not in fellowship.

⁵⁹⁵ LELBA F1 A3 L163 2001–2003 ELCL 20 Sinodes Protokols 11.6.2001 [citations translated from Latvian into English by Uģis Sildegs]; Jouko Talonen interview 18.2.2014.

⁵⁹⁶ LELBA F1 A3 L163 2001–2003 ELCL 20 Sinodes Protokols 11.6.2001 [citations translated from Latvian into English by Uģis Sildegs].

⁵⁹⁷ LELBA F1 A3 L163 2001–2003 ELCL 20 Sinodes Protokols 11.6.2001 [citations translated from Latvian into English by Uģis Sildegs]; Talonen 2007, 260.

experience and see, what is important; who has survived through persecution and pressure, then let them tell something about themselves.

Eimanis continued and, in a way, played the “Nazi card”: “You can ask the Dean of our Academy, Mr. Slenczka, – which Church was it that survived Hitler's attacks and pressure?”⁵⁹⁸

In the morning of 12 June, before the second day's meeting, the Vice-president of the North Elbian Church Henning Kramer sent a strong email on behalf of the council to the Latvian synod and Archbishop Vanags. Kramer wrote:

Northelbian Church Council discussed yesterday evening about 3 hours and voted unanimous:

”Supporting the letter to Archbishop Vanags and Latvian Synod's presidium from 05th of June the Northelbian Church Council keep's it as necessary that Latvian Synod in it's meeting does n o t decide about community with Missouri-Synod regarding the Holy Communion.

It offends our partneship that Consistorium in Riga did not search any official contact to our church in such an important question.

Latvian Church is free to decide it's own way.

But such a decision will have consequences on all fields of the up-to-now-partnership and cooperation between our churches.

We wait for an immediate and official information about your Synod's decision.”⁵⁹⁹

It is this clear that the North Elbian Church sent a last-minute threat or ultimatum in an attempt to influence the decisions made by the Latvian Church. The North Elbians were offended because the Latvians had not asked for their advice concerning their agreement with the Missouri Synod. If they had first discussed matters with the partners they already had the threat would have been avoided. Overall, the pressure from the North Elbians was stronger than that from any other Church. They were not happy about the steps being taken by the Latvian Church, which as a consequence received messages from their old German partners effectively saying, “Please do not do it”.⁶⁰⁰

Despite the pressure, the 20th Synod of the Evangelical Church of Latvia approved, from its side, altar and pulpit fellowship and partner relations with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod on 12 June 2001. The Synod also entrusted to the Consistory of the ELCL the task of reaching agreement with the responsible LCMS institutions on the practical

⁵⁹⁸ LELBA F1 A3 L163 2001–2003 ELCL 20 Sinodes Protokols 11.6.2001 Unedited.

⁵⁹⁹ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Kramer to Synod & Vanags 12.6.2001.

⁶⁰⁰ LKAK Bestand 11.03 Nr. 443 Kramer to Vanags and Synod 5.6.2001; Jānis Ginters interview 5.4.2011; Juris Ulģis interview 6.4.2011; Rainer Stahl interview 31.10.2012.

goals and forms of cooperation, according to Resolution Nr. 1 *On the Relationship between the LCMS and ELCL*.⁶⁰¹

The 20th Synod of the Latvian Church also drew up Resolution Nr. 3 *On partner relations and ecumenism*. It stated:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia is thankful to God for the fellowship with its partner churches – The Church of Sweden, The North Elbian Church, Land Church of Saxony, Bodo diocese in Norway, Church of England Salisbury diocese, as well as sister congregation relations in various countries. We are grateful for the co-operations with the diaspora organisations *Gustav-Adolf-Werk* and *Martin-Luther-Bund*. Special ties bind us with the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Exile.

Within the boundaries of these relations, we have been able to learn a lot from the experience of our partners, we have received valuable support for the development of the life of our Church and we hope, that also we have been able to contribute something valuable from our experience and faith. Coming across the diverse views in various Church life spheres, we have been able to learn mutual patience, keeping in mind the words of Apostle Paul: "Peace to the brotherhood and love, with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. 6:23) We, from our side, acknowledge our trust in the above partner relations and serious desire to continue them.

Following the words of our Lord "May they all be one: as you, father, are in me, and I in you", ELCL is open to new partner relations with the Lutheran Churches worldwide. We consider it to be our Christian duty to search closer relations also with the churches of other confessions, as far as the principles set by our Constitution allow it. May God help us!⁶⁰²

This statement was clearly intended to soften the criticism following the approval of fellowship with the LCMS. The Latvian approach to the fellowship was inclusive in nature: they wanted to signal that the Latvian Church was open to entering into new relations with other Lutheran Churches.

Archbishop Jānis Vanags wrote to Robert L. Rahn, Erling Teigen (ELS), Paul McCain and Kurt E. Marquart immediately after the Latvian Church Synod, informing them about the Leuenberg Agreement. He wrote: "Two hours ago the LELC synod meeting almost unanimously voted for entering the fellowship with LCMS." He continued: "But, probably you are aware that LELC is also a member church of the so called Leuenberg Agreement or Agreement between Reformation Churches in Europe." Apart from anything else, the Leuenberg Agreement stated: "that they accord each other table and pulpit fellowship; this

⁶⁰¹ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Resolution Nr. 1.

⁶⁰² LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Resolution Nr. 3.

includes the mutual recognition of ordination and the freedom to provide for intercelebration.”⁶⁰³

Archbishop Vanags also pointed out that one of the leading theologians of the Latvian church, Juris Rubenis, had mentioned on the radio at the time of the talks about the Porvoo Declaration that the Latvian Church would not necessarily have to sign the declaration to be in fellowship with Nordic Lutherans and Anglicans, because it was already a reality due to the Leuenberg Agreement.⁶⁰⁴ The negotiators, Nafzger, Weinrich and Kuhn, at least knew that the LELC had signed the Leuenberg Agreement. Rahn et al. may have been told only after the decision was made, for tactical reasons.

Archbishop Jānis Vanags wrote to Dr. Robert T. Kuhn, President of the Missouri Synod on 15 June to inform him that the Synod of the Latvian Church with 182 votes for, 11 against and 24 synodals withdrawing, had made the decision to enter into altar and pulpit fellowship with the Missouri Synod. The archbishop disclosed the heated exchanges with the Germans: “The decision making took place under a strong pressure from the North Elbian Church.” Further, “The North Elbian Church has already started its sanctions, therefore the support from LCMS would be very essential to us.” The North Elbians really cut some funding as a consequence.⁶⁰⁵

President Kuhn replied to Archbishop Vanags the same day. He had received Vanags’ fax with “mixed feelings”: it “was with joy that I read of the strong vote in favor of pulpit and altar fellowship” with the Missouri Synod, but it “was with sadness that I read of the pressure the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia was placed under by the North Elbian Church, and the sanctions that have already begun.” He continued: “While I can understand there is disagreement of issues, it is difficult to understand that the severance of assistance would be so emphatic and immediate.” Kuhn was very supportive in his response, even though he did not yet know all the details: “as Dr. Barry assured, there will be some assistance forthcoming” from the LCMS. He continued: “We are grateful to the Lord for the strong confessional stand you and your church have taken, and we want to help you to strengthen that position.”⁶⁰⁶ Again, the lack of support from the LWF member Churches, in this case the North Elbian Church in particular, made the Latvian Church financially more dependent on the Missouri Synod.

⁶⁰³ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 [Vanags] to Rahn et.al. 12.6.2001.

⁶⁰⁴ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 [Vanags] to Rahn et.al. 12.6.2001.

⁶⁰⁵ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Vanags to Kuhn 15.6.2001; LKAK Bestand 11.03 Nr. 443 Vanags to Kramer 16.6.2001; Coleman 2001; Juris Uļģis interview 6.4.2011. According to Coleman the result was 182 votes to 11, with 20 abstentions.

⁶⁰⁶ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Kuhn to Vanags 15.6.2001. Beyond the time frame of this research it is interesting to add that, according to Henning Kramer, the North Elbian Church continued its support “also after the agreements of the Latvian and the Lithuanian Lutheran churches with the Missouri-Synod”. However, as Henning Kramer continued, “It has been not so easy for my church-council in Kiel to accept these agreements, because the Missouri-Synod was not a member of the Lutheran World Federation.” Moreover, the majority “in my church decided to continue the partnership and not to break off it, but to be patient (“you can break off a partnership, but you can do it o n l y one time !”).” (Henning Kramer email interview 26.1.2015)

4.3.2 The process in the Lithuanian Church – an ecumenical landmine

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania began to seek deeper relationships with Lutherans who shared similar theological positions, and discussions with the Missouri Synod started as an outcome of this intention. The LCMS President Alvin Barry asked Dr. William Weinrich and Dr. Samuel Nafzger to make time in the schedule for theological discussions with Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Jr. and representatives of the Lithuanian Church. Dr. Timothy Quill was also among the initiators of the church-fellowship dialogue. The first official theological discussions were held in Klaipėda on 9 May 2000. The deliberations between the Missouri Synod and the Latvian Church formed the basis of the discussions with the Lithuanian Church. Representatives of the Lithuanian Church and the Missouri Synod met in St. Louis and Lithuania in connection with the fellowship preparations. The attendees on the Missouri side were, in addition to Nafzger and Weinrich, President Dr. Barry, First Vice President Dr. Kuhn and Dr. Marquart.⁶⁰⁷

The Synod of the Lithuanian Lutheran Church gathered over 120 members, staff and guests for the daylong meeting in Taurage on 29 July 2000, when the fellowship resolution was to be accepted from the ELCLi side: the previous synod was in 1995, five years earlier. Various foreign guests were present, too, including Henning Kramer representing the North Elbian Church and Bishop Hans Dumpys representing the Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Diaspora. There were five members from the Missouri Synod, four of whom were representing the Ft. Wayne Seminary, namely Professor Marquart, Reverend Quill, the director of Ft. Wayne's Russian Project Reverend Evanson, who was also the Rector at Ft. Wayne Dr. Wenthe, and Dr. Nafzger, the Chair of the Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations. According to Arden Haug, an ELCA pastor stationed in Lithuania who worked among the International Congregation in Vilnius, no one was informed about the precise nature of the Missouri presence, but there was speculation. No formal statements had been issued in earlier mailings, but the items on the day's agenda included a Proposal for fellowship with the Missouri Synod. Haug wrote: "During the greetings from the foreign guests, it was apparent that an ecumenical landmine was present."⁶⁰⁸

Arden Haug reported that "the most ardent" Pastor Saulius Juozaitis from Kaunas was the one who made the proposal for fellowship. Juozaitis had studied the previous year in Ft. Wayne, and had travelled with Quill and Marquart through Russia and Kazakhstan. Haug added: "It was clear that the Missouri Synod leadership didn't understand the dynamics or the history of the Lithuanian Lutheran Church." He sat at the same table as

⁶⁰⁷ LELBA F1 A3 L 80 1998–2000 Nafzger to Vanags 21.3.2000; LELBVR Bishop's Council Kalvanas to BFMS & Quill 20.5.2001; FLW Oct. 2000 Concordia Theological Seminary Mission Update Klaipėda, Lithuania – May 9, 2000; Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011; Mindaugas Sabutis interview 28.9.2011; Petkūnas 2001, 32.

