Chapter One

Concordia College
A Century in Review

As Concordia College completes its first century, it is more closely fulfilling the desired objectives of the request submitted to the convention of the Missouri Synod meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, in the spring of 1893, than it has at any time since its founding.

In the decade following the formation of the Minnesota-Dakota district in 1881, an area that covered Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Northern Nebraska, and part of Canada, church growth was so rapid that there were almost 50,000 baptized members in over 300 congregations and preaching stations being served by 131 pastors and teachers. To meet this increasing need for church workers, the district carefully prepared a petition for Synod to establish and maintain in the district a college to prepare future pastors and teachers for the district. In addition, the district also requested that the college “offer a course in which young men who are not preparing for the ministry or for teaching in our parish schools may receive training for secular occupations and professions, so that they as Christian citizens may serve their community, their state, their country and last, but not least, their church.” In reality, these early church leaders were envisioning today’s liberal arts college which would provide professional preparation for both church and lay leadership.

The Minnesota delegates to the 1893 synodical convention were well prepared to support their request for a school in their district, but it was soon apparent that there was limited support from the delegates and no favorable recommendation from the floor committee. During the ensuing debate, District President Friedrich Pfothenhauer and Concordia Seminary President Francis Pieper of St. Louis eloquently and enthusiastically convinced the delegates to support this project. When the vote was taken, it was unanimously
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approved to found a new school in the Twin Cities. However, the request for a program for students not entering the professional service of the church was denied.

Although the nation was in an economic depression, the synod appropriated $25,000 for physical facilities and elected a local Board of Trustees, chaired by ex officio district President Pfotenhauer, to arrange for the necessities so classes could begin in only four months. The Board was charged with developing the first three years of a high school with one classical course for pre-ministerial students and another for students who would transfer to the teachers colleges of the church.

The first official act of the Board was to ask for the election of a professor through the Electoral Board of Synod which was responsible for selecting and appointing candidates for positions at all educational institutions of Synod. The Board chose the Reverend Theodore Buenger, pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, to become the professor and first director of the new Concordia.

Since it was impossible to build or secure permanent buildings in such a short time, temporary quarters were found on Agate Street near Cortland where the College formally opened on September 13, 1893, one week later than originally planned. The opening service for Concordia's first year was held at Zion Lutheran Church, at the corner of Jackson and Sycamore Streets. President Friederick Pfotenhauer delivered the inaugural sermon and then inducted Pastor Theodore Buenger as first professor and acting director. Thirty young men comprised the first class of synod's newest institution on the Mississippi, almost 600 miles north of St. Louis.

During the first year, the Board of Trustees carefully sought a permanent site for the school. The best location available was the vacant facilities which resulted from the 1890 move of the state training school for boys to Red Wing from its St. Paul location. With the help of Governor Knute Nelson, the college was able to purchase almost five acres of this property, including four main buildings in good condition, in September 1894, for just under $22,000. This excellent location was between the city limits of St. Paul and Minneapolis on the Kittsondale plateau surrounded mostly by woods, pastures, and ponds.

By the end of the century, the success of the school finally helped
the board secure permission to add a fourth year, which was ap­
proved at the 1902 synodical convention. To enable future growth,
ten additional acres were purchased before the 1905 convention
agreed to permit Concordia’s expansion to a full six years and call
the additional teachers needed. Freshman college classes began in
1905, and by 1906 there were six full years of study available.

During the next 20 years, Concordia had steady growth in en­
rollment, completed vital campus buildings, strengthened its aca­
demic programs, and especially demonstrated its leadership as one
of 20 charter members when the American Association of Junior
Colleges was formed in 1920. The most important facilities com­
pleted to alleviate the overcrowding were the Gymnasium in 1912,
Recitation Hall (later called the Administration Building and cur­
rently the Main Classroom Building) in 1918, and the East Dormitory
completed in 1925 and renamed Luther Hall in 1947.

The Buenger legacy also included curricular changes and the
desirability of outside accreditation. He believed that the church
should not be the sole judge of its own institutions. Consequently,
he convinced the faculty and Board to engage in an inspection
process in the 1920–21 year by the University of Minnesota which
resulted in the two-year college division being granted accreditation.

In 1927, the Reverend Martin A. H. Graebner was called to be­
come Concordia’s second president. For 17 years he had taught
Greek at St. John’s College in Winfield, Kansas, and at Concordia
College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

President Graebner’s tenure began with increasing enrollments
until 1931. But the great depression followed the financial panic of
1929 and ushered in the most difficult years in the college’s entire
history.

