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100 Years



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Celebrating the Centennial Anniversary
of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

MAY-JUNE 2018



The “Why” Behind 100 Years

by **REV. JOHN A. MOLDSTAD**, President
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD, Mankato, Minn.

Dear Members and Friends of our ELS:

One hundred years ago in June, an organizational meeting of what would become today’s Evangelical Lutheran Synod gathered at Lime Creek Lutheran Church, northeast of Lake Mills, Iowa. Relatively speaking, the group was small. To an outside observer, the undertaking would not have seemed promising. “Why would people come out of a large church with hundreds of thousands of members and go through all the necessary hoops to make a new start?” Friends and relatives staying with the big synod considered it foolish. Wasn’t there too much to forfeit?

The fathers who structured the ELS endured ridicule and derision. Even some present at Lime Creek might have wondered, “Where’s all this going?” Friends from the past no longer would be so friendly. Church families would be split. Didn’t the spirit of the times trend toward compromise for the sake of unity? In the general thrust for Americanization of religious culture, could the settling of past doctrinal controversies really be considered so crucial?... We can all agree that the weight of societal pressures can be unrelenting!

Rightfully, the inception of the synod is known also as the “reorganization” of the old Norwegian Synod (1953). Those who still remained in the large synod and entered the merger (NLCA of 1917) hurled their objections at the thirteen pastors, particularly over the name originally chosen: Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church. They insisted that only the large body with its synod-owned properties was entitled to use the “Norwegian Synod” label.

Writing almost a decade later, the Rev. Christian Anderson fittingly addressed this unfounded objection. In his 1927 presidential address to the reorganized synod, he observed: “But the essential things in a Christian church body are really not its outward organization, its educational or charitable institutions, or its buildings of wood and stone. Much rather must it be its confession of faith, the principles which are followed in doctrine and practice, and the spirit in which it works and builds. In these respects we claim to be the logical heirs of the old Norwegian Synod” (translation by J. H. Larson).

Here we have the answer to the Why question. It was a matter of doctrine. It was a matter of staying with the true confession of faith, which, by God’s grace, was the very foundation of the old Norwegian Synod under leaders such as Revs. H. A. Preus, J. A. Ottensen, and U.V. Koren. The *reason* for organizing, the *reason* for sacrificing friendships, the *reason* for stomaching the ridicule, the *reason* for investing their own precious time and limited financial resources went much deeper than a love for synodical heritage. It involved the heritage of **God’s Word**. It meant seeing the overriding need to stress God’s grace alone in every aspect of a sinner’s salvation. It meant abiding strictly with what Scripture teaches, as expounded also in the Lutheran Confessions, without reliance on human reason or questionable comments by certain earlier church fathers.

For a minority of pastors and the men and women of their parishes who gathered at Lime Creek, a biblical issue resurfaced that imperiled sound teaching and the consolation of souls. In the late 1800s, a doctrinal controversy had shaken the Norwegian Synod. It centered on the doctrine of election or predestination, but also impacted other teachings, such as conversion and justification.

The Bible teaches clearly that only God’s grace in Christ and nothing within any of us sinners contributes toward influencing God to choose us for salvation (Ephesians 1:4-6; John 15:16). Yet some theologians held to the position that God elected certain ones for salvation “in view of faith” (*intuitu fidei*); that is, they taught that God from eternity foresaw a persevering quality of faith in people as the reason he chose them to have eternal salvation. A false understanding of a phrase in Romans 8:29 (“...those whom he foreknew”) was used to imply that more than God’s grace **alone** was behind his eternal election decree.

But the precise reason God has given us the teaching of election is that we might be *fully certain* of our salvation since nothing – either from eternity or in time – depends on the disposition of our own sinful hearts, but *only* on God’s freely choosing us purely by his mercy. As we say in our ELS Catechism, “God has chosen me to be saved, not because of anything in me, but only because of His grace and mercy in Christ” (2001 edition, #230). By faith in our Savior Jesus Christ, God wants us to know without a doubt that we are of the elect and will enjoy life eternal with Him.

It is terribly unfortunate that the error, which had crept into the old Norwegian Synod and was presumed dealt with by the exodus of a third of the church body in 1887, popped up again in 1910 and the years following. A 1912 document known as *Opgjør* (“Settlement”) had been prepared in an attempt to bring together all sides on the old election debate. The purpose of this was the formation of one large church among all Norwegian Lutherans. This came to fruition in 1917 under the name of “Norwegian Lutheran Church of America.”

The pastors who formed today’s ELS correctly saw how the election error from the 1880s had not been put to rest. Instead, the compromising document placed both views of predestination on the same plane without any reservation: on the one hand, election by grace alone; on the other, election “in view of faith.” The ambiguous document also spoke of a “feeling of responsibility” by natural man (i.e., man who is sinful from birth and therefore opposed to God) to accept grace for salvation. Here we note how also the teaching of conversion was being perverted. We sinners cannot by our own reason or strength or “feeling of responsibility” bring ourselves to faith in Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can do this as he works in our hearts through His Means of Grace (cf. the Third Article of the Apostle’s Creed).

Anybody not willing to examine carefully the issue(s) involved would have questioned the sanity of the ELS originators at Lime Creek. At the time of the merger in 1917, the large Norwegian Synod had 986 congregations with 150,550 souls served by 351 pastors. The reorganized minority, while gaining a number of pastors and congregations in the years following, counted in the year of 1920 a total of 30 pastors and 20 congregations. But it is not the numbers that tell the story. Profound love for the truth of God’s holy Word does. And sincere concern for the souls under that Word does.

The Why question was forcefully answered at that minority meeting near the Iowa-Minnesota border. The first issue of *Luthersk Tidende*, dated a year earlier (July 16, 1917), contained this simple announcement, shared here with emphasis: “Pastors and member congregations *who desire to continue in the old doctrine and practice of the Norwegian Synod* will, God willing, hold their annual meeting in the Lime Creek Congregation, Pastor Henry Ingebritson’s charge, June 14 [1918] and following days.”

Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word.

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Pastor, I have two questions:

1 *Why do we call ourselves “Evangelical Lutheran?”*

2 *What does it mean to be a “Synod?”*

by **REV. CHARLES KEELER**, Contributing Editor
RESURRECTION LUTHERAN CHURCH, Winter Haven, Fla.

ANSWERS:

The name “**Evangelical Lutheran Synod**” was chosen in 1957 after some deliberation. Prior to that, we were known as “The Norwegian Synod of the American Lutheran Church” or the “little Norwegian Synod.” The committee working on the name change decided the following four characteristics would be desirable in the name of our church body:

1. It should be a distinctive name that has historical significance.
2. The name should be short.
3. Since churches, societies, and corporations today tend to be identified by abbreviations, the natural abbreviation must be satisfactory.
4. The name should be broad enough so that it would not need to be changed in the foreseeable future (E.L.S. Synod Report 1955, pages 85-86).

The committee proposed this resolution: “Resolved, that the Synod consider the name Evangelical Lutheran Synod of America (ELSA) as the name that would most adequately serve our church and also retain its historical and confessional significance.” In 1957, we adopted the name Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

This name adequately serves our church. “Evangelical” is the name by which the Church of the Lutheran Reformation was known in Germany. Followers of the Reformation did not call themselves Lutherans. Enemies of the Reformation applied the name as an insult. Dr. Luther opposed calling the church after himself. He said, “I ask that my name be left silent and people not call themselves Lutheran, but rather Christians. Who is Luther? The doctrine is not mine. I have been crucified for no one. St. Paul in I Cor. 3:4-5 would not suffer that the Christians should call themselves of Paul or of Peter, but Christian. How should I, a poor stinking bag of worms, become so that the children of Christ are named with my unholy name?”

“Evangelical” has historic connections to the true Church of the Reformation. It means “of the Gospel” and all that pertains to the Gospel. It is from Greek, the language in which the New Testament was written. St. Paul’s words should guide everything Christian and especially Lutheran: *For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified* (I Corinthians 2:2).

The Gospel, the good news, is this: God sent His only begotten Son into this world to redeem or rescue all sinners from sin, death, and damnation. Jesus accomplished the rescue by providing for us His life of holiness as if we had lived it. He paid our debt by His “innocent suffering and death.” He paid in full our debt of sin so that His Father declared a world of sinners justified. The resurrection affirms our justification. Good news to troubled hearts, this is the message of all we teach and confess.

Many Protestant Christians are also known as Evangelicals even though they do not completely or adequately teach the truths of the Lutheran Reformation. To call ourselves Lutheran lets the world know we teach, believe, and confess that the Bible is truly God’s inerrant and infallible Word and that the Lutheran Confessions are an accurate presentation of what the Scriptures teach. We are the Church of the Lutheran Reformation.

The word “**Synod**” has several meanings. We understand it to be from Greek, meaning “walking together.” Before the name change in 1957, we were known as the “Synode.” The committee proposed its retention because the word “‘Synode’ was used alone quite extensively to designate that group of Lutherans who wanted to remain faithful to the Lutheran Confessions” (E.L.S. Synod Report 1955, page 85-86). We are a group of Christians and congregations who walk together teaching and confessing the same things – the great truths of the Bible and the ancient church restored in the Lutheran Reformation.

Pivotal Points & Pivotal Persons

Critical Junctures in the 100 Years and Those God Gave to Navigate Them

1920

1930

1940

1950

1960

1918

Merger of Norwegian Lutheran Church Bodies

Bjug Harstad



The first pivotal moment occurred in 1918. One year earlier, a **merger of Norwegian Lutheran church bodies** occurred. A remnant of the Norwegian Synod refused to

enter into this new synod because it was based on the false teaching that an individual can somehow cooperate with God in bringing about their own conversion. This is not a small matter or a fine point in doctrine, but a question of the central Biblical teaching of justification by grace alone.

At that time, God used **Bjug Harstad** as the pivotal person to rally a minority of the old Synod. He had served as a district president of the Norwegian Synod and helped establish Pacific Lutheran Academy in Parkland, Washington. He became the spokesman for the minority and, along with other men, such as pastors **C. N. Peterson** and **J. E. Thoen**, was instrumental in planning the convention that gathered under the oak trees at Lime Creek Lutheran Church in northern Iowa in June 1918. Here the synod was reorganized. As the first president of the newly formed church body, Harstad encouraged the small gathering with the word of the prophet Jeremiah, *“And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls”* (6:16).

1927

Purchase of Bethany Lutheran College

S. C. Ylvisaker



A second pivotal moment in the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod occurred nearly ten years later. If the young synod was to endure, it needed an identity. That physical identity came with the 1927 purchase of **Bethany Lutheran College** in Mankato, Minnesota. **Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker** was pivotal in the purchase and development of the college. As a seminary graduate, he had earned a doctorate in Semitics from the University of Leipzig, Germany, and was experienced both as a college professor and also a parish pastor. Serving as the college’s president from 1930-50, he was a theologian, educator, and leader who expended considerable energy in promoting the cause of “Our Bethany.” He was the chief administrator who was responsible for securing gifted faculty members, raising money, and preaching daily in chapel. In speaking of the importance of Bethany Lutheran College, President Ylvisaker reminded the synod, “It is well that our synod consider that one single school year means a year of blessing to those who attend, a year of opportunity to them and to our synod, a year even of harvest where the church is given to see the fruit of its labors.... who can trace the influence which is brought through them to parents, friends, and congregations wherever their future activity may lie?”

1946

Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary Established

Norman A. Madson, Sr.



Having established a college, the next significant event for the synod was to establish a theological seminary. For the first twenty-eight years of its existence, the synod depended on sister synods for the training of pastors. But the synod had a unique background and difficulties which necessitated the need for its own school with teachers who understood the culture of the synod. It also was considered vital that pastors be trained by those who had lived through a large part of the history of the synod. One of those men was **Norman A. Madson, Sr.**, who had joined the synod shortly after its reorganization. In 1946, he was called by the synod to serve as the first Dean of the Theological Seminary at Bethany Lutheran College. As such, he was responsible for the administration of the seminary and the development of the seminary curriculum.

Shortly before the Norwegian Synod was reorganized in 1918, someone said, “The big men have left us, those who were considered our leaders, the learned men. We are only small men left...” Yet God does not leave His people without hope. Shortly after the reorganization, it was also said, “Perhaps He has reserved His best men for days when a heavy reinforcement will be needed.” God did just that at pivotal points in the history of the reorganized Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

1963

Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference Withdrawal

Milton E. Tweit



After reorganization, the synod immediately found fellowship among the synods comprising the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference. At that time, the conference was the largest grouping of Lutherans in North America. However, fissures began to form within the conference. The differences centered especially on the doctrines of church fellowship and verbal inspiration. In 1963, the ELS withdrew its membership from the Synodical Conference, already having suspended fellowship with the Missouri Synod eight years earlier. During the intervening years of heartache and sorrow, the Rev. **Milton E. Tweit** served as president. As the synod struggled with the question of whether to leave the Synodical Conference, his firm hand steadied God’s people as several pastors and congregations withdrew their membership. Pastor Tweit said, “We must seek a God-pleasing settlement of the strife which has overtaken us... so that we can with one mind, faith and zeal go about doing the work which our gracious Lord assigns to us — the work of bearing witness to Him by our Christian missions, Christian education, Christian charity and the like.”

1968

Independent Mission Work Begun

George Orvick



The next pivotal moment in the synod’s history occurred in 1968 when the ELS began independent mission work. During twenty-eight of the following years, the Rev. **George Orvick** served as the president of the synod. During these years, mission work expanded, and eventually thirteen missionaries and their families labored in Peru. In 1992, work began in Chile, and over the years, nine missionary families labored there. Thoughts of Faith, commissioned its first missionaries to eastern Europe in 1990. Since then, the synod’s mission field also has included work in India and South Korea.