⁶⁰⁸ IKA LCMS + ILC Resolution 29.7.2000; ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 Lithuania 1998-. Haug to Ailabouni 31.7.2000; LKAK Bestand 11.03 Nr. 955 Dieter Lorenz: Zu Gast auf der Synode der Ev.-Luth. Kirche Litauens; LKAK Bestand 11.03 Nr. 955 Henning Kramer: Bericht: Über die Partnerschaftsarbeit mit den ev.-luth. Kirchen im Baltikum. Berichtszeitraum 1999/2000; Ketola 2009, 232.

the Missouri Synod members, and “As they sat at the table, they kept on wondering where they were, who was speaking, what was the relationship.”⁶⁰⁹

Haug heard in the meeting, before the official decision-making process began, that the Missouri Synod and Pastor Saulius Juozaitis had prepared three proposals for the afternoon session: the Proposal for Fellowship with the Missouri Synod, a Revision of the Lithuanian Church’s participation in the Porvoo Agreement, signed in 1995, and a Condemnation of Homosexuality. He concluded that the proposals were linked, so that first the Fellowship would be passed, then the Porvoo Agreement would also need to be amended. The Missouri Synod representatives were prepared to sign the Letter of Fellowship at the end of the day, and the next year the convention would vote on the matter. Arden Haug did not think the Condemnation on Homosexuality was very clearly linked to the other two items, although it included a statement indicating that the Lithuanian Church could not work in partnership with Lutheran churches that did not hold similar scriptural beliefs.⁶¹⁰

The question of homosexuality was not only a theological question, but was also part of a larger cultural clash between Western theological thought and Eastern European thought. Homosexuals were regarded as criminals in Soviet times.⁶¹¹ The negative attitude clearly had Soviet roots.

Arden Haug had spoken with Professor Helmutas Arnašius from the Department of Theology in the Faculty of Humanities at Klaipėda, who was greatly concerned about Ft. Wayne’s involvement in the Department and the “fundamentalism” that was creeping in. In fact, he was so concerned about Bishop Kalvanas’ personal involvement that he even felt he may need to turn to the Reformed Church.⁶¹²

The rest of Haug’s Report from the Lithuanian Lutheran synod is based on conversations with Kristina Ivanauskiene, because he had to leave before the end of the meeting. The Proposal for Fellowship with the Missouri Synod was the main item, presented by Pastor Juozaitis, and there were many “misrepresentations”. Juozaitis “dismissed concerns about the role of women in the church”. He claimed that the Missouri Synod was “the only church with the correct Lutheran teaching” and insisted that the partner churches had no concerns about it. Henning Kramer, however, asked him if he had asked the partner churches about their concerns and the answer was no. Then Kramer announced that the North Elbian Church Council had major concerns about the Missouri Synod and that it may even withdraw its financial support. In the end the Lithuanians felt it was inappropriate to vote on the Proposal for Fellowship. Bishop Kalvanas tried to save face in front of the Missourians and modified the wording to imply strengthening or intensifying the relationship with the Missouri Synod. Apparently the meeting of the Lithuanian Church passed a historic resolution that approved fellowship with the Missouri

⁶⁰⁹ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 Lithuania 1998- Haug to Ailabouni 31.7.2000.

⁶¹⁰ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 Lithuania 1998- Haug to Ailabouni 31.7.2000; Petkūnas 2001, 29.

⁶¹¹ Petkūnas 2001, 31; Ketola 2009, 236.

⁶¹² ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 Lithuania 1998- Haug to Ailabouni 31.7.2000; Ketola 2009, 232.

Synod, or at least approved the modified proposal referring to the intention to seek a closer and deeper relationship.⁶¹³

Once the original version of the Proposal for Fellowship had been withdrawn no revision of the Porvoo Agreement was necessary. This, in turn, left more time to discuss the Condemnation of Homosexuality. Professor Arnašius spoke against the substance of the proposal, but was, in turn, attacked by Juozaitis and Pastor Petkūnas. The proposal was not accepted due to the fact that there was no clear distinction between homosexuality as a condition and homosexual activity. However, according to Petkūnas (2001), “There was no disagreement that such behavior is sinful”.⁶¹⁴

At the end of his report Arden Haug asked, “Is this issue over with?” He gave his response: “I don’t think so. I think the Lutheran World Federation will have to be very selective in its emphasis – agreement is not always essential. This must be heavily underscored on such issues as women’s ordination and homosexuality.” He continued: “The Missouri Synod influence will increase – nearly every pastor has studied in St. Louis. Another group will be heading soon to Ft. Wayne.” He gave one solution to this problematic situation: “a steady, patient presence of the ELCA will help – I think we should also consider more viable exchanges with the Sister Synod – this has barely been tapped.” Arden Haug’s report was circulated at least in the LWF and the ELCA. Reverend Said Ailabouni, ELCA Area Program Director for Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, commented on the report to the people he forwarded it to: “You will find this report useful as we attempt to move forward to strengthen relationships with the Lithuanian Church ... I believe that Arden is doing a great job and his presence has been a blessing for opening better relationships with the church.”⁶¹⁵ The ELCA apparently tried to establish more connections with the ELCLi to weaken LCMS influence, or at least that was one of the reasons.

However, the Missourian interpretation of the meeting was quite the opposite. One of those who was there, Dr. Timothy Quill, writing in the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (vol. 66#4 October 2002), emphasized Bishop Kalvanas’ ecclesial leadership at the Lithuanian Church meeting in Taurage at which fellowship with the Missouri Synod was declared, despite “overt lobbying” by visitors from the Lutheran World Federation. Quill pointed out that the German North Elbian Church and the Lutheran section of the Church of Lippe (*Lippische Landeskirche*) were particularly opposed to fellowship with the Missouri Synod. He also noted that women occupied nearly all the top offices of the North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church, naming Maria Jepsen, the first female bishop of a German Lutheran Church and worldwide, and Bärbel Wartenberg-Potter and Margot

⁶¹³ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 Lithuania 1998- Haug to Ailabouni 31.7.2000; LKAK Bestand 11.03 Nr. 955 Dieter Lorenz: Zu Gast auf der Synode der Ev.-Luth. Kirche Litauens; FLW Oct. 2000 Concordia Theological Seminary Mission Update Klaipeda, Lithuania – May 9, 2000; Petkūnas 2001, 32; Ketola 2009, 232.

⁶¹⁴ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 Lithuania 1998- Haug to Ailabouni 31.7.2000; LKAK Bestand 11.03 Nr. 955 Dieter Lorenz: Zu Gast auf der Synode der Ev.-Luth. Kirche Litauens; Petkūnas 2001, 31.

⁶¹⁵ ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 Lithuania 1998- Haug to Ailabouni 31.7.2000; ALWF DMD Europe Desk Y.3.1 Lithuania 1998- Ailabouni to Leichnitz etc. 7.8.2000; Lassila to Ailabouni 8.8.2000.

Käßmann who had “also aggressively led the LWF caucus”. Bishop Kalvanas still refused to ordain women, despite “relentless pressure” from the Lutheran World Federation.⁶¹⁶

Timothy Quill continued to speculate about the attitudes of the LWF churches in Europe towards Eastern European Lutherans. These “old” Western European churches seemed to “perplex” things so much that the theology of the Missouri Synod and other confessional Lutherans appealed to churches in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere in the world. Although these European LWF churches attempted to understand this phenomenon, they did not have much success and, as Quill observed, came up with “some very fanciful explanations”.⁶¹⁷ Quill hit the nail on the head: mainstream Lutherans have tended to find it very difficult to understand the conservatism of the Eastern European churches, specifically in this research the Latvian, Lithuanian and Ingrian Churches.

It seems that *theological geography* has been undermined and not adequately taken into account in global Lutheranism, at least in the area covered in this research. By theological geography I mean that the specific situations in which the churches live in their geographical area affect the basic mindsets in the churches.⁶¹⁸

Furthermore, Quill did not like the way European LWF churches treated the former Soviet Lutherans. He wrote: “The Lutherans in Lithuania are worthy of more respect than this”, and “Lithuanians are quite capable of thinking for themselves”. He also pointed out that many Lithuanian pastors, including Bishop Jonas Kalvanas, had been frustrated by the “one-track intolerant gender agenda of many European Lutherans”. Quill cited the neighboring Latvian Archbishop Jānis Vanags, who expressed a common sentiment among these churches: “For churches which have lived under persecution, liberalism has nothing to offer because it has nothing to die for.” Quill accused Western liberal churches of offering financial help with strings attached. Cherishing hopes of financial rewards, some individual pastors and congregations are tempted to change their doctrine and practice.⁶¹⁹ It is not possible to deny Quill’s accusations. The North Elbians and the LWF in particular used funding as a tool for “guiding” churches along the “right path”.