From 1930 to 1941 total enrollment dropped from 282 to 131.
As the synodical debt increased, all salaries and budget items were
slashed as much as 25 percent. Increased donations of homegrown
and canned produce from congregations helped maintain the stu­
dents’ meal service. In turn, the students were expected to assist
with various janitorial jobs and other maintenance work without
remuneration. Three residence halls were empty. When the supply
of pastors exceeded the number of vacant pulpits, some suggested
closing the college for two years. But by the grace and help of God,
Concordia survived this most difficult decade of its history.
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With the advent of World War II, enrollment was again on the increase, a shortage of pastors was now developing in synod, some additional synodical subsidy had been restored, graduates were achieving well in their seminary and other academic pursuits, and Concordia's future seemed much brighter. As the war deepened and draft restrictions under which theological students could remain in college became more stringent, it became necessary to accelerate the pre-seminary program by operating summer sessions in 1944 and 1945.

In the midst of the war period, Concordia paused during the 1943 commencement to commemorate its first half century as well as the 50th anniversary of Doctor Buenger's service to the college. The Board of Control felt the golden anniversary should be observed in a more significant way, so they submitted an overture asking the Minnesota District to gather a jubilee collection for a sorely needed library building. The district convention approved, and the drive for funds was soon underway.

In 1946, President Graebner, who was approaching his 67th birthday, announced his resignation with the understanding he would continue as a professor. With his versatile leadership he had not only kept Concordia functioning during a trying period, but he had also advanced it educationally and initiated plans for a library and the memorial center.

On September 15, 1946, the Reverend Willy A. Poehler was installed as Concordia's third president. As a 1924 alumnus, he had maintained a strong interest in his alma mater during his pastorates at three Minnesota congregations. He believed that the circumstances of the post-war period were positive toward a major period of growth for Concordia's expanding its service to the Lutheran Church.

In addition to initiating policies to improve the administrative efficiency at Concordia, President Poehler rejuvenated the building plans for the Buenger Memorial Library and the Lutheran Memorial Center. The Library fund received $161,000 from the Synod so that construction finally began in 1950. The final $219,000 structure was completed and dedicated on November 11, 1951. The continuing solicitation of funds for the Lutheran Memorial Center from congregations and individuals in the geographic region served by Concordia eventually matched the total cost of $361,806.45 for the
building. The LMC was dedicated on October 18, 1953, to the men and women who served God and country in military service.

With the increasing demand for women teachers in the parish schools of the Missouri Synod, the faculty had prepared a two-year pre-education curriculum for men and women and had received accreditation from the University of Minnesota for curricular expansion. If Concordia's request to introduce coeducation were approved at the 1950 synodical convention in Milwaukee, the first class of freshmen women could begin in September. The convention approved the introduction of coeducation at Concordia, and 24 coeds began classes with the fall term.

With increased enrollment in the coeducational junior college department, the next vital step was to secure North Central Association accreditation. But the rapid five-year growth had been accomplished without sufficiently meeting the criteria for accreditation by 1956. However, many improvements were made in the next two years so that Concordia received full membership in the North Central Association on April 21, 1959. This was the first of a series of accreditation applications and successes that would follow each major curricular expansion in the next 15 years.

The increasing size of the student body demanded more physical facilities for the campus. Five additional classrooms and a faculty office complex resulted from remodeling the northern fourth of the administration-classroom building in 1954. The 1912 gymnasium was converted into the Graebner Memorial Chapel in 1955.

During the next three years, a critical housing shortage on campus was met by the completion of three new residence halls. In 1957, Centennial Hall was dedicated to mark 100 years of the Missouri Synod's work in Minnesota. It was funded by the Minnesota District. The centennial of Minnesota statehood was commemorated by the dedication of Minnesota Hall in 1958, with the Missouri Synod paying the total costs. After building the two residences for women, Walther Hall for men was completed in 1959. It was also funded by the Synod.

With improved physical facilities on campus, the next goal was to plan an expansion of the curriculum to a four-year college degree. That request was presented to the 1962 synodical convention in Cleveland, Ohio. The convention approved the expansion, but enrollment in the senior college division was limited to women. When
classes began on September 9, 1962, Concordia had a junior class of 46 women. The first bachelor of arts degree was awarded at the May 30, 1964, commencement.

The first junior class had hardly begun classes when the faculty began preparation for the first of five accreditation applications. The excellent academic planning of the curriculum followed by the careful application of the organizational guidelines produced a series of accreditation successes that evoked much praise and admiration by the academic community. First it was preliminary North Central accreditation in 1963. In 1964, it was approval by the State Board of Education in February, followed by the May accreditation of Concordia's liberal arts curriculum by the University of Minnesota.

