



**Session 5:
Opportunities
in a Changing World
(1933–1963)**

Introduction

Watch the [address](#) given to the 2025 WELS synod convention by Matthew Harrison, the president of the Missouri Synod. Why would he thank the Wisconsin Synod for suspending fellowship with them?

Lecture Notes

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

Discussion

Synodical Debt in the Great Depression

Advocate for one side of the debate (that has occurred multiple times throughout our history):

1. "Our synod should never have any debt. If we can't fully fund it, we don't do it."
2. "Our synod can take on debt. We can't let limited resources get in the way of all the opportunities the Lord is placing before us."

WELS Forty-Niners

Edgar Hoenecke (from St. Peter's, Plymouth) and Arthur Wacker (from Salem, Ann Arbor—Betty Burt's father) are famous in our synod's history for traveling 4000 miles in Africa to explore mission work. Hoenecke's report urged the synod to follow through on the opportunities and responsibility for mission work. Southeast Michigan isn't exactly known as being the pioneers of mission work in our synod today. How can our local area reclaim the mission legacy of Hoenecke and Wacker?

Suspension of Fellowship with the Missouri Synod

For those of you who lived during this time period (or had parents who did), what was the most difficult part?

Respond to someone who is hesitant to break with a church body for doctrinal reasons: "I just can't do it. I know there's problems, but someone needs to work on addressing them. If I leave, there will be no one to right the ship."

The Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) was formed in the wake of the split between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods. The issue is not simply that WELS waited too long to suspend fellowship. The ultimate issue is that the CLC believes WELS identified the LCMS as "persistent errorists" (not simply "weak brothers") but still did not suspend fellowship with them. WELS has said that we needed more time to see if our admonition was being heeded and to inform our synod at large of what was happening. When you are issuing doctrinal admonition, when comes the point where "enough is enough"?

Last year (2024) was the fiftieth anniversary of Seminex. What are the sobering lessons for today?

Conclusion

Many people ask (or think), "What's the difference between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods? It doesn't seem that big of a deal." Now with the benefit of more historical insight, how would you answer?