All in all, the LWF and Western Lutheran Churches continuously put pressure on the Latvian and Lithuanian Churches to approve the ordination of women, but as has become clear, with no results. The European Lutheran Churches tended towards “Western ecclesiastical *besserwisserism*” especially on the question of the ordination of women. In comparison, the Missouri Synod showed more respect towards the Baltic and Ingrian Churches than the European LWF Churches did, and on the basis of this research its attitude cannot be described as “confessional imperialism”.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁶ Quill 2002, 361. The North Elbian Church was the first Lutheran Church in the world to elect a woman bishop, namely Maria Jepsen. (ADM Daniel Mattson: Trip Report Latvia trip report October 29–31, 1997)

⁶¹⁷ Quill 2002, 363.

⁶¹⁸ See Kuusniemi 2015, 9.

⁶¹⁹ Quill 2002, 364.

⁶²⁰ Ketola 2009, 231–232. The American Lutheran relief work in Europe after WWII did not generally provoke much negativity, although some people were “critical of what they termed American Lutheranism’s ‘confessional imperialism’”. (Nelson 1980, 478)

The agreement processes continued, and Joint Statements of Agreement with the Latvian and Lithuanian Churches were issued before the Missouri Synod convention. Each of these addressed some of the issues that had been discussed, but for the most part both were similar to the agreement made with the Ingrian Church (see Chapter 3.3.1). In addition, the draft Protocol Documents were drawn up mutually, so that the churches involved could make their suggestions and give comments. After this process the final drafts were ready to be signed at the convention provided that the Missouri Synod agreed to the fellowship.⁶²¹

The deepening of the relationship between the Missouri Synod and the Latvian and Lithuanian Churches raised international concerns among Lutherans. The Lutheran World Federation had to become active on the matter.

4.3.3 The agreements with the LCMS force the LWF to take an active role

“I have received a number of communications concerning difficulties leading to conflicts and divisions in some of the LWF member churches in the Eastern European region”: this is what Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the LWF, wrote to Alvin Barry, President of the LCMS, in March 2001 about the problems that had been raised in “recent months and years”. Noko continued: “Some of these communications implicate the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod in these conflicts and divisions.” He added that this was not his judgment, but he had to rely on rumor and second- and third-hand reports. He wanted to discuss the issue directly with Barry. Noko proposed a meeting between the Missouri Synod and the Lutheran World Federation “to provide us with a forum in which we may clarify these matters in a fraternal spirit.”⁶²² The LWF realized at the beginning of the 2000s that it had to do something if it wanted to keep up with the developments among Lutherans in Eastern Europe.

President Barry replied to General Secretary Noko: “I too have been troubled by reports I have received concerning misleading and inaccurate statements some have been making about our church recently.” He referred to such behavior as “extremely unfortunate and regrettable”, and explained the official line the Synod had taken:

The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod has no plans to start little “Missouri Synods” around the world. We will continue to encourage and support any Lutheran church, or groups of Lutherans, that want to be genuinely Lutheran. If any church, or individual, has a question or concern about this commitment, I would ask you to encourage them to be in direct contact with us, rather than attempting to involve the Lutheran World Federation.⁶²³

⁶²¹ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Joint Statement of Agreement (draft); LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Kuhn to Vanags 29.6.2001; LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Nafzger to Vanags 29.6.2001.

⁶²² ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Noko to Barry 1.3.2001.

⁶²³ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Noko to Barry 5.3.2001. However, the LWF was not considered “genuinely Lutheran” in some Missouri Synod circles, as is made clear in Reverend Prof. Kurt Marquart’s article “Church Fellowship” (2001, 13) in the Fort Wayne seminary’s magazine *For the Life of the World*, in

The Missouri Synod focused its work by encouraging and supporting Lutherans who wanted to be “genuinely Lutheran”. This also legitimized the work it had done with LWF member Churches.

Although Noko asked to meet Barry face to face, Barry referred him to Reverend Robert Hartfield, his personal representative in Central Europe. The meeting was quickly arranged, because the LWF was due to have consultations in Geneva with the bishops of its members in the Baltic/Russian region at the end of March 2001. The LWF/LCMS meeting took place in Hattersheim, Germany, on 21 March before the LWF consultation. Reverend Robert L. Hartfield, Area Director for Central Europe and the Baltic, represented President Alvin Barry, and Dr. Olli-Pekka Lassila, LWF Europe Secretary, represented General Secretary Ishmael Noko.⁶²⁴ Noko may have sent Lassila to the meeting because Barry sent Hartfield to represent him. There were many potential reasons for this kind of conduct, one being to downgrade the meeting and make it less official.

During the meeting Olli-Pekka Lassila requested the Missouri Synod to clarify, preferably in a public statement, the policies and concrete actions of the different organizations linked to the synod, such as the Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne and the International Lutheran Laymen’s League, in relation to its official policies. It was thought that such a procedure would help to avoid misunderstandings and to promote mutual confidence between the Lutheran World Federation and the Missouri Synod.⁶²⁵

Robert Hartfield referred to the LCMS mission statement for Central Europe and the Baltics: the Missouri Synod would strengthen the existing Lutheran Church in Europe at the request of churches and organizations within the parameters they set. He added that the Synod’s resources were limited, but its strengths included a strong educational system and evangelical confessional theology.⁶²⁶

The LWF became more and more active on issues related to the Missouri Synod in 2001. According to Böttcher (2005), the “dead silence” that began in 1988 had come to an end as relations with the LCMS/ILC reappeared on the agenda of the LWF Council meeting of June 2001. He believed that the unofficial contacts maintained since 1988 had paved the way during the silence. It was certainly no accident that the way organizations related to the Missouri Synod had made contact with LWF member churches, especially in Eastern Europe, provoked discussion in the Program Committee for Mission and Development, which had close relations with member Churches. That committee had discussed matters concerning the Missouri Synod and some related institutions, as well as the positive relations and cooperation between the Missouri Synod and LWF member Churches in some parts of the world. However, it was pointed out “that some churches had experienced painful church splits due to the activities of LC-MS-related organizations, and

which Lutheranism as a whole is questioned through the use of quotation marks with reference to the “Lutheran” World Federation.

⁶²⁴ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Noko to Barry 5.3.2001; ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- LWF/LCMS Meeting in Hattersheim, Germany 21.3.2001.

⁶²⁵ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- LWF/LCMS Meeting in Hattersheim, Germany 21.3.2001.

⁶²⁶ ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- LWF/LCMS Meeting in Hattersheim, Germany 21.3.2001.

that others were concerned that such LC-MS activities might occasion church division”.⁶²⁷ On the basis of this research it could be said that Böttcher’s view of “dead silence” between the ILC and the LWF may have been accurate, but there must have been contact between the LCMS and the LWF after 1992 at least. Böttcher’s study confuses the issue to a degree because it treats the ILC and the LCMS as near synonyms. This might be right in the strict sense that the ILC organization may not have had official contacts with the LWF, acknowledged in the LWF Council, but it can be concluded from this research that the LCMS certainly did. For example, from the very beginning Dr. Daniel Mattson visited Geneva as an official LCMS representative, for the first time in 1992 before he visited any of the Baltic and Ingrian or Eastern European Churches. Moreover, the Missouri Synod participated in the Eastern European coordinating meetings arranged by the LWF. In conclusion, official, although not Church-to-Church contacts between the LCMS and the LWF were kept up throughout the years 1992–2001.

In sum, one of the issues raised at the LWF Council’s annual meeting from 12–19 June 2001 concerned internal relations among Lutherans, in other words the question of the Missouri Synod. It was an acute question given that, at the same time, on 12 June, the Latvian Church approved altar and pulpit fellowship with the Missouri Synod. The experiences of the LWF member Churches and their relations with the Synod and the organizations close to it were discussed comprehensively and constructively. In some areas there had been positive development, but on the other hand, Eastern and Central European members in particular had negative and divisive experiences, most of which were connected to the activities of organizations or educational institutes that were close to the Missouri Synod.⁶²⁸ Now that another two full fellowship agreements, between the Synod and LWF members, namely the Latvian and Lithuanian Churches, were in process, the LCMS challenge was addressed on the LWF Council level.

The LWF Council accepted a proposal to establish some form of cooperation with the Missouri Synod, and to encourage member Churches to abstain from the kind of cooperation that involved the judgment of others or an internal split. Several speakers in the LWF Council meeting underlined the seriousness of the situation. Of course there were also reports of good cooperation with LCMS-related institutions, particularly in terms of the work they did in spreading the gospel. Nevertheless, on the LWF level there were also reports of negative experiences. The need for the leadership to determine the parameters as well as the cooperation was underlined, as noted in the minutes: “Although a relationship with the LC-MS could be considered as a way of broadening the basis, self-determination and contextuality were important”.⁶²⁹

By way of an explanation it was also stated in the minutes that the Eastern and Central Europe Churches were emerging from a period of isolation. In order to be able to deal with outside influences they would need the support and cooperation of the worldwide Lutheran communion in the areas of mission, diaconia, Christian and theological

⁶²⁷ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Meeting of the Council, Geneva, 12.–19.6.2001, Minutes; KKA Böttcher 2005.

⁶²⁸ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Meeting of the Council, Geneva, 12.–19.6.2001, Minutes; Paavola 2001, 37–38.

⁶²⁹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Meeting of the Council, Geneva, 12.–19.6.2001, Minutes; Paavola 2001, 38.

education.⁶³⁰ Everything mentioned in the council meeting referred to the fact that the post-Soviet Churches had been in isolation and needed support, and so on. Was the Lutheran World Federation being too custodial in its attitudes towards the Baltic and Russian Lutherans, for example? Was it ignoring the possibility that the Eastern Europeans really were thinking differently, and should have been respected as such? Was this somewhat scornful attitude one of the reasons why some Churches also wanted to enter into fellowship with the Missouri Synod, to get some sort of recognition for their theology and way of thinking? From this perspective the Missouri Synod did recognize the positions of the Ingrian, Latvian and Lithuanian Churches, and could therefore be referred to in confessional conservative Lutheran circles as the “Recognizer” of many Churches and groups.