After a two-year hiatus, the accreditation processes resumed. On April 6, 1967, the bachelor of arts program received full accreditation by the North Central Association. In October 1968, a six-member team representing the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education made the most comprehensive, in-depth appraisal of Concordia's teacher education program to date. The evaluators were pleased with their observations, and full NCATE accreditation was granted in May 1969. The approval was effective retroactive to September 1, 1968.

Whenever campus thoughts wearied of accreditation procedures, they were directed to the continuing building projects under way. First was the construction of the largest residence hall on campus. On February 4, 1964, Wollaeger Hall was dedicated as a residence for 100 men. The first floor is now the present home of the Hand-In-Hand Child Care Center. Six months later, excavation began for the new science building. On September 26, 1965, the Arndt Science Hall was dedicated. The second floor houses the school's Overn Museum.

After the 1965 synodical convention in Detroit had approved the admission of men into the senior college division, Concordia needed additional student housing to accommodate the growing number of students. To supplement the previously acquired apartment buildings off campus, the college purchased the Dobberfuhl and Berger complexes. By 1967, Concordia had six off-campus buildings to help meet the need for single and married student housing.

In 1967, Concordia High School began its departure from the campus. The merger with the St. Paul Lutheran High School was
completed in four years under the administrative leadership of Concordia. Professor Herbert Treichel was the principal during the last year of the synodical high school in 1971. Accrediting agencies had been recommending the complete separation of the high school and college departments ever since college expansion was anticipated. The high school department had provided a superior college preparatory program for the professions, especially those vocations in church work. However, the additional classroom and residence hall space was a boon to the growth and expansion of the B.A. program.

Concordia introduced the Metropolitan Teacher Education Program Selection (M-TEPS) in 1968. This was a project to enroll minority students from the Twin Cities and surrounding communities who would provide an on-going supply of minority elementary teachers for public education in the seven county metropolitan area. The program was later expanded to a minority education program to include non-education majors. This change was especially beneficial to students when a teacher surplus discouraged their continuation as elementary education majors.

The continued growth of Concordia required additional space for academic offices and financial services. The new building planned to meet these needs was the last facility dedicated during the Poehler presidency. The new administration building was dedicated on June 3, 1970, just weeks before the retirement of President Poehler, who had reached the compulsory retirement age for college presidents of sixty-five. The Board of Control later named the building the William A. Poehler Memorial Administration Building in 1973.

Concordia's fourth president was Associate Professor Harvey Stegemeoeller of the Concordia Senior College faculty in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He was installed at the opening service of the seventy-ninth academic year on September 12, 1971. The first academic inauguration of a Concordia president was held one month later with an excellent representation from college and universities of the upper midwest. Governor Wendell Anderson of Minnesota was the inaugural speaker.

The two major construction projects completed during the Stegemeoeller presidency were the Buetow Memorial Music Center and the Student Union. Securing the necessary funds for these two build-
ings was a major challenge because there were no synodical funds available. The Music Center was finished with contributions from neighboring districts of the Missouri Synod and many individual donors. The Student Union was built with financing through a subsidized Housing and Urban Development loan. The Music Center was dedicated in October 1972, and the Student Union was officially opened three months later in January 1973.

With the establishment of a development office and an endowment fund, Concordia seemed on the verge of breaking out of its restricted provincial mold. However, the theological and political struggle in the Missouri Synod became a disruptive force on campus. Following the 1975 synodical convention in Anaheim, California, President Stegemoeller and the Board of Control disagreed on the nature of legitimate dissent as permitted in the Synod's constitution. The impasse over the implementation of resolutions 3-05 and 3-06 of Anaheim resulted in President Stegemoeller's resignation from his office. One later consequence of the President's resignation was similar action taken by six faculty members in 1976.

On July 23, 1976, the Board of Electors chose the Reverend Gerhardt W. Hyatt as Concordia's fifth president. He had been a consultant to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation since his retirement as Chief of Chaplains, Department of the Army, in 1975. He was installed as president on September 12, 1976.

President Hyatt's major contribution to Concordia was probably his stringent program of fiscal responsibility and resource management. Some of his success in financial development led to the Synod's requesting him to direct the Forward In Remembrance fund drive in 1979. President Hyatt's untiring efforts helped the Synod far exceed its goal of forty million dollars for the campaign.