1993

CELC Established

George Orvick

Another key event transpired in 1993. **George Orvick** was the pivotal person who said, “It is important for our ELS to demonstrate our support for small groups around the world who are struggling to uphold the truth. Such groups are found behind the iron curtain in East Germany, in Sweden and Norway, and in Australia. They need our prayers and encouragement just as we did when our synod was reorganized in 1918.” Together with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), the ELS continues a blessed fellowship with thirty-two church bodies throughout the world in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC), which meets triennially to encourage and strengthen one another.

God raised up the best men at pivotal points in the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. As we observe this centennial of the Lord’s work, we proclaim the wonders God has done and recall the words of George Orvick: “The oak trees still stand at Lime Creek. They are taller and sturdier. The synod lives today also, but it too has changed. It has become larger, stronger, adding proof to the Lord’s promise concerning His Word: ‘It shall not return unto me void.... It shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.’ The forces of nature may one day humble our oaks. But if it be our determination to ever remain faithful to God’s Word, our synod shall have a perennial youth and vigor, for are we not reinforced by Christ’s promise to the Church? ‘The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ May God bless those who have labored, whose labors have not been in vain, and may this blessing rest upon all those who shall in the future build Christ’s Kingdom.”

“AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY”

The Role of Bethany Lutheran College in the 100-year history of the ELS

by **REV. PROFESSOR ERLING TEIGEN**, Contributing Writer
BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE, Mankato, Minn.

In 1927, the Norwegian Synod (now the ELS) held its annual meeting at Lime Creek congregation near Lake Mills, Iowa. Ten years earlier, Lime Creek had been the site of the first meeting of the synod. The 1918 convention had been a momentous occasion for those former members of the old Norwegian Synod. After losing their church body and Luther College, they were now striking out on their own. In 1927, they were contemplating another risky venture. The purchase of a college would enable the synod to survive by training its own pastors, teachers, and laity.

In 1925, representatives of the failing Bethany Ladies' College in Mankato had visited the synod convention at Norseland. Their school had been established fifteen years before by an association of pastors and laymen from the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods, but it had not succeeded on as great a scale as the sponsors had hoped. By 1924, the enrollment had dropped to 24 students from a high of 136. Would the synod be interested in buying the school? But in 1925, the synod was not up for such a challenge.

In March 1926, a group of pastors and laymen of the synod organized the Bethany College Association in order to purchase the college. Very soon, pledges had reached the amount needed for the down payment of \$20,000. Valued at \$400,000 (5.7 million in 2018 dollars), the purchase price was to be \$60,000 (\$850,000 in 2018 dollars).

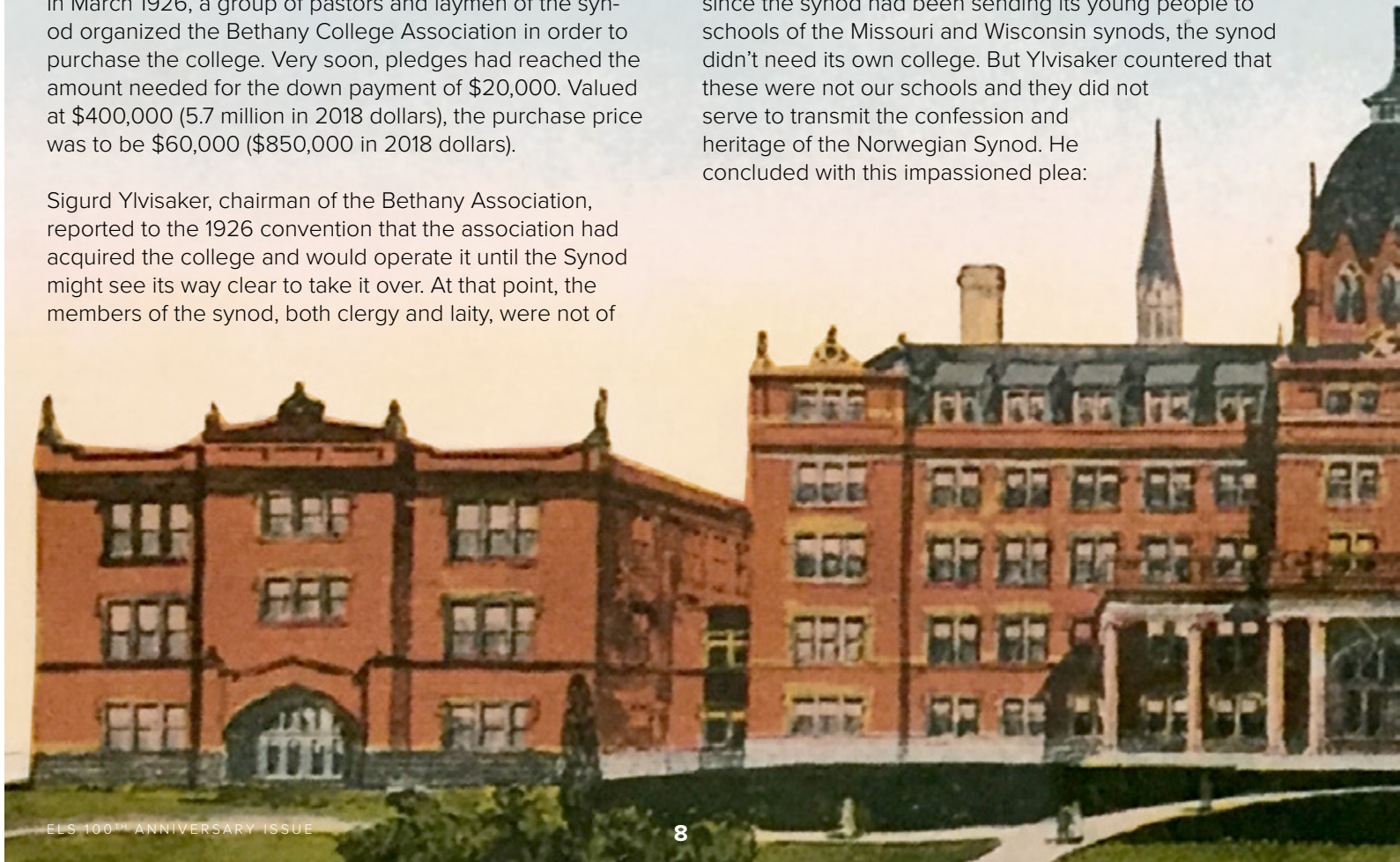
Sigurd Ylvisaker, chairman of the Bethany Association, reported to the 1926 convention that the association had acquired the college and would operate it until the Synod might see its way clear to take it over. At that point, the members of the synod, both clergy and laity, were not of

one mind on the matter. However, the convention passed a resolution recognizing the Bethany Association and expressed “full confidence” in the association without a commitment to ownership.

As the 1927 convention approached, the association had resolved to offer the college to the synod. But to persuade their colleagues to accept the offer was a daunting task; the debate carried on in the mail and pastoral conferences was cordial and fraternal, but intense.

At the 1927 convention, synod president Christian Anderson had referred to the college in his report, suggesting that the meeting should give serious consideration to the association's offer. The matter was finally taken up on Friday, June 19, when the convention heard the association's proposal that “We respectfully ask that this convention consider this matter and take over the ownership and control of Bethany Lutheran College, in order that it may serve the Church as it could and should.”

Dr. Ylvisaker spoke on behalf of the association. “Should the Norwegian Synod have its own school? This is an absolute necessity if we will continue as a synod.” Some held that since the synod had been sending its young people to schools of the Missouri and Wisconsin synods, the synod didn't need its own college. But Ylvisaker countered that these were not our schools and they did not serve to transmit the confession and heritage of the Norwegian Synod. He concluded with this impassioned plea:



The Synod needs just such a school to gather itself around. Without its own school, the Synod simply cannot hope to continue as the Norwegian Synod.

On Saturday the matter was debated all day.

After further discussion, it was Pastor G. A. Gullixson's turn to speak. "I move we take over the school," he said. Since it was the end of the day, the session was adjourned until Monday, also following the Norwegian belief that decisions were best made when slept on or over coffee.

On Monday morning, the vote taken: thirty-three in favor and twenty-one opposed. A temporary Board of Regents was elected to work with the association in transferring the school to the synod. In 1928, the Norwegian Synod held its eleventh annual convention at Bethany.

With the college, the synod inherited the school's name and motto: Bethany—"One Thing Needful." When in 1911 students were invited to submit suggestions for the name of the school, Frieda Trost proposed the name Bethany, the home of Mary and Martha. A brochure for the young college explained: "It is the aim of Bethany Ladies' College to train true Marthas, who are ever ready to help and serve wherever their service may be needed, but who are at the same time true Marys, above all, mindful of the 'One Thing Needful.'" "One Thing Needful" fit perfectly with the motto appearing in the masthead of *Luthersk Tidende*, *Der staar Skrevet*, — "It is Written." The synod and its college spoke with one voice, pointing to the word of God with its proclamation of Jesus Christ and his atonement as the one thing necessary for salvation.

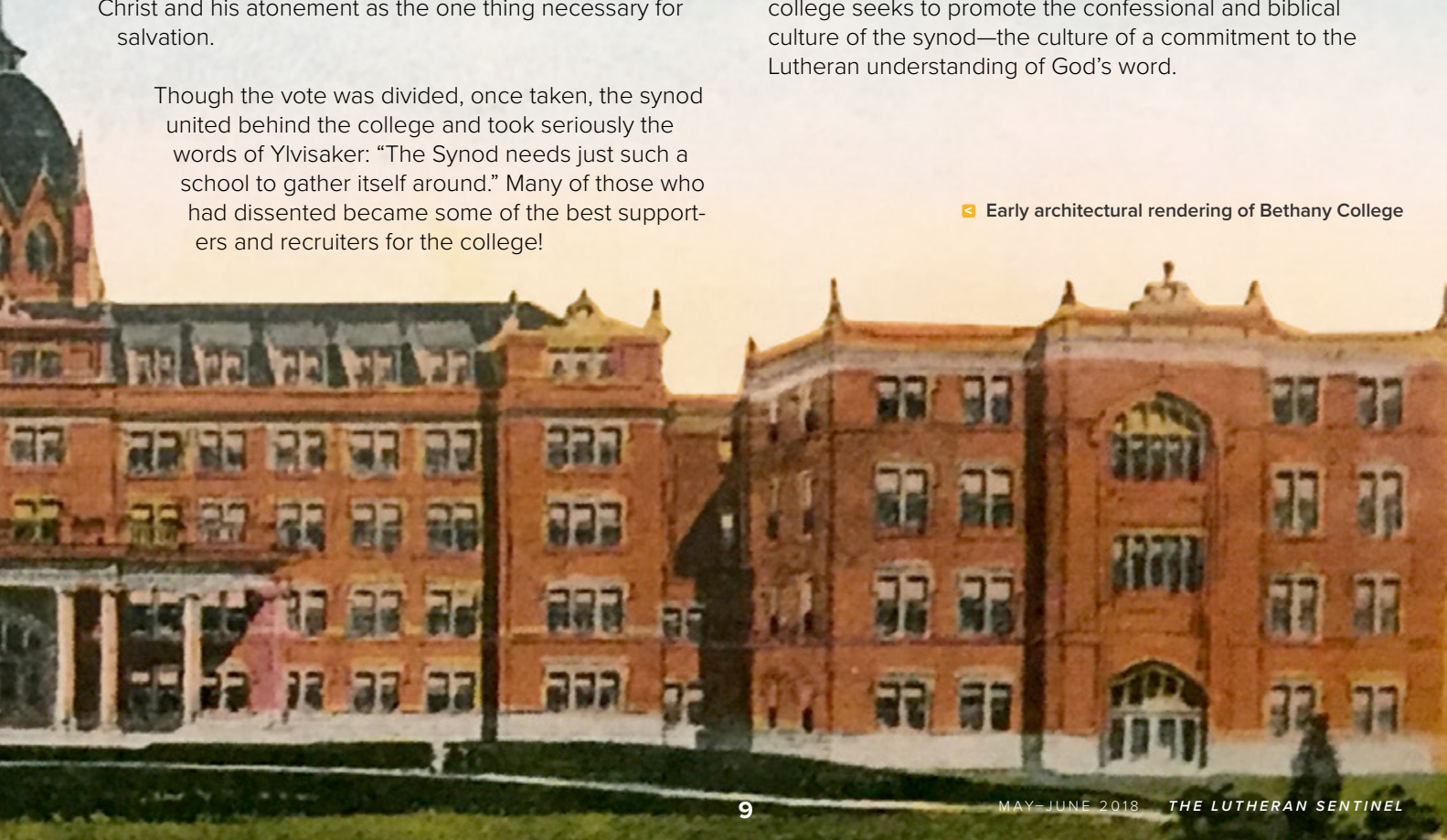
Though the vote was divided, once taken, the synod united behind the college and took seriously the words of Ylvisaker: "The Synod needs just such a school to gather itself around." Many of those who had dissented became some of the best supporters and recruiters for the college!

In order to serve the whole synod, the college immediately became co-educational. The faculty worked to get university accreditation for the high school and college, instituted a three-year teacher program for Christian day school teachers, and, in 1946, opened a seminary department to produce pastors for the congregations.

The college and the synod have lived through several crises together. The depression of the 1930s came close to making the synod's venture a short and disastrous one. World War II challenged the enrollment of the college, but after the war, returning servicemen swelled the enrollment. Over the years, the clientele of the college has been much larger than the little synod; it included those in the Synodical Conference who desired a Christian, liberal arts education, but came close to failing when the Conference was breaking up in the 1950s. Other financial and enrollment challenges in the last fifty years have threatened the college. But survive it has, and that survival can be attributed to God's merciful care alone.

