



**Session 1:
Immigrants Bring
Their Faith in Christ
(1830–1860)**

Introduction

On a scale of 1–10, how much do you know of the history of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>absolutely nothing ...</i>	<i>I lived through some of it, right? ...</i>	<i>I know parts before my lifespan ...</i>	<i>I could teach a class on it ...</i>						

Lecture Notes

Feel free to summarize main points or interesting things from the PowerPoint overview of this period of WELS history:

Discussion

Look at the chart below about the three kinds of Lutherans in early America. What were the pros and cons of the early Wisconsin Synod being in the “mild Lutheran” category?

Old Lutherans	Mild Lutherans	New Lutherans
<i>Traditionalist</i>	<i>Moderate Approach</i>	<i>Progressive Theology</i>
Emphasized strict adherence to the original teachings of Martin Luther and the historic Lutheran Confessions (e.g., Augsburg Confession, Formula of Concord)	Represented a middle ground between strict application of doctrine and lax liberal theology	Advocated for a more modern interpretation of Lutheran doctrine, often influence by rationalism and Enlightenment ideas or broad Protestantism (e.g., the Second Great Awakening)
<i>Liturgical Conservatism</i>	<i>Flexible Worship Practices</i>	<i>Innovative Worship</i>
Held to traditional forms of worship, rejecting innovations or changes influenced by modernity	Less rigid in liturgical traditions, allowing for some adaptations or simplifications in church practices	Open to significant changes in liturgical practices, sometimes moving away from traditional forms altogether (e.g., New Measures)
<i>Opposed to Unionism</i>	<i>Pragmatic in Doctrine</i>	<i>Ecumenical Spirit</i>
Strongly resisted attempts to merge or unify with other Protestant traditions (e.g., the Prussian Union of Churches)	While affirming Lutheran principles, they showed more openness to dialogue and collaboration with other Protestant groups	Strongly favored ecumenicalism and union with other Protestant denominations, often at the expense of distinctively Lutheran teachings
<i>Orthodox Doctrine</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>Doctrinal Liberalism</i>
Stressed pure Lutheran doctrine, focusing heavily on justification by faith and the real presence in communion	Sought a balance between faithfulness to Lutheran heritage and responsiveness to contemporary needs and evangelism	Downplayed or reinterpreted some historic Lutheran doctrines to align with broader Protestant or modern theological trends (e.g., sacraments, Sabbath, conversion)

The church where the Wisconsin Synod was founded, Salem in Granville (northwest side of Milwaukee today) was originally named, “The German Evangelical Lutheran and Reformed Church.” Many early Wisconsin Synod pastors and people took the attitude, “We serve Christians in our church. It doesn’t matter if you’re Lutheran or Reformed. We all have bigger problems to deal with than that. Everyone’s welcome here.” What’s noble about that approach? What’s concerning?

The Wisconsin Synod basically began as a mission church. How can we model the missionary spirit of Muehlhaeuser, Schmid, and Factmann today?

Conclusion

Compare the challenges the Wisconsin Synod faced in its early years with the challenges facing our synod today. What are some lessons to learn today?