After being elected second vice president of the Synod in 1983, President Hyatt was asked to become Assistant to the President of the Synod. He was granted a peaceful release from his presidential call on September 6, 1983, and began his new position in St. Louis on October 1, 1983.

During his presidency, Dr. Hyatt had supervised the completion of the third floor of the Poehler Administration Building, the beginning of the Hand-In-Hand Child Care Center in Wollaeger Hall, the accreditation renewal of all academic programs, and saw the
beginnings of the new residence complex that would later bear his name.

The 1983–84 academic year under the leadership of Acting President Milton L. Rudnick witnessed three major events.

The beginning of Concordia's Southeast Asian Student Program was a significant milestone in beginning increased cultural diversity on the campus. The large concentration of Southeast Asian refugees were looking for educational opportunities to help them become productive individuals in their new homeland. Concordia's unique program helped many refugee families bridge the cultural gaps they faced.

A second landmark event was the establishment of the Oswald Hoffmann School of Christian Outreach. Named after the alumnus and former International Lutheran Hour speaker, the OHSCO program helps prepare students to serve in special evangelistic ministries.

The third major event was the completion of the new residence hall with five separate units. The new structure was dedicated on October 7, 1984, and named Hyatt Village. Since synodical funds for Hyatt did not materialize, Concordia funded this building with a loan from the Lutheran Church Extension Fund.

The sixth president of Concordia College was selected on June 1, 1984. The Reverend Alan Harre of Concordia Teachers College in Seward, Nebraska, was installed during the opening service of Concordia's 92nd year on September 9, 1984. After a series of monthly inaugural events, Concordia held an Inaugural Convocation for President Harre on April 15, 1985. The inaugural address was given by Mayor George Latimer of St. Paul.

The 1984-85 year witnessed the major renovation of the Buen­ger Memorial Library. The project included a newly furnished computer room and a system of electronic exit checking. Another significant development was the beginning of the School of Adult Learning. This division offered a degree completion program for students with the equivalent of two years of college work completed at another accredited college. This specially designed program for working adults has been highly successful.

During the 1987–88 year, all academic programs were reaccredited by three separate agencies.

President Alan Harre was granted a peaceful release from his
duties at Concordia on May 16, 1988, to accept the presidency of Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana. The terminal date of his presidency was July 11, 1988.

The primary campus project undertaken during the 1988–89 year was an extensive renovation of the Arndt Science Hall. The unfinished portion of the second floor was completed and the Overn Museum was given a more substantial home.

On February 17, 1989, the Board of Electors selected Dr. John F. Johnson, a professor of systematic theology and dean of instruction at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, to become Concordia's seventh president. He accepted the presidential call and began his duties on July 1, 1989. He was installed during the opening service on September 10, 1989.

The academic inauguration of President John F. Johnson took place on October 22, 1989. The inaugural address was given by General John W. Vessey, retired chair, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a member of the Board for Mission Services of the Missouri Synod.

During his sixteen-month presidency, Dr. Johnson helped establish the goals and priorities for the Building on Commitment campaign for Concordia's Centennial. Concordia became a full member of the Minnesota Private College Council Fund and is now eligible to share in corporate contributions to this fund. In April 1990, the Board approved a graduate program leading to a master of arts in education.

In July 1990, President Johnson received a call to become the president of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. With the challenge to help ministerial education meet the needs of pastors in the next century, he accepted the presidency of Concordia Seminary and received his release from the Board of Regents on September 27, 1990. President Johnson's presidential responsibilities ended on November 16, 1990.

After the shortest presidential vacancy in modern Concordia history, Dr. Robert R. Holst, professor of theology at Christ College in Irvine, California, was chosen as Concordia's eighth president on February 8, 1991. He accepted the call and assumed his presidential office on June 1, 1991, after completing the spring term as a visiting professor at Luther Seminary in Seoul, South Korea.

The installation of Concordia's eighth president, and the president of the centennial anniversary, took place at the opening service
for the 99th academic year on September 12, 1991.

Dr. Robert R. Holst began his presidency and the new school year pledging Concordia's continuation of its programs of quality education. However, the population in the St. Paul community is a constant reminder of the broader need for increased global and multicultural education. One road to human survival in a more peaceful world is through sharing knowledge and understanding of other cultures of the world. But in addition, Concordia will continue to share its Christian heritage in the next century as it has during its first century. Ultimately, universal brotherhood and peace among nations and cultures is best achieved by the love of God in Christ Jesus, which is the most perfect solution to problems in our world.

Concordia College enters its second century poised to continue its service to church and community as God wills and blesses.