Whether or not the synod would have survived to celebrate its centennial without Bethany, we cannot say. But it has played a central role in the life of the ELS. The college has helped provide the synod with a well-educated laity as well as pastors and teachers. "One Thing Needful" remains central. Daily chapel services promote worship faithful to the Lutheran confession and the preaching of the cross in word and sacrament. Ten percent of the minimum credits required for graduation are religion courses, where the study of the Bible and Lutheran teaching are the focus. And finally, the college seeks to promote the confessional and biblical culture of the synod—the culture of a commitment to the Lutheran understanding of God's word.

◀ Early architectural rendering of Bethany College



Preparing New Shepherds for Old Paths

The Establishment and Work of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

by **REV. GAYLIN R. SCHMELING**, President
BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, Mankato, Minn.

In this anniversary year of our synod, we consider the words of encouragement offered by the Rev. Bjug Harstad from Jeremiah at the organization of the synod: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16). Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary desires to remain in the old path in all its teachings where one can indeed find rest for the soul, true rest found in Christ our Savior. Our souls are never at rest until we are at rest in Him.

From its reorganization in 1918, the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (now the Evangelical Lutheran Synod) was without its own theological seminary for twenty-eight years. It depended on its sister synods for the seminary training of its pastors. First, students were sent to the seminaries of the Missouri Synod as had been done in the early history of the Norwegian Synod, and later also to the seminary of the Wisconsin Synod. During these early years, the hope of establishing its own seminary had been kept alive, but not until 1931 did the convention authorize its president to appoint a committee of three to prepare a plan.

Nevertheless, no real progress was made until the 1942 convention directed the Board of Regents of Bethany Lutheran College to take the necessary steps to make it possible for the synod’s ministerial candidates to have “their last year of training in our own school.” However, it was wartime—World War II—and the Board of Regents’ efforts to gain exemption from the draft for its ministerial candidates ran into difficulties because of Selective Service guidelines concerning new seminaries. Eventually a change in ruling by the Selective Service Administration removed the last remaining barrier.

In the summer of 1946, the synod convention resolved in the name of the Triune God to adopt fourteen resolutions relating to a new seminary, the first of which was: “To establish a full theological seminary course at Bethany Lutheran College, this course to begin in the fall of 1946.” On September 24, 1946, a dedicatory service officially opened Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

The first dean of the seminary was Rev. Norman A. Madson of Princeton, Minnesota. In 1957, Professor Milton Otto joined

the staff and was named dean of the seminary in 1968. He had been the pastor of the Saude-Jerico parish in northeastern Iowa and had served as president of synod.

The 1974 convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod resolved that the seminary presidency be separated from the college presidency. Rev. Theodore A. Aaberg was called as the first full-time president of the seminary in 1976. He had distinguished himself as a parish pastor and a theologian in the synod. At this time, the Regents created the office of dean of students to which Professor Juul Madson, a member of the staff since 1970, was appointed. During much of this period, Professor Rudolph Honsey taught the Old Testament classes in the seminary. President Aaberg tendered his resignation because of ill health in August of 1979 and passed away in January of 1980. Professor Glenn Reichwald served as acting president for the 1979-1980 school year. Dr. Wilhelm W. Petersen accepted the call of the Board of Regents to be the president of the seminary and began his work on August 1, 1980. He served the seminary as president until 1997 when the Rev. Gaylin Schmeling was called.


Throughout its history, a large number of men have attended Bethany Seminary to prepare for the pastoral ministry. The number of pastoral graduates in the past seventy-two years has been 233. Many international students have attended the institution and then have returned to their homelands as missionaries. Graduates of the seminary have served in Australia, Chile, Cornwall, Costa Rica, Czechia, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, and Ukraine. From 1961 to 1988, the Mequon Program at Bethany provided pre-seminary training for second-career students of the Wisconsin Synod.

The seminary was housed on the campus of Bethany Lutheran College for over thirty years. This was a blessing to the infant institution, yet the need for its own facilities became more and more evident. Therefore, a seminary building was erected on the property at 447 North Division Street and was dedicated on June 18, 1978. This building served the needs of the seminary until the present seminary building was constructed in 1996. This beautiful building overlooking the Minnesota Valley is a great benefit to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The Lord of the church continues to bless this school of the prophets.

The seminary has three full-time professors and a number of adjunct professors. The full-time professors are Dr. Michael Smith, Dr. Timothy Schmeling, and Pres. Gaylin Schmeling. Dr. Smith has recently accepted a call to Asia Lutheran Seminary in Hong Kong, and another New Testament professor will be called this spring. At present the seminary has an enrollment of thirteen.

The seminary today, as throughout its history, strives to train pastors who walk in the old paths, rightly dividing the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). The Law will be so preached that the most self-righteous individual is crushed by his sin. The



Seminary Classroom, 1977 

Gospel will be so preached that the most burdened sinner knows the comfort of forgiveness in Christ. The proper division of Law and Gospel is a hallmark of a Lutheran pastor. The seminary curriculum is firmly grounding the students in the inerrant Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions. Students are prepared to proclaim the same Gospel as the fathers in a neo-pagan world. The seminary desires that our students have a deep love for God's Word and a fervent love for lost souls, thus engaging others with Jesus as the Savior.

Concerning Dr. C.F.W. Walther, the founder of confessional Lutheranism in this country, it was said, "He is as orthodox as John Gerhard, but as fervent as a Pietist; as correct in form as a university or court preacher, and yet as popular as Luther himself" (Henry Eyster Jacobs, *A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States*, 5th ed. American Church History Series [New York: The Christian Literature Col, 1907], 403–404).

This is the model pastor that our seminary is striving to train so that another generation of Confessional Lutherans will be prepared to serve in the harvest.

As the seminary nears its seventy-fifth anniversary, its work is pictured in the Good Shepherd stained glass window in our chapel. The picture first of all shows that the center of all Christian preaching is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for our salvation. Through His life and death, He redeemed us from the terrible grasp of the old wolf, the devil. Secondly, the seminary window reminds our students each day that every pastor is to be a shepherd under the Good Shepherd, feeding the flock on the green pastures of Word and Sacrament. The Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep is calling for faithful shepherds.

Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary Building, built in 1996 



The ELS and its Place on the American Lutheran Landscape

by **REV. DAVID JAY WEBBER**, Contributing Writer
REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH, Scottsdale, Ariz.

A small number of pastors and congregations from the old Norwegian Synod declined to enter the 1917 merger of that synod with two other Norwegian-heritage church bodies because of the unbiblical compromise on the doctrines of conversion and election that this merger involved. These protesting pastors did not join an already existing Lutheran synod since they believed that they still had a unique mission among Norwegian Lutherans in America, and there were no orthodox Lutheran synods of Scandinavian heritage at that time. So they decided to reorganize the Norwegian Synod and, in this new synod, to perpetuate the historic doctrinal commitments, and the liturgical and hymnic tradition, of their former body.

In 1919, the year after this reorganization, the new synod was comprised of 14 churches. By 1929, that number had increased to 46. Most of those congregations had previously been affiliated with the old synod and had entered the 1917 merger – albeit with reservations. But before long, they and their pastors had reconsidered this decision. They came to the conviction that they could no longer remain in fellowship with error. They withdrew from the merger and saw the reorganized synod as a place of refuge where they could be united in fellowship with like-minded orthodox Lutherans while also feeling “at home” in a familiar ecclesiastical culture. And the reorganized synod, on its part, exercised loving patience in a spirit of fraternal evangelical encouragement toward those who were for a time struggling with these decisions or who were weak in their ability to immediately grasp the significance of these questions.

The reorganized synod was generally referred to as the “little” Norwegian Synod. In comparison to other Lutheran church bodies, it was indeed a small group without much influence in the larger world of American Lutheranism. But it played an important role among Norwegian Lutherans who wanted to remain faithful to God’s Word and to take a stand against compromise and error.

The “little” synod, while itself reflecting the culture of Norwegian Lutheranism, practiced fellowship with the ethnic Germans and Slovaks of the Synodical Conference (to which it belonged) and declined to practice fellowship with its fellow Norwegians in the merger church. This was an important testimony to the fact that, in matters of conscience, solidarity

with sound teaching is always more important than ethnic solidarity and that we must always remember Jesus’ warning that those who love “father or mother” more than him are not worthy of him (Matthew 10:37).

Within the Synodical Conference, the reorganized Norwegian Synod benefitted from the fraternal goodwill of its larger sister synods. The Missouri and Wisconsin Synods opened their educational institutions to Norwegians who wanted to study to be pastors and teachers. Norwegian Synod missionaries served in Missouri Synod mission fields. And the Norwegian Synod participated in the preparation of The Lutheran Hymnal of 1941, which was a Synodical Conference project.

Both before and after the 1917 merger, the leaders of the Missouri Synod in particular had been of great encouragement to the pastors who declined to enter that merger because of their convictions. It was, therefore, especially distressing to the Norwegians when, a generation later, they began to see a certain “drift” toward doctrinal compromise within the Missouri Synod that was sadly similar to what had occurred in the old Norwegian Synod. This concern came to a head in 1950 when the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church adopted a “Common Confession” that ostensibly settled the historic doctrinal differences that had existed between them, but was really a verbal papering-over of those differences that did not clearly express a real, Biblically-based agreement. The ALC was a German-heritage body that was in fellowship with the Norwegian merger church and that shared its doctrinal shortcomings. In 1960, the ALC and the merger church actually came together into a new church body that retained the “American Lutheran Church” name. But before that happened, in 1955, the “little” Norwegian Synod, with much regret, felt it necessary to suspend fellowship with the Missouri Synod. The Wisconsin Synod followed suit in 1961. The Missouri Synod had put itself on a trajectory toward fellowship with the ALC, which was formally declared in 1969. The Norwegian and Wisconsin Synods could not follow them down that path.

Several pastors and congregations within the Missouri Synod also objected to the new direction their church was heading. Their concerns were triggered not only by the ALC fellowship, but also by the use of the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation that had become entrenched at the Missouri Synod’s St. Louis seminary and by the increasing number of doctrinal errors and lax practices that were taking root in many sectors of the Missouri Synod as a result. Especially in the 1960s and 1970s, a fairly large number of congregations and pastors withdrew from the Missouri Synod. After a while, many of them found their way into the Evangelical Lutheran Synod – which was the new name adopted by the “little” Norwegian Synod in 1957. By this time, the ELS had become almost completely Anglicized, so any linguistic barriers for non-Norwegians that might have existed in the past were now gone. Just as had been the case in the 1920s, the ELS became a place of refuge for those who had made the difficult decision to withdraw from their previ-

ous church body and who wanted to align themselves with like-minded Confessional Lutherans. So, while the ELS was still a relatively small church body, it once again played an important role for fellow Lutherans who shared its doctrinal convictions and who now needed a new synodical home. Throughout its history, in fact, the ELS has often become a new home for conservative Lutherans from other liberalizing synods.

In the Missouri Synod, the heterodox professors in St. Louis were pressured to leave the seminary in 1974. Fellowship with the ALC was severed in 1981. The current leadership has publicly committed itself to the promotion of Confessional Lutheranism and to bringing about the internal reforms that would be necessary for the Missouri Synod to become once again a consistently orthodox church body. To be sure, a significant number of problems remain, so the ELS is not able to restore its previous fellowship with the Missouri Synod. But in the context of these positive developments, the ELS, in spite of its small size, did serve as a catalyst for a new dialogue among the synods that formerly belonged to the Synodical Conference. Informal meetings have accordingly been taking place between representatives of the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, and the ELS. Information is being shared so that there can be an accurate mutual understanding of where agreement does exist and

of where disagreements or misunderstandings still need to be addressed or clarified. And the ELS's representatives have an opportunity to bear witness to their convictions and to encourage the Missouri Synod's representatives in their stated desire to be advocates for Confessional Lutheranism within their church body.

In its relationships with the Wisconsin Synod and overseas sister churches, the ELS is also able to serve as a "leaven" of positive encouragement toward continued faithfulness in doctrine and practice. A large number of ELS congregations, before their entrance into the ELS, endured times of controversy and conflict in their former church bodies and were forced by circumstances and conscience to contend earnestly for the truth of God's Word. Because of this history, ELS pastors tend to have a heightened sensitivity to the dangers of doctrinal compromise, but they also remain committed to bringing the comfort of the pure gospel of salvation by God's grace to a lost world. Those who are a part of the ELS of today pray that the Lord of the church would always preserve them in these convictions – not only for the sake of their own salvation, but also so that the ELS can continue to exercise a positive influence on others, and set a positive example for others, for the sake of His kingdom.

