



NEWS

FROM **WATERLOO LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY**

WATERLOO UNIVERSITY COLLEGE - WATERLOO LUTHERAN SEMINARY

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Rural Church..1

RURAL CHURCH CONSOLIDATION

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Rural churches, built to suit the needs of the horse-and-buggy era in Ontario, should be scrapped in favor of consolidated churches serving larger areas. Rev. Dr. W. A. Young, director of student affairs at the University of Guelph, told students of the seminary of Waterloo Lutheran University that rivalry between small rural churches is wasting money and man-power.

"The church must get with it, here as elsewhere," Dr. Young said. "Small rural one-room schools have been closed and larger consolidated units built. The same sort of solution is needed if the rural church is to serve its people effectively." He added that rural churches, along with the corner village store, is struggling for existence. Conditions have changed radically in the past 20 years and will continue to change.

In the past 20 years, he told the seminarians, Canadian farms have decreased from 680,000 to 480,000 and the number of farmers has dipped from 1,500,000 to 645,000. In Ontario, 50 per cent of its people were rural dwellers half a century ago. The figure today is eight per cent.

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"One-third of Ontario farmers now are only part-time farmers," he said. "They work in factories to help make enough money since they are facing a real cost-price squeeze. While the farm income has gone up 10 per cent in the past 20 years, the cost of operation has gone up by 20 per cent."

Dr. Young said arrival of many immigrant farm families has caused problems in some areas. Many immigrants don't understand local traditions. He felt the church had a real role to play in helping such people adapt to their new surroundings. The church could also assist older Canadians in forming their attitudes toward newcomers.