Cooperation with the Missouri Synod was not always on the level the Lutheran World Federation deemed appropriate. There was a lack of cooperation on the part of the Missouri Synod leadership in particular. Ishmael Noko, the LWF General Secretary at the time, confirmed that the former Missouri Synod president, probably referring to Alvin L. Barry, had been reluctant to cooperate on certain matters. Noko still saw a positive aspect in the call to cooperate with the International Lutheran Council: it was something new and appeared to strengthen the position of the General Secretary and of the member Churches in North America. He drew attention to the great differences in background between Churches in Western Europe and North America and those in Central and Eastern Europe. The Program Committee made some recommendations, which according to Noko would help to “avoid entering into agreements of fellowship which might contain exclusion clauses”. As a result, the LWF Council voted in the June 2001 meeting in Geneva:

to request the General Secretary

- to enter into conversations with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LC-MS) to seek cooperation agreements between the LWF and LC-MS and to explore relationship with the International Lutheran Council;
- to encourage member churches to resist approaches that seek to condemn other Christians and other churches and divide our churches; and
- to seek ways to accompany churches in need of discerning theological questions by offering various means of LWF support.⁶³¹

Dr. Ishmael Noko was very critical of the LCMS for signing altar and pulpit agreements with some of the LWF member Churches. As he wrote on 3 July 2001: “Some of these agreements are based on confessional and theological positions that undermine unity among Lutheran churches within the LWF. We find this unacceptable.” He added

⁶³⁰ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Meeting of the Council, Geneva, 12.–19.6.2001, Minutes.

⁶³¹ ALWF DMD 4.3.1. Meeting of the Council, Geneva, 12.–19.6.2001, Minutes; KKA Böttcher 2005, 6. Böttcher points out the eventual start of the “New Beginning” in relations between the LWF and the ILC/LCMS in the meeting of representatives of both sides, 30 July - 1 August 2002 in Geneva. Personnel changes at the top of the Missouri Synod opened up new prospects.

that he was in the process of writing to President Robert Kuhn of the Missouri Synod, and that he wanted to arrange a formal meeting with him.⁶³²

The inter-Lutheran tensions were made public in July 2001, when the media became interested in the developments in Latvia and Lithuania. Some people from the opposition inside the Latvian Church, at least, said in interviews to the media that the agreement was a terrible thing and would split the Church. Nick Coleman's article "Agreement with Missouri Synod sparks unholy row" was published in *The Baltic Times*. It was written after the Latvian Church's resolution on establishing altar and pulpit fellowship was passed at the synod meeting earlier the same month. The Missouri Synod was to vote on the issue later, on 14–20 July. The article posits in the opening paragraph that the divisions within Latvia's largest religious denomination, the Lutheran Church, came to the fore after its synod voted to establish a partnership with the Missouri Synod, whose stance on many issues had brought it into conflict with the Lutheran World Federation.⁶³³

According to Nick Coleman, Archbishop Jānis Vanags defended the move to formalize what he had said was already a close relationship: "This gives us the chance to maintain our identity. The Latvian church is well known for its conservative theology, so it is no miracle that we understand each other." He said that relations with the Missouri Synod had developed since the end of the Soviet era, and that the Synod had contributed to the cost of establishing the Luther Academy to train people for ordination.⁶³⁴

Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the LWF, issued a word of warning: relationships with "other churches should not create alienation among or between Lutheran churches". Archbishop Vanags added that he did not wish to damage relations with the Lutheran World Federation: "There is tension between the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and the Lutheran World Federation, but we shouldn't play games according to their rules." He continued: "We establish our own rules and develop friendly relations with all churches".⁶³⁵ His comments reveal two ideological aspects behind church fellowship: first, identity - to make it clear to all that the Latvian Lutheran Church was conservative and aimed to remain so; and second, independence - to be the driver of its own community and not to let others tell it what to do.

The Lithuanian Church was able to follow in the footsteps of the bigger Latvian Church in the agreement process, while still giving much needed support to the Latvians. Bishop Jonas Kalvanas of the Lithuanian Lutheran Church said the Missouri Synod had helped meet the costs of printing theological and religious books since the end of the Soviet era: "The relationship has been growing each year." Moreover, "Parts of the Lithuanian Church in exile have been members of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod since czarist times." Bishop Kalvanas continued his analysis: "In economically developed countries people find other gods and idols and try to change the Bible to their own reasons. But during Soviet times, true biblical faith supported us and we want to keep this

⁶³² ALWF DMD Europe Desk LCMS 1992- Noko to Ratz 3.7.2001.

⁶³³ Jānis Ginters interview 5.4.2011; Coleman 2001.

⁶³⁴ Coleman 2001.

⁶³⁵ Brug 2010, 38; Coleman 2001.

teaching.” He was unwavering: “We will go to the convention in St. Louis to decide on altar and pulpit fellowship.”⁶³⁶

The question of women’s ministry was at the heart of the controversy. Sarmīte Fišere, one of the Latvian Church’s few female pastors, indicated in the article that as a result of the Missourians’ increasing influence she feared for her future ministry: “This was a very rushed step and symbolizes our conservatism. European churches will look at us differently.” She continued: “There is so much prejudice against women priests. I don’t know what will happen to me. I cannot become a man.” The question of women’s ministry had been causing problems in the Latvian Lutheran Church for a long time, women having been ordained at various times since the 1970s, mostly depending on who was Archbishop. As was well known, Vanags had not ordained women since he took office in 1993.⁶³⁷ Thus, in that sense the agreement with the Missouri Synod did not change the line on the position of female pastors. Nevertheless, women pastors feared that the line would get stricter, and perhaps also that fellowship with the Missouri Synod would permanently seal the position of their non-ordination.

The LWF line was clear concerning the ordination of women. General Secretary Noko commented on the theological and church-political situation: “They are not being forced, but encouraged, to realize there is no sound theological basis for such limits.” He insisted that the Lutheran Church of Latvia “is part of the Lutheran World Federation and will remain so.” The position of the federation was such that it “encourages ordination of baptized men and women who are called. Baptism is the basis, not gender.”⁶³⁸ However, some of the LWF member Churches did not share the LWF’s somewhat moderate official polity. The North Elbian Church, for example, tried to exert its influence not through encouragement, but rather by threatening with sanctions.

The position of the Missouri Synod reflected the official LWF line, but in reverse because the Synod encouraged the non-ordination of women. Missourian support was very important morally and spiritually to the conservatives inside the Latvian Church who opposed women’s ordination: it helped them to maintain their chosen positions.⁶³⁹ Women’s ordination attracted some support in the Latvian, Lithuanian and Ingrian Churches, in the face of which their top leaders needed Missouri backing for their conservative line.

Juris Cālītis, Dean of Latvia University’s Theological Faculty (since 1999), was keen to counter the impression that Archbishop Vanags’ conservatism was in line with the traditions of the Latvian Lutheran Church. As he argued, “Before World War II this was a very liberal church in the German tradition. For ecumenicism not to be a priority is not characteristic.” Moreover, by linking to the Missouri Synod the Latvian Church “is linking itself to a church that is completely outside all ecumenical endeavors – which were a

⁶³⁶ Coleman 2001.

⁶³⁷ Coleman 2001; Klīve 1995, 125.

⁶³⁸ Coleman 2001.

⁶³⁹ Juris Ulģis interview 6.4.2011.

hallmark of the whole church in the 20th century.” Cālītis feared that this could also endanger the ratification of the Porvoo agreement.⁶⁴⁰

It is feasible to claim that Lutherans globally followed with interest the developments between the Missouri Synod and the Churches linking to it. On the LWF level it was realized in the spring and summer of 2001, if not before, that the Eastern European Lutheran Churches could be taking several steps towards the opposite camp, the LCMS. It was feared that the actualization of the deepening relations in the form of altar and pulpit fellowships between the Missouri Synod and the Latvian and Lithuanian Lutheran Churches would weaken cooperation on the international Lutheran level. The LWF organization and many of its member Churches felt that something had to be done to prevent the destruction of the Lutheran *communio*.

4.3.4 The final decision

“Synod OKs altar-pulpit fellowship with four churches”, stated the *Reporter*. On 15 July 2001 the Missouri Synod’s convention delegates voted to declare church fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia. On the same day the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia and the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod signed protocol documents in St. Louis. Lithuania was just a little ahead of Latvia, entering into fellowship “a couple of or half an hour ahead.” The Missouri Synod was expanding its official contacts very widely, also formalizing fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti and the Lanka Lutheran Church of Sri Lanka on 16 July. Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger said that never before had the Missouri Synod convention declared fellowship with four church bodies.⁶⁴¹

According to the *Reporter*, all the fellowship resolutions were adopted with substantial majorities, and in the case of the Church of Haiti with 100-percent approval. The church bodies in Haiti and Sri Lanka were “daughter” Churches of the Missouri Synod, having evolved from its associated mission work. The situation was totally different with the Latvian and Lithuanian Churches, which were established in the 16th century during the Lutheran Reformation. The *Reporter* correctly stated that Missouri Synod Lutherans established connections with Lithuanian and Latvian Lutherans when the two countries were released from Soviet domination in 1991, and that there had been continuing and

⁶⁴⁰ Coleman 2001.