Presidents of the Four Synods, 1961: J. Behnken (Missouri Synod), P. Rafaj (Slovak Synod), M. E. Tweit (ELS), O. Naumann (Wisconsin Synod) 



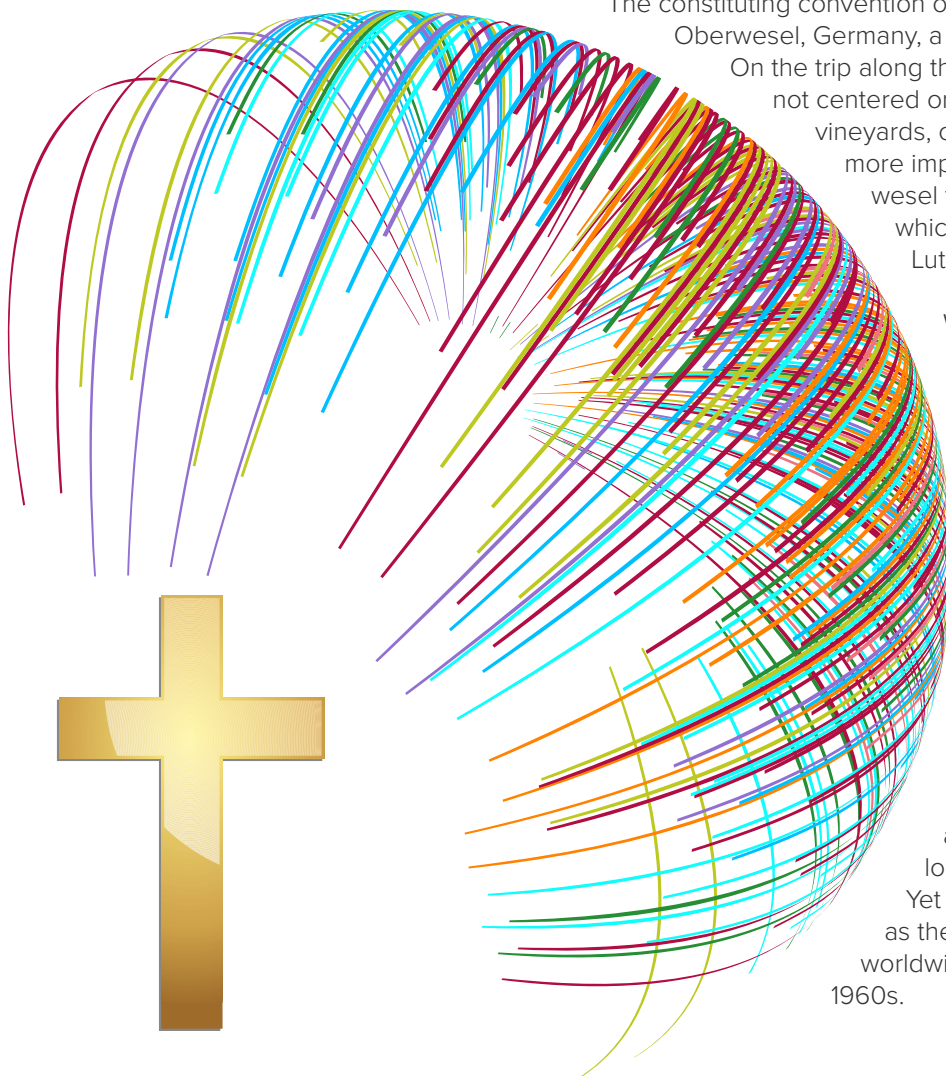
A Worldwide Confession

The Common Voice of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference

by **REV. GAYLIN R. SCHMELING**, President
BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, Mankato, Minn.

As we are all aware, last year we celebrated the five hundredth anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, and this year is the hundredth anniversary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In 1918 at Lime Creek, the Norwegian Synod was reorganized as The Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, which in 1958 was changed to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS). This year is also the twenty-fifth anniversary of our worldwide fellowship, the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC). Here we express fellowship with like-minded Christians from around the world.

The constituting convention of the CELC took place April 27–29, 1993, at Oberwesel, Germany, a beautiful site overlooking the Rhine River. On the trip along the Rhine to Oberwesel, thoughts were not centered on Heine's *Die Lorelei*, the castle ruins, the vineyards, or the beauty of the Rhine Valley, but on far more important things. We were travelling to Oberwesel to establish an international organization which would unite confessional and orthodox Lutherans throughout the world.



We in the ELS were only a small church body by human standards, a remnant of Norwegian mergers in 1917. In 1918, the synod men had hearts of oak in the tradition of the oaks of Koshkonong, establishing a reorganization. We were sarcastically called the plucked chicken, but the healthy chicken began to grow feathers. We experienced the devastation of the demise of the Synodical Conference and its aftermath in the 1950s and 1960s. We were gathering remnants of confessional congregations in various places in the Midwest and elsewhere in the States, but what could be done to reach out to confessional groups in other lands? There were many lonely Lutherans spread across the globe.

Yet there were men of vision in our midst, such as the Rev. Edgar Hoenecke, who called for a worldwide Lutheran fellowship already in the late 1960s.

Many people advocated such an international organization over the years and did much to bring it to fruition. However, three names stand out as individuals who worked to promote such an organization and make it a reality: Pres. Gerhard Wilde of the Evangelisch-Lutherische Freikirche (ELFK), Pres. George Orvick of the ELS, and Prof. Wilbert Gawrisch of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). Pres. Wilde emphasized again and again the need for such a fellowship for lonely Lutherans throughout the world. He had experienced that loneliness in his own country during Soviet times and later when his church body struggled to maintain its confessional stand. Pres. Orvick expended considerable effort throughout his presidency to make contact with confessional Lutherans in the United States and around the globe who were in need of a new confessional home. Prof. Gawrisch worked tirelessly for this organization. He put in more time and effort than anyone else to organize, promote, and establish such an international synodical conference.

We experienced some amazingly heady days in the spring of 1993. We in the ELS were mainly a rural Midwestern synod and now, on the twenty-seventh of April in Germany, the cradle of Lutheranism, we were establishing an organization including church bodies from Europe, North America, Asia, Africa, and Australia. The CELC has continued to reflect its international outlook with conventions in Puerto Rico, Sweden, Japan, Ukraine, and Peru. This past year, the ninth triennial convention of the CELC commemorating the five hundredth anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation took place in the German heartland of Lutheranism, and the 2020 convention will be held in Korea. The members of the CELC have now reached thirty-two orthodox Lutheran church bodies worldwide.

The *Proceedings* and the essays from all of the conventions are found on the CELC website (www.celc.info). The Theological Commission continues to produce *The Eternal Word: A Lutheran Confession for the Twenty-First Century*. Article I is a study of the doctrine of Holy Scripture, Article II of the doctrine of justification, Article III of the work of the Holy Spirit, Article IV of the person and work of Christ, Article V of the doctrine of eschatology, Article VI of the church's mission, and Article VII on the doctrine of the church. These statements also may be found on the CELC website.

The CELC was established as the spiritual heir of the Synodical Conference and it is definitely fulfilling its purpose. The purpose of the CELC has been to preserve the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions in our midst and to proclaim the message of salvation in Christ

throughout the world. The CELC has done this through mutual encouragement and strengthening of the member churches. Hearing brothers from across the seas confess the same doctrine and proclaim the same Gospel that we do in southern Minnesota is a wonderful encouragement and blessing. Having had the privilege of being able to attend every convention of the CELC since its establishment, I have seen firsthand the mutual consolation of brethren and strengthening that is the result of this gathering of orthodox and confessional Lutherans. Because of this international organization, I can count among my personal friends men and women from nearly every continent.

The CELC stands ready to give answer to the confident hope of salvation in Christ that is within us. It is a refuge for those seeking confessional homes and a beacon shining the light of the Gospel in a sin-darkened world. Here the central truth of the Reformation, justification by faith alone, continues to be proclaimed. We are declared righteous by nothing we do or accomplish, but alone on the basis of Christ's redemptive work which is counted as ours through faith in the Savior. He accomplished salvation for all on the cross and announced it to all by His resurrection, declaring the whole world righteous in Christ. This treasure is brought to us personally through the means of grace and is received by faith alone in the Savior, which is worked through those very means of grace.

We are filled with gratitude and thankfulness to the Lord for all the blessings He has bestowed on us through the CELC. Here He has preserved His Word in its truth and purity and His sacraments rightly administered, providing a refuge for lonely Lutherans in an ever more secularized world. On this, the hundredth anniversary of the ELS and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the CELC, we pray that as He has been our refuge and strength in the past, He would continue to be with us in the future through Word and Sacrament.

*The CELC stands ready
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LUTHERAN SENTINEL

Origin, History, Future

by REV. THEODORE G. GULLIXSON, Contributing Editor
PASTOR EMERITUS



A small group of pastors and laymen gathered in the Aberdeen hotel in 1917 to discuss the merger disaster that was occurring nearby in Minneapolis. They were not giving up, but they needed a way to go forward. The men elected Rev. **Bjug Harstad**, then a young 69, both temporary chairman and the first editor of a newspaper.

These faithful pastors and laymen needed to let many others know why they did not join the merger. Their voices had been muzzled in the synod conventions, so their only hope was through the press. Obtaining money and a printer were their primary concerns.

Another issue that faced them was the publication's name. This small group still considered themselves the true representatives of the Old Norwegian Lutheran Synod. They wanted to retain the name of its publication: *Luthersk Tidende* (or *Lutheran Times*). However, those who owned the copyright would not agree. So they placed a photo of a church between the two words and were able to use that name for many years.

The first issue of the *Luthersk Tidende* was published on July 16, 1917. Rev. Bjug Harstad was listed as the editor and he wrote the first article, titled "Why can the Minority not go along with the new church body?" In the article, he lists five reasons, the most important reason being the false teaching about election. Since B. Harstad served a church in Tacoma, Washington, it is likely that Pastor **C.N. Petersen** did much of the busy work. Subscriptions were \$1.00 per year.

By issue number five, the *Tidende* was given a motto, which has been on the front page for over 100 years. That motto is "Der staar skrevet" in Norwegian, which is in English: "It is written."

During the second year of publication, beginning on 15 July 1918, the editor was C.N. Petersen and the name was changed to *Evangelisk Luthersk Tidende* or *Evangelical Lutheran Times* with the church drawing still in the title. By September of that year, it was stated that the magazine was "published every Tuesday." So from 1918 to 1919, there were 46 issues of the *Evangelisk Luthersk Tidende*. The September 17, 1918 issue announced the dedication of Fairview Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, MN.



By 1919, the young synod became more organized. The synod convention elected a new Editorial Board consisting of **George A. Gullixson**, **John A. Moldstad**, and **Herman A. Preus**, all pastors of churches in Chicago, Illinois. At this convention, it was resolved "that the "Evangelisk Luthersk Tidende" be doubled in size and that it be published alternately in English and Norwegian." The new editor restated the purpose of the *Tidende/Sentinel*: "The purpose of publishing this paper is, to assist in keeping the altar fire of God's holy truth burning steadily and brightly in the hearts of his children who read it, and in the churches to which it may be a help in these trying times."

Over the next 12 years, various men had the role of editor of either the *Tidende*, the *Sentinel*, or both. Then in 1930, Rev. **Jacob E. Thoen** became editor of both publications until he retired in 1938. This meant publishing one sixteen-page issue every week. This was also the time of the Depression. In 1932, the *Sentinel* was reduced to 12 pages because of the lack of receipts. The subscription price was \$1.00 for each magazine or \$1.50 for both. On September 13, 1933, editor Thoen added a feature called "Our Youth's Companion." Future *Sentinel* editor **Rev. Erling Ylvisaker** wrote this column for many years.

The 1935 synod convention resolved that the financial information of the synod be printed in the *Sentinel*, a practice that continued for many years. In addition, there appeared a list of those who contributed to the synod work. The convention also asked that congregations take over collecting funds for subscriptions.

The Rev. **Adolph Harstad, Sr.** took over as editor in 1938 until 1948. These were the war years. The first cover in color was on a special “Service Men’s Issue” for June 27, 1942. The synod’s Army and Navy Commission saw to sending Sentinels to synod people in the armed forces. The June 27, 1945, issue listed the servicemen who lost their lives during World War II.

In 1948, Business Manager **Erling Petersen** reported that the *Sentinel* had a deficit of \$1,205.00. The cost of printing 24 issues a year was \$2,700. There were 2,700 subscribers for the *Sentinel* and 500 for the *Tidende*.

The year 1950 brought a change of editors from Rev. **Ahlert Strand** to Rev. **Erling Ylvisaker** of Madison, Wisconsin. The new editor stated as his goal for the *Sentinel* to “Teach the Word of God to our people,” and he wanted to add more news of synod work in the *Sentinel*. To that end, he began a section titled “Both Old and New” with news and information on synod and congregational activities.

Because of declining readership in 1950, the *Luthersk Tidende* was published once a month. Rev. **George O. Lillegard** served as editor. The last issue published was dated December 15, 1953, completing a run of 36 years.

A major change of editors was necessary due to the sudden heart attack of **Erling Ylvisaker** in 1954. Rev. **Morris Dale** was asked to take over for a while, but his health was not good, either. From 1955 to 1958, Rev. **Martin Galstad**, pastor of Mt. Olive, Mankato, MN, served as editor. Then **Paul Ylvisaker** took over the work from 1958 to 1966. These were tumultuous years when the synod was discussing membership in the Synodical Conference with pastors and congregations leaving the synod over the issue.

In 1966, Rev. **Julian Anderson**, then professor at Bethany Lutheran College, was elected as editor. Because of his teaching load, he asked to be excused, so Rev. **Victor Theiste** was given the work from 1968 to 1972. When ill health caused him to retire, Rev. **Nelak Tjernagel** became editor until 1976.

Prof. **Erling Teigen**, 1972 to 1983, next worked on the *Sentinel*. The January 1982 issue represented major changes to the magazine. The size was increased to 8 ½ by 11 inches and it was published once a month. On the cover, there was a new drawing of an open Bible with the words “It is written” printed on one of the pages.

