

PCF - History of the Affiliation of the Lutherans

As you will have elsewhere in this book, the first meeting of the *Pinawa Church Committee* was held in Pinawa on 6 October 1963. The minutes of this meeting, duly recorded by Jock Guthrie, showed 26 residents in attendance, including Mr and Mrs P E Spencer of a non-identified Lutheran denomination. At this meeting, the *Pinawa Church Committee* morphed into the *Pinawa Committee for Christian Worship* that selected as name for the congregation the *Pinawa Christian Fellowship* (PCF). This committee was given the responsibility of organizing fellowship activities and liaison with the supporting denominations: Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Mennonite, Presbyterian and United Church. This six-member committee held a meeting in Winnipeg later that October with representatives of these six denominations, including Rev. W. K. Rath from the Canadian Synod of the American Lutheran Church. The denominational distribution in Pinawa at that time was seen as 30% each Anglican and United Church, 10% Roman Catholic and the remainder consisting of "Mennonites, Baptists, Lutherans and Presbyterians". For the first two years, the Anglican and United denominations provided a minister per month to lead the worship services, while the other four denominations provided a minister on a cyclic basis. Lutheran pastors who participated in this "pulpit supply" included Pastors W. K. Rath, and R Jacob.

Although the vision of the founding members of the PCF was to have non-Roman Catholics in Pinawa worship as a single congregation, comments expressed as early as 1964 showed some concerns. At a meeting held with denominational representatives in Winnipeg on 1 October 1964 to discuss the proposed constitution of the PCF, Pastor Wilfred Rath mentioned that he had discussed it with the President of the region's Lutheran Synod who had only "minor comments about this constitution but felt that they could be solved 'with very little difficulty'." The main problem appeared to deal with "the Sacrament" [Holy Communion]. A suggestion was made that the problem could be solved the same way as in the Canadian Armed Forces. This suggestion caused some concern with the Mennonite representatives who wanted to exclude any link between their pacifist conviction and the Armed Forces. It is important to note the view of the Lutheran tradition on the nature of the presence of Christ in Holy Communion.

It should also be noted that the Anglican Bishop Hives expressed the view that PCF would be a temporary organization in Pinawa and that, as the town would grow, individual denominations would withdraw and start their own congregation. Dr Abe Petkau also felt that the time would come when the PCF organized on "the present basis" would not adequately serve all its members. He hoped that, if a denomination were to break away from the PCF, the PCF would give it its blessing.

At a second meeting with denominational representatives in Winnipeg on 5 November 1964, after the PCF had adopted its constitution, Pastor Rath stated that the rules and regulations for membership in Lutheran churches was similar to that in Anglican churches but that there was "difficulty with regard to the constitution." He presented a counterproposal in a letter to Jock Guthrie that, regrettably, appears to have been lost. The notes from this meeting also state that

"[Pastor Rath] was then asked if there would be any problem in having the Lutheran members attend the PCF for services, if there were no nearby Lutheran churches. Rath said the Lutheran Church would encourage its members to attend the PCF services rather than not go to church, but as soon as the congregation was large enough, they would have their own services. He also stated that it was not their desire to make Lutherans of members of other denominations '

L & B. The "Visitor Information" for both 1965 and 1966 lists Mrs Bud Bjornson (Sylvia Bjornson) as the Lutheran denominational representative. However, the Visitor Information for 1967 lists the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada as being "in friendly association" with the PCF and mentions no Lutheran denominational representative. It is also interesting to note that, at some time, a decision was made to pay Pastor Bowen from Lac du Bonnet \$2 per week for travel to instruct Lutheran children. The minutes of the second annual meeting of PCF mention that

"Mrs Bjornson wanted to know what is to be done for those who do not agree with Sunday School teaching literature H A Allen suggested this be given serious study because 'should not teach anything they don't believe'."

The choice of instructional material for the youth of the PCF appears to have been contentious, as the Minutes of the 47th meeting of the General Committee indicate. Sylvia Bjornson moved that "the Anglican material be retained in a reference library and not returned." and "that the Concordia Lutheran material be used for the Junior High, preteen, junior, primary, kindergarten and nursery department." This motion was seconded by H Allen and adopted after "another of the committee's characteristically animated and none-the-less lengthy, discussions.,

By 1966, Lutheran contingent of the PCF had grown substantially and numbered close to 45 adherents. For a number of reasons, including the desire to educate the Lutheran youth in the Lutheran tradition, including a confirmation program based on Luther's Small Catechism, this group felt compelled to venture out on its own. The Pinawa Lutheran Church began as a mission outreach from the Evangelical Church of Canada and was officially organized on April 12, 1968, some four and a half years after the first PCF worship service in Pinawa. Records of the Pinawa Lutheran Church show that the congregation consisted of 33 households at that time, giving it a critical mass. This fact was apparently recognized by AECL in that it allowed the Pinawa Lutheran congregation to use one of its homes for a manse. Like all congregations in Pinawa, it held its worship services in a school auditorium. in this case, that of W B Lewis School.

With three congregations worshipping in Pinawa in the late 1960s, each with its own venue, there was relatively little interaction: each congregation had its own Sunday School, its own catechism or confirmation program, and its own ministerial supply. It is probably not too far from the truth that both the PLC and the Pinawa Lutheran congregations were too occupied by

providing their members with spiritual care and were self-sufficient to devote much time and effort on joint ventures. A decision by the Lutheran congregation in the early 1990 to embark on a building program caused a marked change in the dynamics of the Christian community in Pinawa. The construction of the first church building in Pinawa was completed in 1992 December, soon followed by the Alliance Church and, some years later, by the Roman Catholic Church. Around 1996, Pastor Barry Bence, who was then serving the joint Pinawa - Lac du Bonnet Lutheran Parish and Rev Rob Murray started to discuss ways to cooperate by holding an occasional joint worship service. This initial step grew over time by holding a joint service during Advent and a "Carol and Lessons" service on the Sunday after Christmas, a joint Good Friday service and joint summer worship services. Initially, summer worship services alternated between F W Gilbert School and Pinawa Lutheran Church but, over time, holding all services at the Lutheran Church made more sense in that it avoided having to ship hymnals back and forth and vacating the F W Gilbert School allowed the Whiteshell School Division staff to perform required annual cleaning and maintenance in its building.

In the late 1990s, there were some preliminary discussions between PCF and Pinawa Lutheran to explore options for PCF to use the Lutheran church building for its worship services. However, the sanctuary of the Lutheran church proved to be too small to accommodate the much larger PCF congregation and storage facilities at the Lutheran church were inadequate. Currently, the two congregations cooperate in joint Vacation Bible School and Sunday School programs and in joint worship services during the summer.