⁶⁴¹ ALCMS CTRC Protocol Documents 2001-12- Protocol document between the ELCLi and the LCMS; ALCMS CTRC Protocol Documents 2001-12- Protocol document between the ELCL and the LCMS; Quill 2002, 361; Samuel Nafzger interview 11.2.2011; Jānis Vanags interview 5.4.2011. In comparison, the ELCA made a Called to Common Mission agreement with the Episcopal Church, which came into force officially on 1 January 2001. (Cimino 2003 c, 75) This may be why the LCMS convention of July 2001 resolved that it did not consider the ELCA “to be an orthodox Lutheran church body”. (Schmidt 2003, 203) Reporter August 2001 Synod OKs altar-pulpit fellowship with four churches; Petkūnas 2007, 27.

expanding contact since then. Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Jr. and Archbishop Jānis Vanags represented the European Churches at the convention.⁶⁴²

There were 1,113 votes in favor of fellowship with the Lithuanians and 29 votes against, the respective numbers in the case of the Latvians being 1,023 and 129. The voting was unambiguous, but the resolutions were not adopted without debate. The discussion centered on the fact that the Latvian Church had a small number of women pastors who were ordained during the years of communist dominance. This issue created a problem that was considered so important that “Delegates adopted an amendment to add that Latvia’s women pastors are not recognized as pastors for service in the Missouri Synod”. In other words, according to the Convention Proceedings, it was resolved that the “declaration of fellowship does not acknowledge that those women who have been ordained are recognized as ordained clergy who can serve in the capacity of ordained clergy” in the Missouri Synod.⁶⁴³ Hence, the agreement was total, albeit excluding a few Latvian women pastors.

The Missouri Synod was tolerant enough to accept the earlier admission of women pastors in the Latvian and Lithuanian Lutheran Churches, and also the continuing reality that women pastors were still working in the Latvian Church. These fellowships challenged the self-understanding of the Missouri Synod given that the non-ordaining of women had been “the most visible symbol of a church body’s understanding regarding the authority of the scripture” since the Seminex controversy in the 1970s.⁶⁴⁴

Professor Robert Kolb wrote in his *Article on Church Fellowship* [2001] that the message the Missouri Synod gave when establishing altar and pulpit fellowship under President Barry’s and President Kuhn’s leadership was that “we have come to a new understanding of our ecumenical responsibility”. It was also of importance that the Latvian Church was, to some degree, a national Church, a people’s Church: “For the first time my church has joined in fellowship with an historic Volkskirche”.⁶⁴⁵ The fact that a historical folk or people’s Church had accepted the LCMS was really something, especially when the critical or radical anti-unionist German roots of the first Missourians were taken into account.

Dr. Daniel Mattson summed it up thus: “we maybe and I would emphasize maybe strengthened some emphases that were already there.” The Missourians showed that it was

⁶⁴² Reporter August 2001 Synod OKs altar-pulpit fellowship with four churches.

⁶⁴³ ASN 2001 Convention Proceedings To Formally Declare Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia Resolution 3-05A, 137; Brug 2010, 37; Reporter August 2001 Synod OKs altar-pulpit fellowship with four churches; Jānis Ginters interview 5.4.2011; Petkūnas 2007, 27; Ketola 2009, 233.

⁶⁴⁴ Todd 2000, 208.

⁶⁴⁵ LELBA F1 A3 L 163 2001–2003 Robert Kolb: Article in Church Fellowship [August 2001]. To compare the path the Missouri Synod had taken in its decisions in 1998 and 2001 to the ELCA decision of 1999 to accept full communion with the Episcopal Church. (Gassmann 2001 I, xxiii) Both did open up, the Missouri Synod inside the Lutheran world and the ELCA even beyond Lutheranism. As Michael C.D. McDaniel, Emeritus Bishop of the ELCA’s North Carolina Synod, wrote in the LCMS theological journal the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (April 2001), for example, “It is often pointed out that the ELCA and the LCMS are on divergent courses. People in high places in the ELCA have expressed their regret – but done nothing about it. Instead, there has been a rush by the ELCA leadership to consort with various Reformed churches, Moravians, Roman Catholics, and Episcopalians.” (McDaniel 2001, 99, 106)

“possible to take the Scriptures and Confessions very seriously and to regard them as living norms for the life of the church”. This was in contrast with many of the European partners of the Baltic and Ingrian Churches, which considered it old-fashioned.⁶⁴⁶ It could be argued on the basis of the research material used in this study that the Missouri Synod really strengthened the conservative emphasis that already existed at least in the Latvian, Lithuanian and Ingrian Churches. Furthermore, the conservatism included some confessional elements. The Missouri Synod succeeded in offering a confessional choice, which nevertheless was not taken without contextual modification as these Churches succeeded in developing a hybrid confessional and ecumenical position.

In a way the Missouri Synod was “a perfect match” among the largest American Lutheran Churches for the Ingrian, Latvian and Lithuanian Churches, given its position between the ELCA and the WELS. It may be that the LCMS was closer to the ELCA in its doctrine of fellowship, while appearing to agree with the WELS on the doctrine of the Scripture.⁶⁴⁷ In a way the Missouri Synod tried to balance partial fundamentalism and partial ecumenism. The Wisconsin Synod would have been too narrow in its understanding of fellowship and ecumenism for the Ingrian, Latvian and Lithuanian Churches, and the ELCA would have been too liberal and too far away from the emphasis on scriptural inerrancy.

According to John F. Brug (2010), the declaration of fellowship with the Latvian Church confirmed the belief “that the LCMS practice in Europe is to turn away from the small confessional Lutheran churches that it helped found in hopes of influencing the larger, liberal churches toward a more confessional direction.” He continued: “The LCMS has also violated its own principles of church fellowship by entering pulpit and altar fellowship with Lutheran World Federation churches.”⁶⁴⁸ Brug’s notion makes sense, at least if one thinks of the desire in the LCMS to work with larger Churches rather than just with separatists or small groups, and that the will to guide these Churches towards confessionalism remained. It is also true that the Missouri Synod had to “bend the rules” concerning its own view of church fellowship.

⁶⁴⁶ Daniel Mattson interview 11.2.2011.

⁶⁴⁷ Schuetze 2000, 401. Kieschnick (2009, 65) points out that it was a very relevant question for the LCMS how to remain confessional while recognizing other Christians as well. As Dr. Jacob A. O. Preuss wrote in his report to the 1981 Convention of the LCMS: “We can all agree that we want to avoid a total separatism on the one hand and a wild, irresponsible ecumenism on the other. The difficulty is to find a middle path which will avoid both of these extremes and which can work in all situations in our church.” (Kieschnick 2009, 76–77) Similarly, as Sueflow (1998, 214) argues: “The synodical objective of maintaining pure teaching was never meant to be accomplished by refraining from contacts with other church bodies, Lutheran and otherwise. The concomitant objective was (and remains) guarding against separatism and/or sectarianism.” On the other hand, the WELS had a “unit concept” of church fellowship, which the LCMS rejected. (Brug 2012, 23) The Ingrian, Latvian and Lithuanian Churches had a wider and “more ecumenical” understanding of fellowship, which in fact could be considered quite similar to the LWF’s concept of “reconciled diversity” introduced by Norwegian Bishop Anders Aarloft in the LWF Assembly in Dar-es-Salaam, in 1977. The term means having an ecumenical fellowship while still maintaining a confessional heritage and identity. (CTCR 1981, 24–27; Brug 2010, 22)

⁶⁴⁸ Brug 2010, 39–42.

Mary Todd (2000) posed the question: “As the twentieth century turns, does Missouri stand in light of and in relation to its historic claim to be the voice of confessional Lutheranism in America?”⁶⁴⁹ The Missouri Synod opened up and became more tolerant between 1991 and 2001, but still retained its rather confessional position in its new international relations with post-Soviet Churches. According to my research, a brief answer to Todd’s question could be that the Missouri Synod came to be the voice of confessional Lutheranism, not just in America but also internationally.

⁶⁴⁹ Todd 2000, 279.

V Conclusions

I have examined the influence of the Missouri Synod in the Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran Churches in 1991–2001 in the context of inter-Lutheran relations. As became apparent, the Missouri Synod had no contact with these Churches before the 1990s: it would have been almost impossible because of its narrow view of ecumenism, its intense anti-communism and its non-membership in the Lutheran World Federation, which had some contacts with Churches in the USSR.

Things changed, however, when the Soviet Union collapsed. The new era began and the first contacts were established in 1991 through the Missouri Synod's auxiliary organizations the International Lutheran Laymen's League and the International Lutheran Women's Missionary League, in cooperation with its Finnish sister Church the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland. The Missourian pioneer in the area was Reverend Wallace Schulz, who was in touch with each of the Baltic and Ingrian Churches.

The first direct official Missourian contacts with Lutherans in the Baltics and Russia were established in 1992. Before going to any Eastern European Lutheran Church the official representative of the Missouri Synod, Reverend Daniel Mattson, visited the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva. The General Secretary of the LWF, Ishmael Noko, welcomed Mattson and hoped that the two organizations would come up with suggestions regarding how to approach Eastern and Central Europe in a more coordinated way. Noko remarked on the potential for internal conflict in the Churches in Eastern Europe, and suggested that one way of avoiding this would be to take a deliberated and integrated approach. He also pointed out that the common heritage of the two organizations called for synchronization.

At the time it was actively beginning to establish contacts with Eastern European Lutherans in the fall 1992 the Missouri Synod apparently moved closer to conservatism in its leadership when Alvin Barry replaced President Ralph Bohlmann.

At first the Missouri Synod focused on mission work among German Lutherans living in Russia, which had to be organized via Riga, where the Bishop of the German Lutheran Church in Russia, Harald Kalnins, had his seat, and St. Petersburg. However, this focus gradually shifted towards other ethnic groups, namely the Ingrians and the Latvians, and particularly after Daniel Mattson's first official LCMS visit to the Latvian Lutheran Bishop in Riga, Kārlis Gailītis. Mattson questioned the Bishop, a loyal LWF supporter, about his prejudiced attitude towards the Missourians.

At the same time the Lithuanian Lutheran Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Sr. was flattered by the fact that Daniel Mattson, as a representative of the Missouri Synod, had come from so far away with a letter from its president to give attention to him and the little Lithuanian Lutheran Church.