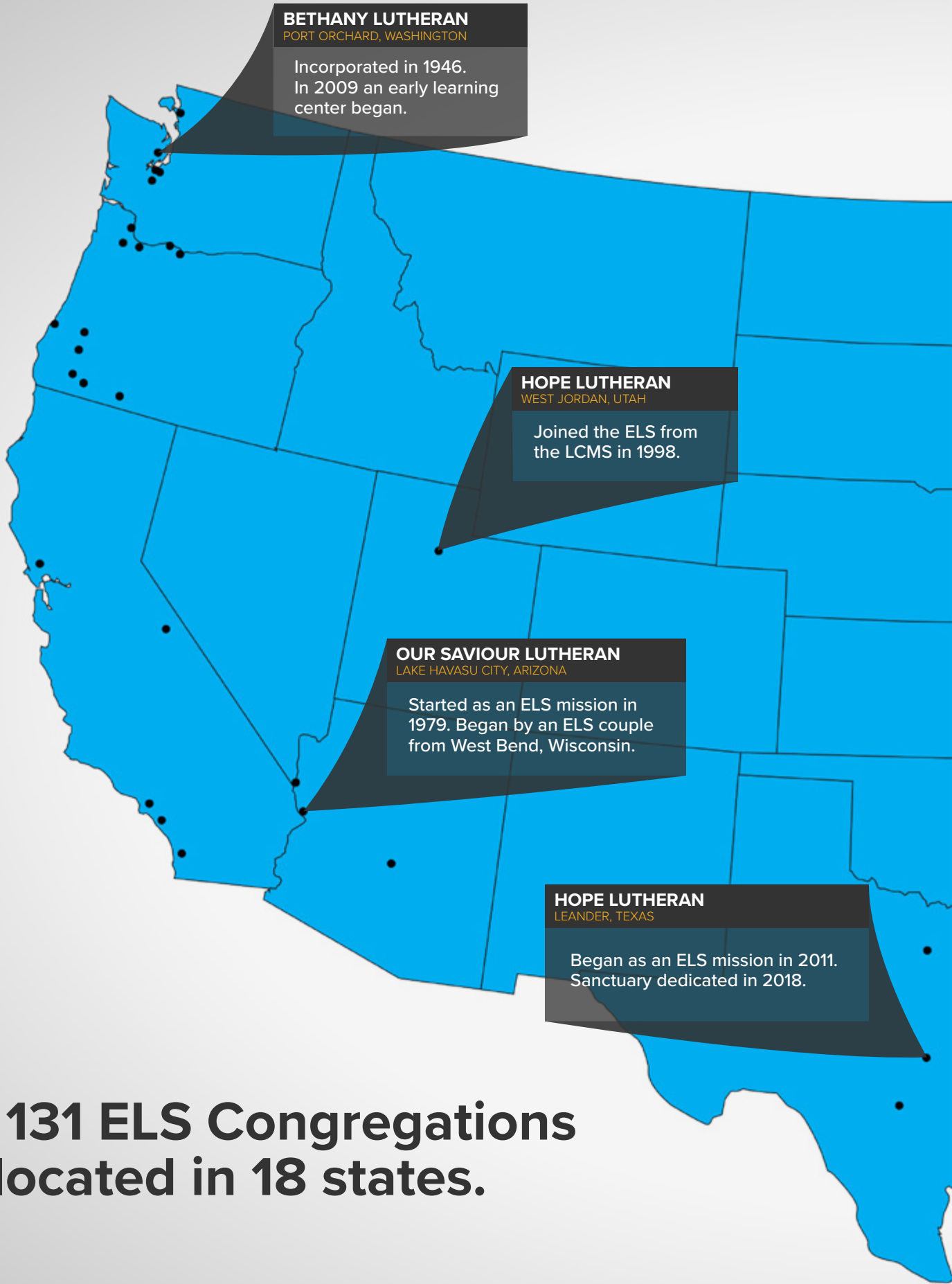


Rev. **Paul Madson** continued this format as editor from 1983 to 1995. During this time, the synod was adding new congregations and new home and foreign missions. There was plenty of news to cover.

Up to this time, the *Sentinel* was a “hands-on” process—typing, cutting and paste, mailing, reading proof, etc. In 1996, Rev. **Theodore Gullixson**, a pastor in Escondido, California, started working with a computer and sending articles via the internet. In order to pay for full-color issues, the July issue was dropped in 2007. Another cost-saving change came in 2012 when the *Sentinel* began to be printed every other month. Since 2014, Rev. **Paul Fries** and Rev. **Kyle Madson** have worked together on the *Lutheran Sentinel*.



The *Lutheran Sentinel* is the official publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. During the past 100 years, this magazine has encouraged and instructed its readers about Biblical truth and informed the members about synod people and work. Under the theme “It is written,” the *Lutheran Sentinel* will continue to proclaim the message of Christ and Him crucified to members and to the world—in print and via the internet.



BETHANY LUTHERAN

PORT ORCHARD, WASHINGTON

Incorporated in 1946.
In 2009 an early learning center began.

HOPE LUTHERAN

WEST JORDAN, UTAH

Joined the ELS from the LCMS in 1998.

OUR SAVIOUR LUTHERAN

LAKE HAVASU CITY, ARIZONA

Started as an ELS mission in 1979. Began by an ELS couple from West Bend, Wisconsin.

HOPE LUTHERAN

LEANDER, TEXAS

Began as an ELS mission in 2011. Sanctuary dedicated in 2018.

The 131 ELS Congregations are located in 18 states.

RIVER HEIGHTS LUTHERAN

EAST GRAND FORKS, MINNESOTA

Organized in 1933. The present facility was built in 1981.

PINEWOOD LUTHERAN

BURLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Organized in 1884. Joined the ELS in 1924. It has a bell cast by an apprentice of Paul Revere.

ST. TIMOTHY LUTHERAN

LOMBARD, ILLINOIS

Organized in 1957 as a daughter of two ELS congregations.

PEACE LUTHERAN

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

Organized in 1986. Its new sanctuary was built in 2003.

CHRIST LUTHERAN

PORT ST. LUCIE, FLORIDA

Started as an ELS mission in 1986. Full elementary school began in 2012.

The Gospel for the Eunuch Next Door

A Brief Overview of 100 years of Home Mission Work

by **REV. LARRY WENTZLAFF**, Contributing Writer
ELS EVANGELISM/MISSIONS COUNSELOR, Mankato, Minn.

Standing Solely on God's Word

In 1918, the reorganization of the Old Norwegian Synod was complete, and the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church came into existence near Lime Creek Lutheran Church in rural Lake Mills, Iowa. At that meeting, two of the articles that were passed spoke to the future teaching of the new synod:

Article 2:

"The only source and rule for faith and doctrine is the Word of God as revealed in the canonical books of the Old and New Testament."

Article 3:

"The Norwegian Synod adopts as its confession all the symbolical books of the Old and New Testament." The new synod was bound to stand solely on God's inerrant Word.

As a result, over the past one hundred years, the members of our synod have had and continue to have the joy of true salvation burning brightly in their hearts, creating the strong desire to share that joy with others in response to the great commission. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19-20).

In this brief article, we will watch this unfold as we review the history of our ELS home missions. →

The Early Years

In the second chapter of *Built on the Rock*, Professor Juul B. Madson highlights the early years of home missions. "The earliest efforts in the sphere of home missions was directed toward providing moral and financial support for minority congregational groups which had failed to embrace the merger or had later broken away from it. At least a goodly number of these confessional groups survived to become self-sustaining units which could then turn around and lend a helping hand to the ongoing work of spreading the Gospel in new locations."

Home Missions Started and Supported by the Home Mission Board (currently the Board for Home Outreach [BHO]) in the Past 100 Years.

In the past 100 years, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) has started and supported 60 new home missions. Thirty-nine of the missions continue to preach the Gospel yet today; thirty remain in the ELS and nine congregations have merged with other church bodies (WELS, LCMS, CLC). Three have merged with other ELS congregations and eighteen closed their doors or were defunded by the Home Mission Board for lack of growth.

Missions that are now active congregations in the ELS:

Holy Cross – Madison, WI (pictured above)

Pinhurst – Eau Claire, WI

Redeemer – New Hampton, IA

Lakewood – Lakewood, WA

Ascension – Eau Claire, WI

St. Timothy – Lombard, IL

Grace – Madison, WI

Pilgrim – Waterloo, IA

Heritage – Apple Valley, MN

Our Saviour – Lake Havasu, AZ

Our Savior – Naples, FL

Christ – Port Saint Lucie, FL

Family of God – Fort Mohave, AZ

Peace – Kissimmee, FL

New Life – Sebring, FL

Saved by Grace – Gresham, OR

Peace – Lakeland, FL

Lord of Life – Holland, MI

Resurrection – Winter Haven, FL

Abiding Word – Bowling Green, OH

Redeemer – Scottsdale, AZ

Peace – North Mankato, MN

Abiding Shepherd – Cottage Grove, WI

Faith – Medford, OR

Redeeming Grace – Rogers, MN

Hope – Farmington, MN

Hope – Leander, TX

Divine Mercy – Hudson Oaks, TX

Cristo Rey – Bell Gardens, CA



A Brief Lesson on How to View the History of Closed Missions

How are we to view those missions that were started, at a substantial financial cost and expenditure of man-hours, and had to close their doors? Too many times they are listed or referred to as failed missions. Are they really failures? We have to always keep in mind that this is God's church. Each new mission's start is entered into with much research, prayer, and a divine call being issued. We pray with the Psalmist, "May He grant your heart's desires and fulfill all your plans!" (Psalm 20:4). But in the end, it is the will and purpose of God Almighty that is going to be fulfilled, even though we do not understand how or why. God clearly tells us, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways, declares the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). In the end, we simply have to let God be God, for it was He that placed those missions and it was He that, once His purpose was fulfilled, brought a close to their existence. Instead of looking at them as failures, we rejoice that the Gospel was preached, that countless young and old were baptized into God's kingdom, and that the Sacrament of the Altar was served as saving nourishment to troubled hearts. With God's purpose being served for the time He allotted to each mission, how can we look at the closed missions as failures? We can't. Rather, we thank God for allowing the spread of His love in Christ Jesus in Word and Sacrament to so many.

Other Home Mission Work, Daughter Congregations

(Not Initiated by the Home Mission Board)

Not all Home Mission work has been done through the Mission Board (BHO). The work and effort that is consumed in the running and care of one congregation is enormous, yet motivated by the desire to share the good news of salvation and the great commission. Over the past 50 years, 26 ELS congregations or groups of congregations have taken the initiative to create daughter congregations. They chose locales around the boundaries of their area of influence and planted or daughtered a sister congregation. Most commonly, they start out as preaching stations seeded with members from the parent congregation and over time mature into self-supporting church bodies. In the same way God uses missions for a short time according to His purpose, He also uses daughter congregations. Of the 26 daughter congregations planted, five remain as ELS congregations, two merged with LCMS, four withdrew and their current status is unknown, and 15 closed.

The daughter congregations that remain in the ELS:

Bethany – Princeton, MN

Grace – Weston, OH

Grace – Crookston, MN

(Independent in fellowship)

Our Redeemer – Yelm, WA

Faith – Irvine, CA

The History Continues

The BHO is currently supporting five of the home missions listed above. Redeeming Grace, Rogers, MN, is moving toward the end of being supported. Hope, Farmington, MN, is starting their second year of worship in the new church building. Hope, Leander, TX, dedicated their new church building this past April. Divine Mercy, Hudson Oaks, TX, just purchased a building site. Cristo Rey, Bell Gardens, CA, our newest mission, is a cross-cultural mission reaching out to the Hispanic population of East Los Angeles.

The BHO continues to investigate areas to start new home missions. The biggest challenges the ELS faces in starting new home missions is the lack of resources; finances and missionaries are at the top of the list. Your generous contributions to the anniversary offering will help with the finances. You can also help with the lack of missionaries by encouraging the young men in your congregation to consider becoming pastors. If you are a young to middle-aged man, you might prayerfully consider making a career change and attending Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).

To the Ends of the Earth:

A Century of Foreign Mission

by **REV. WAYNE HALVORSON**, Contributing Writer
PASTOR EMERITUS

George Lillegard on furlough in the Philippines >



When the Evangelical Lutheran Synod organized 100 years ago, there was a felt need to fulfill the Lord's injunction "Make disciples of all nations." That felt need resulted in 10% of the first year's proceeds being set aside to support that endeavor.

The Beginnings

Rev. George Lillegard was sent to Hankou, China, in 1921. He was there for six years. He had to return to the USA in 1927 due to political unrest in that country. A schoolteacher, **Anena Christensen**, was sent in 1926 to aid in a girls' boarding school in Ambur, India. She continued to teach there until 1939, when she returned to Mankato, MN. Her presence in India had been a major undertaking; the ELS was cooperating with the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod at that time. It resulted in 66 mission stations and 4,180 souls. Just before she returned to the US, there were 34 pastors, four women workers, and 499 national native mission workers.

In 1936, it was reported that the Synodical Conference mission in Nigeria, Africa, was in need of workers. **Rev. Paul Anderson** was called and was there from 1946-1952. **Rev. Gerhardt Becker** then received the call to go there from 1953-1957. An example of the effective work was this: "October 1948 at the Okon church I Baptized 57 people in one day," said Pastor Anderson. That year there were "ten churches, ten teachers, and six schools."

Cornwall, England, requested help with spreading the Good News of Jesus to the people of the British Isles. **Rev. Joseph Petersen** was sent there in 1951. It resulted in Desmond Jose, a student from England, attending Bethany Lutheran Seminary in Mankato. He was ordained and installed as missionary to Cornwall, England, in 1954. Joseph Petersen then returned to the USA. The congregations in Cornwall then affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of England (at

that time an affiliate of the Synodical Conference). A brief effort was put forward in 1961 when the Christian Chinese Lutheran Mission group from Hong Kong, China, sent **Peter Chang** to Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary for training. He then returned to serve them with an urgent plea for support. In 1964, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod sent "a friendly Counselor" to assist in the congregation's outreach. At that time, there were 896 souls. It has now been renamed South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission Limited. From there, the WELS has a seminary training site.

Such are the missions of the first 50 years of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Just as there were 3,000 added to the church on Pentecost Day by the blessings of God the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:41), thousands upon thousands have been added to the Kingdom of Christ from those efforts.



Anena Christensen, matrons, and pupils; Ambur, India

The Next 50 Years

July 1968 brought more blessings to the task of “telling the nations.” It became obvious that the Holy Spirit was blessing the message of Christ proclaimed to the nations of the world. In recognition of 50 years of blessing, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod explored and sent Rev. **Theodore Kuster** and his family, along with **Orlin Myrli** and his family (lay workers), to the area of Lima, Peru. Already by 1969, Reynoso (a *barriada*, what we would call suburbs or shanty towns) became the first congregation to celebrate Easter. By that time, there were often 1,500 children and additional adults in Sunday School classes throughout the villages and worship gatherings. Reformation Day of 1971 brought the organizing of the churches under the brief identifying title Centro Cristiano (Christian Center). The official name became Peruvian Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church (PELCC). By this time, Missionary **James Olson** and his wife **Mary** had joined the American workers. An objective was to train the national workers to become pastors and missionaries. By November of 1991, three pastors were trained and ordained: **Fidel Conversio**, **Segundo Gutierrez**, and **Braulio Capuillan**.

