

“Pastors for America” –

A Questionnaire for the Profiles of Clergy from Germany

(Research program of the Northelbian Evangelical-Lutheran Church/now Evangelisch-Lutherische Nordkirche related to the University of Kiel on the impacts of the Northelbian ‘missionaries’ and pastors of the Lutheran congregations and synods in the USA and Canada.)

Our research project is gathering speed. It is ambitious! Otherwise things passed into oblivion. The outline demonstrates the wide ranging topics of the research.

The research project has been launched some years ago (in 2008/09) from the decision making bodies of our church. The presiding bishop, the conference of bishops, the church council, among others welcomed the project and had made funds available for personnel. The scientific endeavor is related and located at the University of Kiel in the Theological Faculty, Systematic Department. The program has been again recognized from the German Research Foundation (DFG) supporting the work by important amounts.

The Study starts with the many million of German speaking people – we have to experience a real suction effect of this drain of resources. We hope, to make an contribution to reveal the work and the impacts of a so called ‘lost generation’ of round about 500 pastors – educated particularly from Breklum Theological Institute and afterwards in the same way from Kropp and last but not least from Hamburg-Rauhes Haus. They were sent from the 1880th to the 1930st to cure the immigrated Germans and German speaking people all around the States and Canada as well as in Brasil in the congregations; and often they had to start new congregations.

Questions raised to the program are this:

- Does already exist a road map of the Movement of the German Emigrants at the time from 19th to the 20th Century?
- Are there anywhere available statistics, facts and figures dealing with where German pastors settled down – for how long they were serving certain congregations; to find documents like diaries and journals, letters, photos, pictures of family live, documents of immigration, gravestones, sermons, remarks in books, publications and history books – including biographical details?
- Do you know anything about the (important) role Breklum pastors played in the different synods of the Lutheran Church in North America – and about the impact of their work for the Church and for the society?

In terms of the beginnings,

The development and progress,
Struggles and achievements,
Influence,
Looking for new aspects and discovering more details,
Perhaps there are any other suggestions or stimulations from another side.

We are aware, that the proposed research is not only ambitious but covers a huge area. The project will reach its first goal by finding a lot of biographical details of the 'Breklum Builders far West in the Americas'.

- ✓ We will be supported by archives of the Lutheran synods;
- ✓ By other archives;
- ✓ By the Magazine The Lutheran announcing the program for adhortation to assist and to support it;
- ✓ By people in the congregations and in the synods - while doing field studies;
- ✓ By the churchwide institutions.
- ✓ By discussing opinions about the facts of to be americanized, to be narrow minded and with strong confessional convictions, to be gnarled and to less flexible, to rely on the time difference; and to balance different standpoints and insights – to overcome bluffs on a scenic ride or drive.

At this stage thank you so much for the multifold opportunities of support. And in reverse: for the kindness in entertaining and undertaking to set aside quite a bit of time for our common history.

The historical approach attains profitable dynamics in questioning for goals of the relevance for today. Therefore the program is gaining and aiming a second goal. (We are also afraid it could be a lack of interest by responsible members):

Some questions may lead us in an encouraging direction:

II. Lutheranism and Reformation in the present-day context:

1. Has Martin Luther reached as in the process of social changes in North America and in Europe? What are our responsibilities to expose this challenge.
2. What about the persuasive power of Lutheranism in our time?

3. What about the ability of Lutheranism to make itself felt in the context of cross-cultural theology in the concert of religions. (This is a real question about the being of Christianity in face of the clash of culture or rather civilization.)

To discuss these common subjects would be a second approach to learn more about the Lutheranism in North America and to communicate in a global context.

Furthermore and third the question must be raised of the relevance of German-American and American-German relations.

The thesis of the rediscovery of a common history must be proved. Though to be lost a common history and partnership it's on us to stimulate a new lasting partnership. The steps to this ongoing plans must be examined carefully.

Appropriate steps have already been agreed on between church leaders of the ELCA and the Lutheran Church of Northern Germany.

It means that this study does not just aim to describe historical perspectives but rather seeks to use the interpretation of historical facts to show ways of interpreting the presence will hopefully have become clear from the description of the project so far.

By the way: the proposed project outlined here will appropriate the complex material which is often a hidden one. But nevertheless "Great Oaktrees from small acorns grow."

For compassionate readers,

Dr. Helmut Edelmann