The Estonian Church, being more developed, more self-sufficient and strongly supported by the Finnish Church, was not so needful of Missourian support. It also had a more liberal theological approach, having allowed women to become pastors and continuing to do so. This was not the case in the Latvian Church, which also allowed

women to be ordained but overruled the decision in 1993 when Jānis Vanags was elected Archbishop and was consecrated by Bishop Henrik Svenungsson of Stockholm. As a result, the problematic question of women's ministry no longer had a negative effect on cooperation between the Latvians and the Missourians.

Leino Hassinen became a bishop of the Ingrian Church in 1993. He wanted to establish connections as soon as possible so that the Ingrians would not be left alone should Russian society go through new unpredictable upheavals in the future. The Ingrian Church joined the Lutheran World Federation in 1994, and the Ingrians and the Missourians had their first fellowship negotiations in 1995.

Cooperation between the Missouri Synod and the Estonian Church did not intensify at the beginning of the 1990s during the time of Archbishop Kuno Pajula. Despite the change in leadership in 1994, when Jaan Kiivit Jr. was elected Archbishop, the Estonians continued to have a slightly reserved attitude towards the Missourians. Archbishop Kiivit was ready for some degree of cooperation with the Missouri Synod, however, and even though he has been described as quite mindful of keeping the Estonian Church independent in its decisions the cooperation was a little more active during his period of office. At any rate, his priority was the Lutheran World Federation and he did not focus as strongly on the Missouri Synod.

The Lithuanian Bishop Jonas Kalvanas Sr. died suddenly in 1995, to be replaced by his son Jonas Kalvanas Jr., who was slightly more oriented towards confessionalism. From that perspective relations with the Missouri Synod could develop further.

Aarre Kuukauppi, a Russian native, followed Hassinen as Bishop of the Ingrian Church at the beginning of 1996. Since the very first contacts were made, Kuukauppi had supported cooperation with the Missourians, as well as their positions.

The Lutheran World Federation's member Churches in Europe and the USA were highly suspicious about the increasing influence of the Missouri Synod in Eastern Europe. The Missourians wanted to give Churches formerly under Soviet control the confessional option of Lutheranism, and also perhaps to prove to many LWF Churches that it could work in a responsible way.

The Missouri Synod also had to find a balance between strong confessionalism and being a loyal and responsible partner Church. In the case of the Augsburg Institute in 1996 it proved to be a loyal ally of the ecclesiastical leadership of the Latvian Church: it did not support the separatists who taught according to the Missourian doctrine of closed communion. In the view of some critics the Missouri Synod was just engaging in church politics and was not being true to its dogma.

From the beginning the Missouri Synod had strongly supported theological education in the Baltic and Ingrian Churches. At this stage their support often meant sending young people to study on short summer courses or as graduate students at the St. Louis and Ft. Wayne seminaries. Quite a few visiting lecturers taught theology in the Baltic and Ingrian Churches or in their educational institutes. One of them was Professor Robert Kolb, who started visiting these places regularly to give lectures in the mid-1990s.

The Latvian Church became increasingly juxtaposed with the Faculty of Theology at the University of Latvia during the 1990s, and therefore began arranging its own pastors' training program. The Missouri Synod supported this program, which then developed into the Luther Academy project.

The Luther Academy building was originally promised support from the Lutheran World Federation and its member Churches. Astonishingly, the 1997 LWF Hong Kong Assembly withdrew the funding because of the intention not to allow women to study on the pastoral program. The Missouri Synod had previously promised the Latvians that it would support them if the LWF refused to do so. Consequently, the project fell into Missourian hands and brought the Latvian Church and the Missouri Synod even closer to each other.

Following the discussions between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church, the altar and pulpit fellowship agreement was signed in 1998 at the LCMS Convention. There were two main factors that, in a way, forced this agreement. The 1997 Russian law on religion gave the Missouri Synod the choice of ending its mission work or continuing and becoming more deeply involved with the Ingrian Church. Its teaching on church fellowship did not allow it to proceed with closer incorporation without a full fellowship agreement. These two main factors combined made the altar and pulpit fellowship agreement necessary. Interestingly, it was the first time a Church that was already a member of the LWF entered into fellowship with the Missouri Synod. It could be said that it served as a model for the two Baltic Churches, which later signed fellowship agreements with the Synod. From the Missourian side, the agreement with the Ingrians implied the development of a more tolerant and more open attitude towards its partner Churches and their pluralism. It represented the start of direct contact between the Missouri Synod and the Ingrian Church.

The Missouri Synod continued supporting theological education in the Baltic and Ingrian Churches, especially in Latvia, Lithuania and Ingria. The Luther Academy in Latvia received teachers and funding from the LCMS. In Lithuania, the Department for Evangelical Theology in Klaipėda, the Lithuanian Church and Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne signed a partnership agreement in 1999. In the case of the Ingrian Church, the education center in Koltushi near St. Petersburg was supported in many ways, but with relatively little publicity because it was not an exclusively Missourian project due to the even stronger involvement of the Finns. The Missourians were ready to engage in more theological cooperation with the Estonian Church, too, although the Estonians were not very enthusiastic about the idea.

The small Finnish sister Church, the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland, severed its fellowship with the Missouri Synod in 1999. It did so because the Missouri Synod had made a fellowship agreement with the Ingrian Church, which was in cooperation with the Finnish peoples' Church and was also a member of the Lutheran World Federation. The CLCF felt that the LCMS had changed its understanding of fellowship in entering into fellowship with a Church that was in partnership with heterodox Churches. There was some truth in this.

Relations between the Lutheran Churches in Siberia and the Missouri Synod were complex. The Estonian and Ingrian Churches, the Siberian Lutherans and the Missouri Synod, especially with its Ft. Wayne seminary's Russian Project led by Professor Timothy Quill, were all involved. The Ft. Wayne people supported the formation of an independent Siberian Church, the Ingrians wanted to keep the Siberian Lutherans in the Ingrian Church, and the Estonian Church leadership saw the question from a nationalist perspective. The LCMS had promised continuously, from the first fellowship talks in 1995 to the 1998 full fellowship agreement with the Ingrian Church, that it would not establish its own Church in Russia, or at least such a move would have to be approved by the Ingrians. The St. Louis people were also critical of the way the Ft. Wayne people handled the situation. Many Missourians feared that the LCMS was again falling into a cycle of irresponsible and disruptive behavior, as it had done so many times in the past.

Despite the wide-ranging influence of the Missouri Synod and the good and sometimes not so good aspects of it, the Latvian and Lithuanian Churches followed the example set by the Ingrian Church and entered into fellowship negotiations. The main negotiators on the Missourian side were Dr. Samuel Nazfger and Dr. William Weinrich, both active and very influential in Missourian relations with the Baltic and Ingrian Churches.

Although the Missouri Synod had gone through the major questions with the Ingrian Church, there were still several challenging matters to discuss with the Latvian and Lithuanian Churches. The fact that the Latvian Church had female pastors was particularly difficult. However, Archbishop Vanags had not ordained any women since his election into office in 1993, thus the line of the Latvian Church was deemed to be confessional despite this flaw.

The ecumenical commitments of the Latvian and Lithuanian Churches were also discussed. The previous Latvian Archbishop had signed the Leuenberg Agreement, which meant full fellowship with the Reformation Churches in Europe. This agreement was downplayed, the explanation being that the Latvian pastors' conference had not made the decision and that the issue was virtually unknown to many Latvian Lutherans. On the subject of membership in the Lutheran World Federation, which both the Latvian and Lithuanian Lutherans joined in the 1960s, the mitigating explanation given to the Missourian audience was that neither Church supported all the positions of the LWF or considered them normative.

The fellowship discussions aroused international attention and concerns among the other partners of the Latvian and Lithuanian Churches, especially Latvia because it was not a minority Church but a historical peoples' Church. The North Elbian Church and its Vice-president Henning Kramer took the strictest line against the fellowship agreement, making it clear that the Latvians would lose North Elbian funding if they chose to sign a full fellowship agreement with the Missouri Synod. It was somewhat surprising that the Church of Sweden, being progressive, was quite tolerant of the decisions the Latvians made.

The momentum was on the Missourian side at the beginning of the 2000s, and it was perhaps also for that reason that the Lutheran World Federation became keen to establish

more contacts with the Missouri Synod: the Federation and many of its member Churches may have felt that the Synod was a threat to inter-Lutheran relations and Lutheran unity.

There was one more reason for uncertainty in the fellowship process, namely the death of President A.L. Barry during the negotiations in spring 2001. His immediate successor was Dr. Robert T. Kuhn, who was to lead the Missouri Synod until a new president was elected at the convention.

Despite all the pressures and concerns, the Latvian and Lithuanian Lutheran Churches signed the altar and pulpit agreements and were accepted by the Missouri Synod at the synodical convention on 15 July 2001.

It could be concluded from this research that the Missouri Synod was motivated to create connections with Lutherans in the former Soviet Union because of a desire to do mission work especially in that area: anti-communism was one of the reasons for not having established connections, but after the upheavals it became one of the reasons for establishing them because of the desire to do mission work among Lutherans of German origin in particular; the Missouri Synod had a long tradition of “home mission abroad” or “*Innere Mission im Ausland*”, which the mission work continued, but the focus soon shifted to other ethnic groups. The Missourians became the main partners because they wanted to offer a confessional choice to the Eastern European Lutherans, and because many of them wanted to improve the image of the Synod and show that it could be a responsible and reliable force. In sum, the Missouri Synod had several reasons for doing mission work in the area immediately after the doors opened, but they did not have to push themselves very strongly because the former Soviet Lutherans welcomed all the help they could get. There were also theological similarities. To give an objective and realistic picture of the many facets of the LCMS influence it should be stated that churchly ambition was not the sole motivation behind the mission work and cooperation. It is not possible to conclude, at least from this research, that the influence of the Missouri Synod on the Baltic and Ingrian Churches was only on the level of church politics. There were many other things, such as personal involvement and a desire to teach new generations of theologians and churchmen in former Soviet countries. Altruism was one significant motivating element.