Many more students entered the seminary and some of the teaching staff included Peruvian nationals. Segundo eventually became the President of the seminary and was responsible for directing the seminary and arranging for a teaching staff.

Through the 50 years, **Robert** and **Mary Moldstad**, **Martin** and **Albina Teigen**, **David** and **Ione Lillegard**, **Tim** and **Ellen Erickson**, **Dan** and **Lisa McMiller**, **David** and **Ruth Haeuser**, **Terry** and **Mary Schultz**, **Kurt** and **Debra Smith**, and **Karl** and **Karen Kuenzel** have been the mission leaders and instructors for varying lengths of time. Recent years have seen many of the American missionaries returning stateside as the enduring proclamation of the Gospel and the training of future pastors and evangelists is being turned over to the national pastors and teachers. The Amazon Jungle area has now become a focus of the Peruvian Church leading its own mission field in their own land on the other side of the mountain range. Those in the Amazon River area actually travel by boat and on foot to the various Shawi villages. Shawi is a language identifier for the river basin. Seminary classes are

conducted on a bi-monthly schedule in the central riverside town of Tarapoto, Peru.

What a privilege the Lord of the Church has granted the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in forming a Church in the South American country of Peru. There are Christian schools (two in Lima, two in the Amazon Jungle area) nearly filled to capacity. There are at least 50 congregations and new ones being promoted in new areas. There is an average attendance of 1,200 each week. There are 30 pastors, vicars, and seminary students serving the congregations or learning how to become pastors. In addition, there are a good number of evangelists (people telling people about Jesus) in many villages and towns. The next generation, using God the Holy Spirit’s Word and Sacraments, have affected the eternal destiny of believers to be with Jesus in the high village of heaven.

Besides Peru, in the last 50 years many other sites throughout the world have been brought the good news of Jesus: Managua, Nicaragua; San Jose, Costa Rica; Santiago and Linares, Chile; Latvia; Kiev, Ukraine; Pilsen, Czech Republic; Brisbane, Australia; Avaldsness, Norway; Jabalpur, Hyderabad, and Rajahmundry, India; and Seoul, South Korea. Add to that the humanitarian aid to Ukraine and the thousands that have heard the Bible message while the medical clinics MCOW (Medical Clinic on Wheels) are traveling to deal with health issues or dental care.

All of this adds up to 100 years of faithfully handling and sharing the precious message of Jesus Christ. Thousands upon thousands have heard the Word that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the people in every nation. One wonders how many Christian funerals have been conducted for the people who have been brought to faith in Jesus. All of this has come about because of the Holy Spirit blessing the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus to the people by the efforts of the people of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod reorganized at Lime Creek. I would have to say that the “plucked chicken” has regained its feathers and “flown” around the world to bring many to the heavenly flight pattern.



First School at Mariano Melgar; Lima, Peru, 1969 📷



LOOMING LARGE:

The Pivotal Place of the Laity in 100 Years of History

 Women at the 1921 Convention

by **MR. NORMAN WERNER**, Contributing Writer
KING OF GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, Golden Valley, Minn.

The decisions that are made in the name of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod are determined at the annual conventions. Between conventions, the day-to-day work of the synod is conducted by boards and committees, whose membership is approximately equally shared by clergy and laity. A review of annual reports of the synod show that during the 64 years from 1954 to 2018, 269 laymen from **Earl Aasen** to **Charles Zitzmann** provided 2,626 years of service for the synod. A normal term of service for each member is three years, but, as indicated by the preceding numbers, the average length of service was about ten years for each man. Most positions are filled by election at the conventions; some members are appointed.

The Lord spoke through the prophet Jeremiah: *I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts* (Jeremiah 31:33, ESV). The 269 laymen who served the 2,626 years in the service of the Lord within the structure of the ELS received God's law in their hearts at the time of their baptism. It is likely that the majority were baptized as infants and were increasingly exposed to and educated in the Christian heritage through their family, through the Sunday School and the Christian Day School. Christian higher education was a

factor in the life of many. Therefore, the love of the Lord was in their hearts and, when they were sought out to be nominated or appointed to a synod board or committee, they willingly heard and accepted the call. Some men served one year, many served several years; in fact, 29 men (eleven percent) each served more than 20 years.

Most committee meetings are one day at a time, but some extend two or three days. Some meet once a year, but most are four or more times each year. The meeting dates are planned, but additional research, study, and advance preparation is necessary for each member to ready himself to resolve the issues on the next agenda. Travel time to the meetings may be fifteen minutes for some, but for others, it may be a day or two. In much of the twentieth century, the travel was often by railroad and the travel time was longer.¹ Expenses of the committee members are reimbursed by the synod, but there is no salary or financial remuneration for the time that is spent away from the family or from employment. Time is donated by the laymen. Their life experiences are another contribution that the laity bring to the work of the Lord, experiences and knowledge that are not readily available to the clergy.

1. A railroad secretary was an important officer of the synod, planning the travel of synod officers and committee members.

At the 1918 Lime Creek convention of the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church,² there were approximately 200 people listed³ as being in attendance. Aaberg states that thirteen of them were pastors.⁴ Obviously, the laity have been active participants from the first meeting of the old/new Lutheran Christian organization throughout this first century.

After organizing the synod at Lime Creek, the members did not sit back and relax; they immediately continued the Lord's work in the new setting. They established a Missions Committee with a subcommittee for the West Coast, publications, constitution, historical committees, auditors, and a delegate to the Synodical Conference. Four of the men elected to the committees were laymen. At the 1919 convention, foreign missions, elementary education, higher education, church extension, and a railroad secretary were added. Five additional laymen were elected.⁵

Mission programs started early. Miss **Anena Christensen** served in Madagascar and was sent to India in 1926 through the Board for Foreign Missions of the Missouri Synod. She retired in 1939.⁶ Other ELS women missionaries were **Sarah Tjernagel Schalow** in China and **Ruth Tjernagel Strohshein** in the Philippines.⁷ The synod also participated in mission fields of the Synodical Conference.

Many of the synod's current congregations started as home mission programs.⁸ Approximately twenty congregations were on the roll call in 1920;⁹ 149 congregations are shown in the 2017 Synod Report. Many were started by an assembly of Christians who sought a pastor from the synod to provide spiritual leadership.

Only eight years after the synod's organizing convention and again in the succeeding year, a committee from privately operated Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato offered to sell the institution to the synod, but the synod convention could not finance the necessary \$90,000. Synod representatives suggested that a request be made of the congregations to find fifty members who would finance the purchase and operational costs of the college. Within a week, seventy-four people had volunteered.¹⁰ The laity were willing to finance Christian higher education out of their own pockets.

Because the establishment of the Bethany Lutheran College Association by the private donors had been hurriedly completed without any official synodical authority, the committee's actions were not immediately accepted by the members at the 1927 convention. Several days of discussion included a motion that the synod assume ownership of the college. The following day, the vote was taken and the purchase was approved 33 to 21. The purchase price and

operational costs of the college were now the responsibility of the synod. The final payment to the association was made in 1944.¹¹ The voluntary financial efforts of the laity and clergy had secured a secondary education institution for the synod until the synod itself could finance it.

For several generations, but especially in this twenty-first century, the work of the synod has been assisted by modern industry and technology. The laity have provided leadership in the use of these assets in spreading the Gospel.

The wives of the clergy often exist in the shadow of their husbands without the acknowledgement of their service to the Church. They do not have a position in the pulpit, but they have more significance than only the one who irons his shirt, presses his suit, and provides eggs, sausage, toast, and coffee each morning. Frequently, they may be the lead or substitute congregation organist. Often they will sing in the church choir and perhaps direct it. They teach Sunday School or Christian Day School. The role of the pastor's wife usually reflects his call as she works by his side.

Significant in service to the synod have been the administrative office secretaries, **Melvina Aaberg**, **Mary Jane Tweit**, and **Elsa Ferkenstad**. Their work has provided the necessary production of synodical writings, publications, and other documentation.

Over the last century, the laity have been pivotal in the organization of the restructured synod, in its early work into various mission fields, into the furtherance of Christian education in all phases of life, and in taking advantage of modern industry and technology for spreading the Gospel of Christ. It has been proclaimed locally and to the world by the combined actions of the clergy and laity of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.



2. Aaberg, Theodore A., *A City Set on a Hill, A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (Norwegian Synod), 1918-1968, Board of Publications, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Mankato, MN. The synod's name was changed to "Evangelical Lutheran Synod" in 1957.

3. Beretning Synodemodet, 1918, pp.4-5. Many of the names are preceded by "Mr. and Mrs.," some were followed by the word "family," it was of the highest importance for the members of the laity to be present, more important than their farm work, than minding their store or attending to other personal business.

4. Aaberg, p. 80.

5. Translated from the Norwegian by Prof. Emeritus Erling Teigen as published in the Beretning Synodemodet for 1918 and 1919.

6. Aaberg, p. 83.

7. Aaberg, p. 84.

8. Aaberg, p. 87.

9. The Third Annual Convention of the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1920.

10. Aaberg, pp. 96, 98.

11. Aaberg, p. 103.

O Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly

The History Of The Choral Union In The ELS

by REV. THEODORE G. GULLIXSON, Contributing Editor
PASTOR EMERITUS



The “Choral Union” was composed of singers from various congregations that joined voices to sing a concert and for a service at the synod convention. In the May 15, 1918 issue of the *Luthersk Kirketidende*,

Rev. Henry Ingebritson, pastor of the Lime Creek Lutheran Church in rural Lake Mills, Iowa, announced that the Choral Union would sing six songs from the booklet “Jubilate.” At the first Choral Union of the little Norwegian Synod, the gathered chorus sang “Kirken den er et gammelt Hus,” “126 Psalme,” and “Seek Ye the Lord,” among others.

For the next thirty years, synod conventions began on Thursday and ended on Tuesday of the next week. The Sunday of convention week became “Synod Sunday,” with a Norwegian and English service in the morning and the Choral Union concert/lecture/service in the afternoon or evening. Synod Sunday often meant that nearby congregations would not hold services so that the members could attend these special services.

The Choral Union concert would often consist of six to ten pieces sung by the joint choir, along with vocal and instru-

mental soloists. The concert would be held in the church, under a large tent used for the convention, or at a large rented hall.

The Lord provided talented men to choose the hymns and music and direct the choir. The first director was Rev. Henry Ingebritson. From 1921 to about 1930, Rev. Christian Anderson directed the Choral Union. In 1930, a young Rev. Adolph Harstad directed. When Prof. Walter Buzsin came to Bethany Lutheran College in 1931, he was also given the directorship. Under his leadership, the Choral Union sang and the Bethany Lutheran College choir often returned from their choir tour to participate in the concert. In 1939, Bethany Prof. Oswald Hoffman became director of the Choral Union.

The 1945 synod convention emphasized Christian education. That year, children from Immanuel Lutheran School - Mankato, MN, Trinity Lutheran School - Nicollet, MN, and Norseland Lutheran School - Norseland, MN, formed a joint choir directed by Mr. Otto Hellerman. By 1946, Prof. Alfred Fremder served as director of the Choral Union and the Bethany choir.



In the 1940s, the Choral Union devolved on the young people of the synod. The Young Peoples' Association held their annual conventions about the same time as the synod. They also had a "Choral Union," which sang for both conventions.

Beginning in 1951, the Rev. George A.R. Gullixson served as director for most of the 1950s. A major Choral Union concert occurred in 1953 in connection with the 100th anniversary of the Old Norwegian Synod. The Sentinel reported that 150 people sang in the Choral Union, 100 were in the children's chorus, and the Bethany Choir also sang a motet that Dr. Fremder wrote for the Centennial. In 1957 and 1958, Rev. Raymond Brandstad directed the Choral Union and the Pastors' chorus.

In the 1970s, the schedule of the synod conventions changed to begin on a Sunday and continue throughout the week, so there was no separate evening concert. The Choral Union choirs sang during the afternoon Synod Sunday service. In 1966, Rev. Brandstad brought down the choirs of Fairview Lutheran Church in Minneapolis to sing at the Synod Sunday service. He continued directing the Choral Union

into the 1970s. The last Choral Festival occurred in 1993, when the Bethany Lutheran College Choir, the Holy Cross and King of Grace choirs, and the assembly sang songs and hymns from past Choral Unions to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the synod.

The practice of Choral Union singing at synod conventions has been sporadic during the past 30 years for various reasons. One important reason is the twenty-year existence of the Youth Honor's Choir under the direction of Prof. Dennis Marzolf. For the past three years, these young people have arrived on Saturday in order to be able to sing for the afternoon Synod Sunday service.

With the 100th anniversary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the anniversary committee has revived the idea of the "Choral Union" so that singers and choir members from around the synod could join together in song, just as they did in the early days of our synod.



Western Koshkonong Lutheran School; Cottage Grove, Wisconsin, 1937

Tending the Tender:

Christian Education and Youth Work in the ELS

by **REV. BERNT TWEIT**, Contributing Writer
HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL, Madison, Wisc.

Summer Bible Camps, High School Youth Conventions, and Christian Day Schools have been a big part of the youth work of our ELS throughout the years.

I was born and raised in Mankato, MN, and while I didn't attend Camp Indianhead, MN, when I was growing up, after I became pastor at Holy Cross in Madison, WI, I fell in love with Summer Bible Camp. For 15 years, I served as director of Camp Indianhead, WI, and looked forward to the week with the youth from Holy Cross and other youth from WI and IA. I continue to be a camp counselor. It is one of the greatest weeks of the year!

I also didn't go to an LYA Convention while I was in high school (with the exception of stopping in for part of a day when it was on Bethany's campus), but I have attended 14 LYA Conventions as a pastor and youth leader. Again, it is one of the greatest weekends of the year to be with the young people of our synod!

I did, however, attend a Christian Day School. I went to Mt. Olive Lutheran School in Mankato, MN, from 1st – 8th grade. My teachers were:

- Mrs. Karen Merseth** (1st and 2nd grade),
- Mrs. Dawn Bartels** (3rd and 4th grade),
- Miss Julie Sorenson** (now Faugstad) (5th grade),

Miss Marie Aaberg (6th grade), and
Mr. Ray Diepenbrock (7th and 8th grade).

After Mt. Olive, I attended Minnesota Valley Lutheran in New Ulm, MN. After high school, I went to Bethany.

For the past 20 years, I have lived in Madison, Wisconsin. My wife Katie and I have sent our children, Benjamin and Kira, to Camp Indianhead, WI; LYA Conventions across the country; and the Christian Day School (or Lutheran Elementary School, as they are now called) at Holy Cross. They were also blessed to attend an area Lutheran high school, Lakeside Lutheran, in Lake Mills, WI. Benjamin is now a freshman at Bethany.

My grandparents, parents, and now Katie and I have been proponents of youth work and Christian education in our synod. Why are we compelled to be active in this work to teach and instruct our youth in the truths of Scripture?

The simple answer is that through their faith in Jesus, we want our youth to be in heaven.

But there are other blessings as well. Following are some quotes from other members of our synod that have written about this subject over the years.

In his book entitled *Forget Not All His Benefits*, Pastor **George Orvick** began the section on Christian Day Schools by quoting the Synod Report from 1922 held in Madison, WI:

“Since the preservation of the coming generations for God's true church on earth is a matter which concerns the very survival of our Lutheran church in this country, therefore it is our Christian duty (not only in word but also in deed) to obey God also in those things which He demands of us regarding the bringing up of our children in true godliness. The synod, therefore, recommends that everything possible be done for the establishment of Christian Day Schools in the various congregations.”

In the book *A Blessing in the Midst of the Land*, which was written in 1953 for the 100th Anniversary of the Norwegian Synod, **Martin Galstad**, a professor on Bethany's campus, wrote,

"Some may not know exactly what we mean by a Christian day school, for not every congregation has such a school. It is a school that teaches all the subjects that are found in public school; but it also has the Bible and catechism and hymns and church history, plus many more things about the church and eternal truth. Every morning opens with devotions. Christian living is learned in all the classes and on the playground. One young man wrote recently: 'My parents could have given me no greater gift by way of schooling than that they sent me to a Christian day school. It was there that I received not only competent instruction in secular education, but above all, I received that instruction which educates, not only for this life, but also for that which is to come.'"

In 1987, **Ray Diepenbrock** was asked to be one of the essayists for the 70th Annual Convention of the ELS. The theme of the convention was "Children of the Heavenly Father." "Mr. D", as we called him in grade school, was my principal and 7th and 8th grade teacher at Mt. Olive in Mankato. He concluded his essay by saying,

"The painting we all know so well of Christ with the children requires no caption to express its meaning. The picture is one that expresses well the theme of this convention, a perfect model for Christian education. I encourage you to keep this mental image as you return to your congregations and strive there to carry out your God-assigned task of educating your members for time and eternity. If the job seems overwhelming and you have trouble determining which way to go or how to proceed, perhaps you could print out and put in a conspicuous place this

little motto which a colleague of mine in California had taped to the desk in her classroom, 'Only that is important which is eternal.' May God bless your every effort in the cause of Lutheran Christian education."

A tagline that Bethany Lutheran College used for a number of years was "Education that lasts beyond a lifetime." From the Fall 2002 Bethany Report, **Ed Bryant** wrote,

"Bethany recognizes that there are certain enduring truths that were known by our forefathers and will be valuable to our children and their children long beyond our lifetime. These include an understanding of the nature of human beings, an understanding of the lessons of history, the context in which the sciences are taught and understood and above all, an understanding of the Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ. More than anything else, it is this Gospel of Christ that lasts beyond a lifetime."

So why are we compelled to be active in this work with youth and teach and instruct them in the truths of Scripture? The reason is because we want our youth to know and believe in the God who created them, redeemed them, and sanctified them.

I still get choked up during some children's sermons on Sunday mornings or sharing Bible stories with the three- and four-year-olds in our Early Learning Center during the week. When the youth share what they know about the Bible and confess faith in Jesus, it is eternally precious.

That is why our Day Schools and Sunday Schools, our Camps, and our Youth Conventions are important. We want our youth to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *To him be the glory both now and forever! Amen.* (2 Peter 3:18)



QUESTIONING HISTORY

WHY CHURCH HISTORY IS IMPORTANT AND APPLICABLE TO YOUTH TODAY



11 questions with Ottesen Museum Director **Rebecca DeGarmeaux**

1 | When did you first become interested in church history? What piqued your interest?

My interest in church History began when I was in grade school, probably around 5th grade. Our church had a good library that had a short biography of Martin Luther. I read it because I thought it would be a good idea to learn something about the man that our church was named after. I also had Reformation History and Church History classes in grade school and high school.

2 | You work in the ELS' Ottesen Museum. Can you tell us about the museum and your work there?

My work in the Museum is quite varied. Everything revolves around teaching the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and its congregations. In order to do that, I give tours of the Museum, give presentations about Synod history, and work with pastors and congregations to help them preserve their own history. I also put together displays about specific topics in Synod history. Every year there is a Christmas Open House that I spend a lot of time planning. All of these things take a lot of research to get right. The other thing I'm always working on is cataloging and properly storing the Museum's artifacts, so that future generations will also be able to learn from them.

Why is it important that the ELS has a museum?

3

Learning from a book and with pictures can work really well but being able to see objects in person reinforces that knowledge. I see the Museum as a teaching tool, not just for young people but for everyone who visits it.

In your view, have there been things in our history that speak to issues facing our church today?

4

100 years ago the pressure was very strong to join a new church that tried to unite all Norwegian-American Lutherans. But there was no Biblical basis for that merger. The ELS exists today because a few pastors and congregations were determined to remain faithful to God's Word. As a result of that they stayed out of that merger and formed what we now call the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Later, our Synod realized that it had to break its formal ties with the Missouri Synod when that church body started to take positions that were against the Bible. Today we have to watch for false doctrines all around us. Learning that the church has had to do this in the past as well can be encouraging when we have to face them in our current lives.

5

History seems to be something that is especially important for pastors and leaders to know, but is it just for them? Why is history important for even the youth of our Synod to know?

I think that it's important for everyone to learn church history because church doctrine and church history are so closely connected. Think of it this way: God gave us the Bible as a history book, not a list of doctrines. Learning church history shows us about the struggles the church has had in the past and how God has graciously preserved the church through those struggles. This knowledge is especially important for young people. They are the future of the church! If they start learning at an early age, hopefully they will continue to grow in their faith and understanding. Then they can be strong leaders in their homes and congregations.

6

Youth sometimes struggle to find their identity during their high school years. Baptism, ultimately gives someone their identity in Christ, but can history help shape their identity?

I think church history shapes our identity in a similar way to how family history shapes our identity. Just like family history shows us where we come from genetically, church history shows us where we come from doctrinally. It shows us that we believe the same things that Bjug Harstad, U. V. Koren, Luther, Augustine, St. Paul taught and it ultimately leads us back to Christ himself. What a blessing that legacy is for us.

7

Can you give an example of something in our history that may be especially meaningful to our youth?

Whether they attend the school or not, the purchase of Bethany College in 1927 affects almost everyone in the Synod. For a Church body of our size, the school has helped to give us an identity that shows the world our doctrinal and educational priorities. Even for those of our youth who do not attend Bethany. It shows them that they and their education are important to the Synod.

What can our youth do to learn church history?

If their congregation has a church library, they can see if there are church history books in it. Their pastor may have some books as well. Over the years, the ELS has published several books documenting Synod history. One in particular, *Growing in His Mercy*, is a workbook created specifically for Confirmation and Youth Group classes. They can also ask their pastor to teach them about their own congregation's history. Even though we all belong to the same church body, the history of each congregation is unique and significant in its own right.

What are ways individuals can help preserve history in their local congregations?

They can create a congregational history committee. These groups help to collect and protect historically significant items from the church's history. Some of them even create and maintain historical displays with some of the congregation's artifacts.

What's the oddest artifact you've come across in any congregation or in the Ottesen museum?

There is a bag in the Museum's storage room that contains a group of bones from an animal. I'm not sure what animal it was or why the bones are in the Museum collection.

What would be one thing for succeeding generations to know about our current era/generation? (What from our time would make it in the history books/museum?)

I think that the current talks that Synod officials are having with the Church of the Lutheran Confession and the informal meetings with the Missouri Synod are important. The break up of the Synodical Conference 60 years ago was hard on all of Confessional Lutheranism and left bad feelings in many places. We don't know where these talks will lead but it's significant that we are at a point where we can discuss the things that unite us as well as those issues which may still keep us apart.

8

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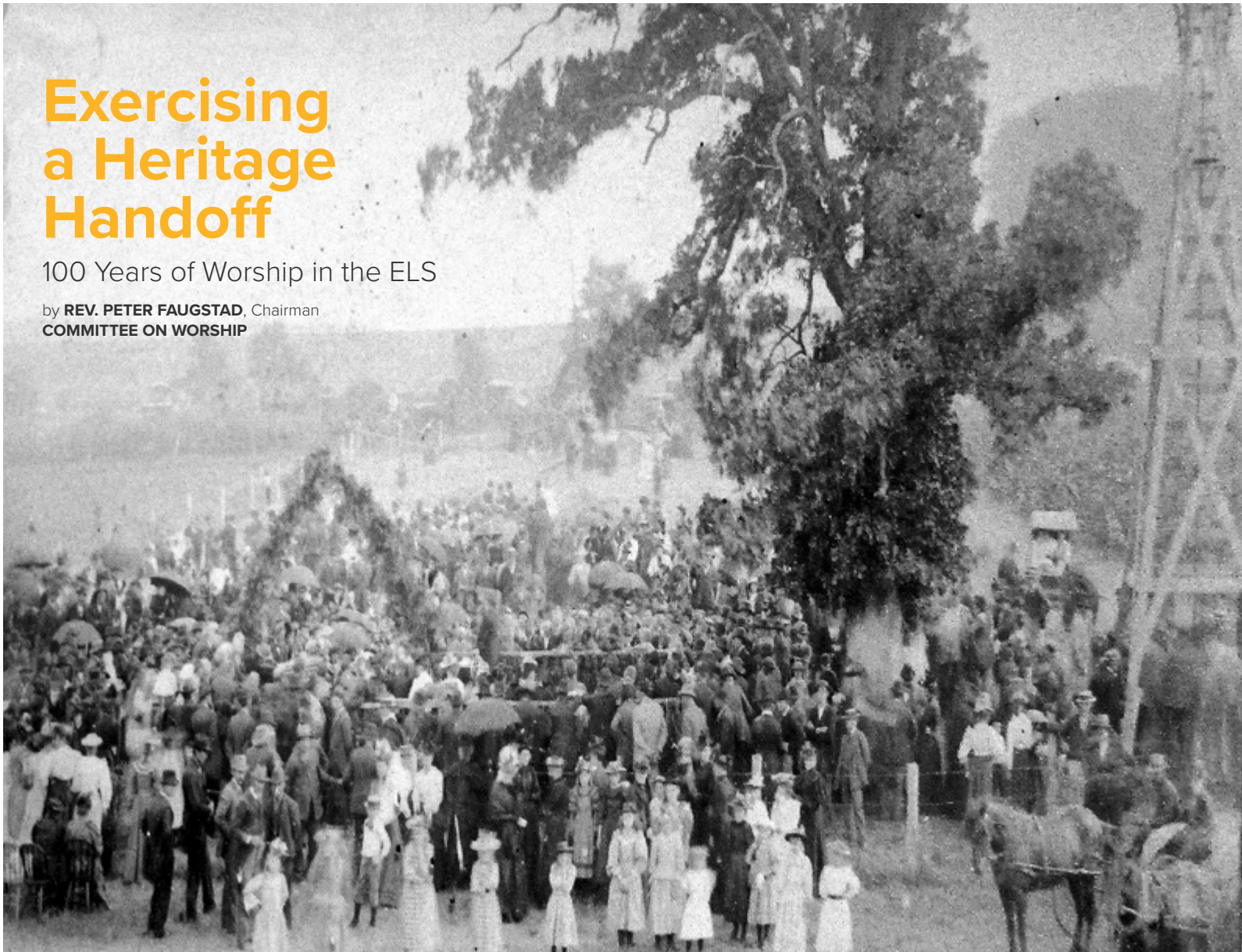
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11

Exercising a Heritage Handoff

100 Years of Worship in the ELS

by **REV. PETER FAUGSTAD**, Chairman
COMMITTEE ON WORSHIP



25th Anniversary of the first service under “the Oaks”; West Koshkonong, Wisconsin, 1869 

When scores of Norwegians left their homeland for America in the nineteenth century, they brought their cherished hymnbooks with them. But as the years passed, these Norwegian-Americans began to recognize the need for English-language worship materials to serve their children and others in the community.

The Norwegian Synod published its first English hymnbook in 1879, consisting of 130 hymns. A larger production followed in 1898, but neither of these books gained widespread use. In 1908, the Norwegian Synod contacted representatives of the United Church about working together on a new hymnbook. This was surprising since the United

Church contained many members who had left the Norwegian Synod in the 1880s over the doctrine of election. The Hauge Synod, of pietistic origin, was also invited to join the hymnbook effort.

The work of the hymnbook committee was finished in 1912, and *The Lutheran Hymnary* was published in 1913. In the preface, the committee included its hope that this hymnbook “may prove no small factor in the efforts made to unify the various Norwegian Lutheran Church bodies of our land.” This goal was realized when the three synods formed the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America in 1917.