This research has revealed the three major forms of support, and influence at the same time, emanating from the Missouri Synod to the Ingrian, Latvian, and Lithuanian Lutheran Churches, and to a lesser degree the Estonian Lutheran Church:

- 1) Theological support
- 2) Financial support
- 3) Moral support

Of these, *theological support* was the most important. The Missouri Synod extensively supported theological education in the area for two basic reasons. First, it was not easy for the churches that had to function in ghettos under Communism and to practice their

theology in a void to adapt to the new freedom of religion and Western-style religiousness, and especially Western Lutheranism with its historical-critical method and women's ordination. The Missouri Synod had reaffirmed its position on many theological questions and had not gone as progressively far forward as the German and Swedish Lutherans for example, and hence its theology was more understandable, and more similar to the post-ghetto theology. Second, the Missourians had the capacity for educational cooperation, with its comprehensive education system. The publishing and distribution of theological literature is one subject for further research, not having been included in this study.

Financial support was given on a quite large scale. Riga's Luther Academy building and its renovation cost around one million US dollars, for example. In other projects the contributions tended directly to serve the purposes of theological education, but there was also some support for diaconal work, for example. Missourian financial support of the Baltic and Ingrian Churches has raised questions in the Western Lutheran public discussion concerning motives, as well as the independence of the alleged recipients. Perhaps to the surprise of many Western Lutherans, the financial support given by the Missouri Synod to the Baltic and Ingrian Churches had the opposite effect: they were able to maintain their independence because they could play with "two packs of cards", one pack for the LWF and one for the LCMS. They were also less vulnerable to the threats to cut funding coming from some of the Lutheran members of the Federation.

Moral support was essential and was usually connected with theological and financial support. At first it meant offering encouragement to the small Churches in Eastern Europe that had suffered under communist persecution. The need for such support perhaps increased when the Baltic and Ingrian Churches came under heavy criticism and pressure from proponents of mainstream European Lutheranism. Included in moral support are the connections to the Missouri Synod, also through the International Lutheran Council, that helped the Baltic and Ingrian Churches to get to know other Lutheran conservatives or confessionals, and in this sense the Missouri Synod offered them a forum.

The Missouri Synod also gave much needed recognition to the Ingrian, Latvian and Lithuanian Churches for their conservative line, which did not attract a great deal of praise in mainstream Lutheranism. Some of the LWF member Churches may have been quite arrogant in their dealings with Churches that were newly freed. Theological geography may not have been fully taken into account in the LWF block given that the former USSR nations tend to be more conservative in nature. This lack of consideration created perfect opportunities for the Missourians to establish connections with the Churches in the area.

In a way, then, the Missouri Synod articulated the conservatism that formed during the Soviet era when the Churches did not have a public presence, in the form of guidance towards taking a confessional position. Overall, Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran conservatism may have moved slightly towards the Missourian style of confessionalism.

Cooperating with the Missouri Synod was also an identity issue for the Baltic and Ingrian Churches. In a way they were perhaps "more ecumenical" than other Lutherans, but this also had some benefits. The relationship gave them more independence from the LWF and its member Churches. Opportunism should not be ignored either: to some

degree the Baltic and Ingrian Lutherans calculated that belonging to both camps could benefit their Churches in the best possible way.

The Missouri Synod also appeared to change during the course of the cooperation: it had to become more tolerant of its partner churches' pluralism and multilateral ecumenical contacts.

Furthermore, it seems that the influence of the Missouri Synod challenged the LWF's self-understanding as a *communio*. The trend at the beginning of the new millennium was in the opposite direction compared to what is stated in the title of the LWF's official history *From Federation to Communion* (1997). The Missourian involvement and the more independent Baltic and Ingrian conservatism may have triggered another development: the ongoing progress could more relevantly be described as "from communion to federation".

It could also be argued that the Missouri Synod's influence and the conservative nature of the Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran Churches triggered a "Lutheran New Deal" or reallocation in Eastern Europe just ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Between mainstream and non-mainstream Lutheranism grew the "middle ground" of the Ingrian, Latvian and Lithuanian Lutheran Churches, and also to some degree the Estonian Lutheran Church, all of which were strongly connected to both the LCMS and the LWF.

The findings of this research offer answers to many questions, but at the same time raise many other relevant questions to be explored. The Missouri Synod's influence in the Baltic and Ingrian Lutheran Churches continued after 2001 and the Lutheran World Federation began to realize it had to take the challenge more seriously. With regard to the Nordic countries, it would also be worth investigating the contacts of some small Lutheran groups in Sweden and Finland with the Missouri Synod. Some of the conservative African LWF member churches have come closer to the Missouri Synod, and the situation looks very similar to the one explored in this research, except that the geographical and cultural contexts are very different. The overall situation and relations between non-LWF and LWF blocks would be a relevant research topic, especially given that 2017 is the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.

Abbreviations

BFMS	–	Board for Mission Services
CEC	–	Conference of European Churches
CLCF	–	Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland
CSL	–	Concordia Seminary (St. Louis)
CTCR	–	Commission on Theology and Church Relations
CTS	–	Concordia Theological Seminary (Ft. Wayne)
CPH	–	Concordia Publishing House
DMD	–	Department for Mission and Development
EELC	–	Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church
EKD	–	Evangelical Church in Germany <i>(Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland)</i>
ELCA	–	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
ELCIR	–	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia
ELCL	–	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
ELCLi	–	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania
ELCROS	–	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States
ELS	–	Evangelical Lutheran Synod
ILC	–	International Lutheran Conference / Council (1993-)
ILWML	–	International Lutheran Women’s Missionary League
JDDJ	–	Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification
LCMS	–	Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod
LHF	–	Lutheran Heritage Foundation
LWF	–	Lutheran World Federation
NEK	–	North Elbian Evangelical Lutheran Church <i>(Nordelbische Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche)</i>
ROC	–	Russian Orthodox Church
SELK	–	Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany <i>(Selbständige Evangelische Lutherische Kirche)</i>
USSR	–	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WSCM	–	West Siberian Christian Mission
WCC	–	World Council of Churches

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Jeffrey Thormodson AJT
Samuel Nazfger ASN

RUSSIA

St. Petersburg

Inkerin kirkkohallituksen arkisto IKA
(The Consistory of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia)

ESTONIA

Tallinn

Eesti Evangeelse Luterliku Kiriku Konsistoriumi arhiiv EELKKA
(The Archives of the Consistory of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church)

LATVIA

Riga

Latvijas Evaņģēliski luteriskās baznīcas arhīvs LELBA
(The Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia)

LELB arhibīskapa kanceleja LELBAK
(The ELCL Archbishop's Office)

Luterisma Mantojuma Fonds arhīvs LMFA
(The Archive of the Lutheran Heritage Foundation Latvia)

LITHUANIA

Vilnius

Lietuvos Evangelikų Liuteronų Bažnyčios Vyskupo raštinė LELBVR
(The ELCLi Bishop's Office)

SWITZERLAND

Geneva

Archives of the Lutheran World Federation

ALWF

Archive of the LWF Europe Desk

ALWFED

FINLAND

Helsinki

Helsinki University Main Library

HUML

Ecumenical Archives

EA

Personal archives

Jouko Talonen

JTA

Risto Lehtonen

RLA

Kalle Kuusniemen tutkimusarkisto

KKA

(The Research Archive of Kalle Kuusniemi)

SWEDEN

Uppsala

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SKA

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Concordia Journal	Concordia Journal 2003
CTQ	Concordia Theological Quarterly 2001, 2002
Ecumenical Review	Ecumenical Review 1992
EJCS	European Journal for Church and State Research – Revue européenne des relations églises-état 2004
EMQ	Evangelical Missions Quarterly 1992
FLW	For the Life of the World 1997–2001
IBMR	International Bulletin of Missionary Research 1994
IJSCC	International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church 2009
IK	Inkerin Kirkko 2006
INYT	International New York Times 1994
JBS	Journal of Baltic Studies 2006
JES	Journal of Ecumenical Studies 1998, 1999
Kerygma und Dogma	Kerygma und Dogma 2014
KM	Kotimaa 1997
KSML	Keskisuomalainen 1985
Luterilainen	Luterilainen 1997–1999
Lutheran	Lutheran 1989, 1992
LA	Lutheran (Australia)1995
LTR	Lutheran Theological Review 1995
LW	Lutheran Witness 1997
LQJAS	Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences 1995
Missio Apostolica	Missio Apostolica 2014
Perusta	Perusta 2015
Pyhäkön Lamppu	Pyhäkön Lamppu 2013
Reporter	Reporter 1994, 1997, 2001, 2002
Reseptio	Reseptio 1992–2001
RSS	Religion, State and Society 2001
SKPSL	Suomen Kirkon Pappisliitto 1985
SR	Svētdienas Rīts 1997, 1998
TA	Teologinen Aikakauskirja 2003, 2007
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Dr. Sandra Gintere	7.3.2011 (email), 4.4.2011
Reverend Jānis Ginters	5.4.2011
Bishop Leino Hassinen	14.12.2011
Dr. Guntis Kalme	29.3.2011 (email)
Dr. Tomi Karttunen	9.3.2012
Professor Robert Kolb	11.2.2011, 25.11.2011 (email)
Vice-president Henning Kramer	26.1.2015 (email)
Bishop Aarre Kuukkauppi	8.6.2011
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Archbishop Andres Põder	22.8.2011
Dr. Aleksandr Prilutskij	7.6.2011
Reverend Juha Saari	15.2.2012 (email)
Professor Risto Saarinen	29.11.2011
Bishop Mindaugas Sabutis	28.9.2011
Mrs. Kathy Schulz	13.2.2011
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Dr. Rainer Stahl	31.10.2012
Professor Jouko Talonen	18.2.2014, 20.2.2014 (email)
Reverend Jeffrey Thormodson	10.2.2011
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Dr. Veiko Vihuri	12.3.2012 (email)
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Index of Names

- Ailabouni, Said, 174
 Akmentiņš, Roberts, 87, 116
 Alexy II, 94
 Altnurme, Riho, 111
 Arnašius, Helmutas, 173, 174
 Barry, Alvin, 55, 56, 58, 61, 62, 64, 72,
 75, 76, 78, 89, 102, 111, 112, 119,
 133, 147, 149, 155, 156, 159, 160,
 165, 171, 172, 176, 177, 179, 183,
 186, 190
 Bikše, Erberts, 145, 161
 Bitēna, Vaira, 90
 Boheim, Keith, 122, 145
 Bohlmann, Ralph, 24, 25, 26, 55, 82, 83,
 91, 95, 96, 156, 186
 Böttcher, Reinhard, 101, 177
 Brand, Eugene, 102, 103
 Brandt, Dwaine, 117, 118
 Brezhnev, Leonid, 32, 51
 Brug, John, 107, 139, 149, 165, 184
 Buckman, Allan R., 51, 53, 60, 64, 69,
 100, 128
 Burgdorf, Larry, 47, 122
 Cālītis, Juris, 168, 181
 Camp, Leif, 137
 Christian, Ronald F., 76, 78
 Cimino, Richard, 16
 Coleman, Nick, 180
 Danell, Sven, 40
 Darwin, Charles, 18
 Dauksts, Ingus, 168
 Degner, Waldemar, 118
 Dimitroff, James, 52, 133, 137
 Dumpys, Hans G., 93, 172
 Dusan, Toth, 112
 Eimanis, Rolands, 168, 169
 Elliot, Mark, 71
 Evanson, Charles, 172
 Ezerniece, Ilze, 120
 Feldmanis, Roberts, 40, 41, 81
 Fišere, Sarmīte, 181
 Frederick, William III, 18
 Frusti, Martin, 52, 60
 Fry, Franklin Clark, 25
 Gailītis, Kārlis, 40, 41, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85,
 86, 89, 186
 Gassmann, Günter, 16
 Gintere, Sandra, 86, 114, 158
 Ginters, Jānis, 145, 160
 Gorbachev, Mikhail, 35, 44, 97
 Görög, Tibor, 93, 96, 98, 100, 101, 128
 Gritsch, Eric W., 16
 Hackmann, Edward, 117, 118
 Hamann, John George, 18
 Handog, Birgitta, 85, 86, 100
 Hark, Edgar, 37
 Harms, Claus, 18
 Harms, Oliver R., 21
 Harnack, Adolf, 17
 Harnapp, H. L., 88
 Hartfield, Robert, 64, 76, 77, 87, 88, 89,
 90, 145, 151, 177
 Hartwig, Raymond, 57, 64, 72, 165
 Hassinen, Leino, 48, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63,
 64, 66, 67, 70, 72, 76, 117, 126, 127,
 187
 Haug, Arden, 172, 173, 174
 Heubach, Joachim, 124
 Hjelm, Norman A., 16
 Hummel, Horace, 118
 Imhoff, Frank, 131
 Irbe, Kārlis, 162
 Ivanauskiene, Kristina, 173
 Jansen, Harold E., 76
 Jepsen, Maria, 174
 Juozaitis, Saulius, 172, 173, 174
 Kajava, Maria, 63
 Kalme, Guntis, 82, 90, 115, 117, 119,
 147
 Kalnins, Harald, 34, 45, 58, 80, 84, 186
 Kalvanas, Jonas Jr., 93, 148, 150, 172,
 173, 174, 175, 180, 183
 Kalvanas, Jonas Sr., 42, 43, 91, 92, 93,
 186, 187
 Käßmann, Margot, 175
 Ketola, Mikko, 16, 93
 Khrushchev, Nikita, 32, 37, 38, 39
 Kieschnick, Gerald B., 22
 Kiiivit, Jaan Jr., 75, 79, 111, 112, 113,
 114, 148, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 187
 Kiiivit, Jaan Sr., 37
 Kirill, 130

- Koehler, Edward W. A., 61
 Kolb, Robert, 60, 76, 77, 101, 128, 183, 187
 Kramer, Henning, 85, 166, 169, 172, 173, 189
 Kretschmar, Georg, 58, 59, 124
 Kuhn, Robert T., 131, 134, 155, 156, 164, 165, 166, 167, 171, 172, 180, 183, 190
 Kukk, Mihkel, 75
 Kumari, Prasanna, 16
 Kuortti, Aatami, 35
 Kuukauppi, Aarre, 50, 57, 58, 63, 64, 65, 72, 126, 127, 128, 131, 133, 135, 137, 138, 143, 152, 155, 156, 158, 187
 Lahtinen, Aarno, 100
 Larson, Duane H., 16
 Lassila, Olli-Pekka, 79, 98, 100, 101, 124, 125, 126, 128, 137, 141, 142, 143, 145, 177
 Lehman, Edwin, 102, 103
 Lehtonen, Risto, 51, 64, 66, 72, 124
 Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich, 31
 Lescher, Richard, 124
 Löhe, Wilhelm, 19, 20
 Lund-Quist, Carl E., 25
 Lutichius, Frank, 58
 Lytkin, Vsevolod, 70, 152, 153, 155, 156
 Manske, Friedrich, 100
 Marquart, Kurt E., 170, 172
 Marx, Karl, 18, 31
 Mattson, Daniel, 46, 49, 52, 53, 56, 61, 64, 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 105, 106, 108, 109, 110, 116, 117, 118, 119, 121, 122, 124, 125, 128, 134, 137, 138, 144, 145, 146, 147, 151, 178, 183, 186
 Matulis, Jānis, 40, 90
 McCain, Paul, 170
 Mehl, John, 48, 60, 137
 Mehl, Susan, 137
 Meriläinen, Juha, 16
 Mesters, Ēriks, 40
 Meyer, Herbert, 22
 Mildenerger, Michael, 124
 Mocko, Paul, 112, 113
 Murto, Esko, 14
 Nafzger, Samuel, 25, 28, 103, 121, 131, 137, 147, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 171, 172, 182
 Närhi, Kimmo, 150, 152
 Nazfger, Samuel, 189
 Nelson, David, 95, 100, 124
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 18
 Noko, Ishmael, 27, 98, 99, 100, 102, 129, 176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 186
 O'Shoney, Glenn, 44, 53, 56, 57, 60
 Oldenburg, Mark W., 16
 Otten, Herman, 138
 Paarma, Jukka, 152
 Pajula, Kuno, 38, 57, 73, 74, 75, 76, 79, 187
 Pälikkö, Kimmo, 151
 Petkūnas, Darius, 17, 174
 Pieper, Francis A., 20, 152
 Pihkala, Isto, 47, 51, 58, 63, 64, 131, 134, 139, 142, 156, 157
 Pill, Ivo, 75
 Pinola, Sakari, 125
 Plūme, Ilars, 80, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110, 116
 Poser, Wilhelm, 85
 Preiman, Sergei, 49, 58, 64, 72
 Preus, Jacob Aall Ottesen, 22, 23, 29
 Prilutskij, Aleksandr, 140
 Quill, Timothy, 143, 147, 150, 152, 154, 172, 174, 175, 189
 Rahn, Robert, 74, 147, 170, 171
 Rajala, Johanna, 58
 Raulo, Sylvia, 100
 Rozītis, Elmārs, 85, 86, 90
 Rubenis, Juris, 160, 171
 Rudnick, Milton, 124
 Ruotsila, Markku, 16
 Saarinen, Eero, 127
 Salonen, Tauno, 16
 Salumäe, Tiit, 74, 75, 76
 Särelä, Markku, 60, 75, 77, 150, 151
 Scaer, David P., 22
 Schielke, Frederick, 64, 124, 128, 137, 143, 145, 147, 151
 Schjørring, Jens Holger, 16, 28
 Schmale, Karlheinz, 124
 Schulz, Kathy, 73, 91
 Schulz, Wallace, 44, 53, 74, 75, 78, 80, 81, 82, 91, 94, 186

- Schwan, Marvin M., 47, 122, 123, 144
Sepherd, John, 108
Settje, David E., 17
Slenczka, Reinhard, 121, 147, 161, 168,
169
Sluberski, Thomas, 52, 94, 95, 96
Söderblom, Nathan, 162
Soone, Einar, 76, 77
Stahl, Rainer, 48, 121
Stalin, Josef, 28, 32, 34, 37, 42, 69
Stålsett, Gunnar, 25, 26, 59, 60, 94, 102
Stephan, Martin, 19, 20
Stolina, Ilvija, 145
Stricker, Gerd, 142, 144
Stroža, Berta, 90
Survo, Arvo, 35, 50, 58, 64, 70, 72
Susi, Mart, 111
Svenungsson, Henrik, 86, 168, 187
Talonon, Jouko, 146
Teigen, Erling, 108, 170
Thormodson, Jeffrey, 17, 153
Todd, Mary, 16, 23, 56, 155, 185
Tooming, Alfred, 37, 42
Türs, Gustavs, 40
Turunen, Maija, 16
Työrinoja, Pirjo, 84, 85
Ubbelohde, Robert, 113
Uzzel, Lawrence A., 131
Väisänen, Matti, 16
Vaitekūnas, Stasys, 148
Valpētere, Helēna, 90
Vanags, Jānis, 81, 82, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89,
90, 103, 105, 108, 109, 110, 115, 116,
117, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 144,
145, 147, 149, 159, 160, 161, 162,
163, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171,
175, 180, 181, 183, 187, 189
Vārsbergs, Vilis, 90, 116
Vihuri, Veiko, 114
Vikström, John, 38, 113
Villenthal, Laine, 37
Vilmar, August F.C., 18
Virrankoski, Pentti, 15
Walther, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm, 19,
20, 152
Wartenberg-Potter, Bärbel, 174
Weinrich, William, 127, 147, 148, 154,
159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165,
171, 172, 189
Weman, Gunnar, 86
Wenthe, Dean O., 110, 127, 147, 148,
154, 172
Winters, Walt, 112
Wurmbrand, Richard, 30
Wyneken, Friedrich, 20
Yeltsin, Boris, 59, 60, 94, 130
Yoder, Bill, 94, 95, 96