There was a lot to like about *The Lutheran Hymnary*. For the first time, the Bugenhagen order of service enjoyed wide circulation in English. (Johannes Bugenhagen was Luther’s pastor, who helped bring the Reformation to Scandinavian lands.) Many Norwegian/Danish hymn translations were also included in the book.

But there were weaknesses, too. A good number of Scandinavian and German Lutheran hymns were not included in the book, either because they had not been translated or because hymns of Reformed origin were preferred. Specific hymns on election were also omitted, evidence of the doctrinal compromise which would lead to the merger.

Some pastors and congregations of the Norwegian Synod refused to join the merger. They met in 1918 to reorganize the Norwegian Synod (later called the ELS). But what should be done about a hymnbook? The one in use among them was *The Lutheran Hymnary*—“the merger book.”

The reorganized synod expressed its desire for another book to the Synodical Conference, and plans began to develop in 1927. The Rev. Christian Anderson and the Rev. Norman A. Madson were elected to the Synodical Conference Hymn Book Committee, with Prof. Walter Buszin serving on a subcommittee. The Rev. Adolph M. Harstad was later elected to serve on a subcommittee on liturgics.

The committee completed its work and offered *The Lutheran Hymnal* for publication in 1941. This book contained many good hymns, including classic Lutheran hymns that had not been included in earlier books. But synod president Henry Ingebritson commented, “We miss many of our favorite hymns in the new book.” The Bugenhagen order of service was also missing.

The synod resolved “to endorse the proposal of the Hymn Book Com. to try to get 40 additional hymns and the Norwegian Synod’s liturgy printed as a supplement to the new *Lutheran Hymnal* of the Synodical Conference.” Nothing more is recorded about a supplement in the 1940s, likely due to the pressing concerns of a World War and to growing tensions over unionism in the Synodical Conference.

In 1959, the General Pastoral Conference of the ELS sent a memorial to the convention “to investigate the need for and possibility of producing a hymn book suitable for our use.” Instead of a new hymnbook, two supplements were proposed, one with hymn selections from *The Lutheran Hymnary* and the other with selections from *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Lacking widespread support, these plans were dropped.

The ELS was invited to participate in the hymnbook efforts that led to the publication of *The Lutheran Book of Worship* in 1978 and the Missouri Synod’s *Lutheran Worship* in 1982, but in neither case were suggestions from the ELS seriously considered. This caused the ELS convention in 1980 to urge the Committee on Worship to look into the feasibility of “a reprint-revision of a hymn book attempting to combine the best qualities of the Lutheran hymnal and the Lutheran Hymnary.” Once again, a supplement and not a full hymnbook was suggested.

Shortly after this, the Wisconsin Synod began work on its own hymnbook and invited input from the ELS. While members of the Committee on Worship took part in those meetings, they also prepared an “ELS Hymnal Supplement” in 1989. Based on this resource, the synod in 1991 directed the Committee on Worship “to examine the possibility of assembling and publishing a hymnal that reflects the liturgical and hymnic heritage of the ELS.” The three-member committee made up of Prof. Dennis Marzolf, the Rev. Harry Bartels, and Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux began work on this project.

Five years later in 1996, the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* was ready for publication. It combined the best of the 1913 and 1941 books, a long-expressed desire of the synod. The Bugenhagen order (Rite 1) was once again in print, along with about half of the hymn texts from *The Lutheran Hymnary*. About two-thirds of the hymn texts from *The Lutheran Hymnal* were retained in the new book. Other new translations and compositions produced since the early part of the 20th century were also included.

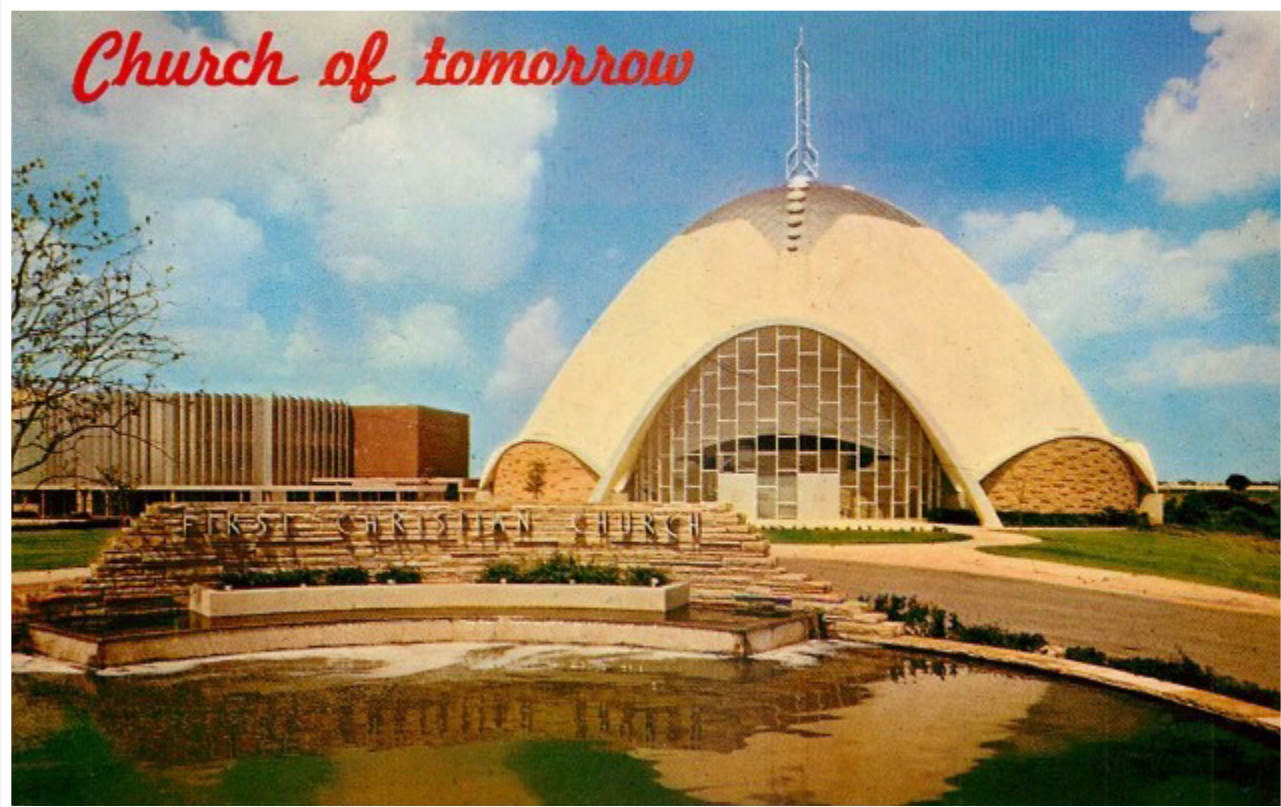
The *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* has preserved the unique Scandinavian worship tradition of the ELS while also providing a rich selection of hymns from other cultures stretching from the early church to today. Now the great hymns of Kingo, Brorson, Grundtvig, and Landstad are as easily accessed as the timeless hymns of Ambrose, Luther, Gerhardt, and Watts. We are grateful for these matchless treasures which faithfully proclaim “Christ yesterday, today, the same” (ELH 211, v. 6).

Copies of the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* can be ordered from the **Bethany Bookstore (800-944-1722)**. Cost is \$15 per copy or \$12 for multiple copies. The book was recently reprinted with even sturdier materials than before.

A list of Scandinavian hymns for each month has also been prepared for the ELS anniversary year. This list, along with other worship materials, can be accessed at:

els.org/resources/worship.





Looking Back into Our Future

The irony of the article title was too much to pass up: **“The Church of Tomorrow is FOR SALE.”**

The fascination with “the future” – OUR FUTURE – possesses a strong, magnet-like pull. Tomorrowland was one of Disney’s five original “lands” and remains a major attraction. The space-family *The Jetsons* was a highly successful animated series many of you will remember. Future-themed films like the *Star Wars* brand still dominate a box office whenever released.

It’s a well-known urge to want to know what’s coming – what lies ahead. But more than that, the desire is to know and have certainty that the future we have is a desirable ‘future,’ one in which the things near us and the plans dear to us are not left in ‘yesterday-land’ – irrelevant to the ‘great tomorrow.’ And because this investment in a certain and desirable future is so innate, it’s also not surprising that many efforts and great means have been and are put toward affecting that future toward our desirable end. In that way, this futuristic church building constructed in Oklahoma City in the 1950s (*pictured*) was way ahead of this curve, maybe even keeping pace with the great visionary, Walt Disney himself!

This entire issue of the *Lutheran Sentinel* has been spent chronicling our synod’s 100-year history in prose and pictures. And a worthy and rewarding endeavor that is. But as much as many of us like history and the reminiscing that goes with it, you know just as well as I do that appetite for a certain and desirable future is no less alive for us. Who of us doesn’t want to know what the future holds for our local churches and our church body?

Though it may seem a surprising place to look for our future, we know of its blessed certainty by looking into a past full of Promise. This Promise-Full past says our future is as **the body of Christ**.

Our certain future has to do with our Body. Now each of us was born from our mothers with our own bodies. Our physical bodies are God’s workmanship, but they are marred with sin and poised from their very conception to die sin’s death. And so God in His grace birthed you anew of Water and the Spirit, not into your own body, but into One Body – into Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

And so our future is inseparably tied to the Body in which we, the Church, now live. Life in the body of Christ is a treasure to be sure! But it is a treasure that is held in “earthen (fragile) vessels” – our mortal bodies in this embattled life of temptation, trouble, and hardship.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body (2 Corinthians 4:7-10).

Our Promise-Full past says our future is **on the rock of Christ**.

Music on the radio sounded a lot different 80 years ago than it does now. Tastes change. Trends come and go. How instruments sound or are used even transitions from one generation to another. The Body of Christ – the Church – has been rescued from the rat-race of keeping up with “sound changes.” Jesus announced the eternal “audio” of His Body when He highlighted Peter’s confession of Jesus as “The Christ”...

“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven...and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:16-17).

The future of the Church is being the “echo-rock,” resounding Peter’s confession that our ears and those all around us in the world might hear and believe on the Name of our salvation.

Our Promise-Full past says our future is as **living sacrifices in Christ**.

God the Father has “mercy-ed” us. Shouldering our shame and suffering the death of our sins, Jesus kept our death sentence from us by becoming our dying sacrifice. And as a result of our being born into His body, the life of His body, The Church, is a life of “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1). Our place in Christ animates our lives so that they are spent being “poured out” – offered in love and service to those redeemed neighbors given us by God in our daily life.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

Our Promise-Full past says our future is as **blessed beggars**.

The Promise-Full past means we have our **posture** for the future – we ask, yes, BEG all things for life and salvation from The God of Promise.

In Jesus, we beg of God not as a stranger, but as our loving Father. **We beg** His name to be set apart and glorified among us. **We beg** His kingdom to come to bless the body and to grow the body. **We beg** for His will to be done, even

if it thwarts our own ideas or wishes. **We beg** for the daily blessings good for our bodies and for the bodies of our neighbors. **We beg** for the Father’s forgiveness to us as the body of His Son AND for that forgiveness to flow through us to others. **We beg** that the deceptions of the Devil, the despair of the world, and the weakness of our flesh not dismember us from Christ our head, but that amid such trials we might remain embodied in Him. And finally, **we beg** deliverance. We ask that the Father send Christ to bring His body home.

And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).

We are Christ’s Church. We know this by looking back at what God has done for us in Christ Jesus, in His suffering, dying, rising again – because of what God IS doing for us in delivering Christ to us now in the Gospel preached for our ears, sprinkled on our heads, and placed on our palates. So we DO have a future. It is not a nebulous future. It is, as St. Paul says, full of “good works prepared beforehand that we might walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

Dear members of the ELS, but more importantly fellow members of **The Body of Christ**, the future is NOT “for sale.” For Christ’s Body, The Church, **the future** is sure and certain because it is **in Christ**. For Christ’s Body, The Church, **the future is full and it is free** as only life in Christ is.

*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
To God our Savior,
Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever.
Amen. (Jude 24-25)*

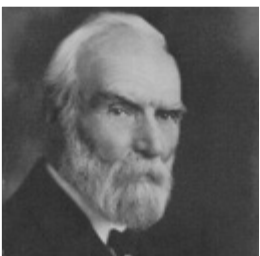
by **REV. KYLE MADSON**, Editor
LUTHERAN SENTINEL
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BIOGRAPHY BRIEFS:

The ELS of 1918

We continue with a series of biographies of the pastors who attended the reorganization convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1918. There is evidence for the presence of at least thirteen pastors along with two hundred guests at this convention.



In 1918, **Bjug Harstad** was elected as the first president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. At the age of sixty-nine years, he was

the oldest of the thirteen pastors whose attendance is recorded at Lime Creek and the only one born in Norway where a granite monument stands in his memory. In 1918, he was the pastor of Parkland Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington, where he established Pacific Lutheran Academy (today, Pacific Lutheran University). Prior to this he had served a mission field near Mayville, North Dakota, where he was instrumental in founding nineteen congregations and three schools in the Red River Valley. He was an essayist at the 1918 ELS convention and served as the synod's president until 1922. He married Guro Omlid. He died in 1933.



In 1918, **Emil Hansen** was living a few miles from Lime Creek Lutheran Church, and he was the pastor of the Scarville and Center congregations

at Scarville, Iowa, along with Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Albert Lea, Minnesota. These congregations were being organized at that time. He later served at Mayville, North Dakota; Bygland, Minnesota; and Volga, South Dakota. For many years he served on the synod's Home Mission Board. It appears that he delivered the final Norwegian language essay to the 1938 convention. He married Annette Anderson. He died in 1956.



In 1918, **Henry Ingebritson** hosted the first ELS convention at Lime Creek Lutheran Church near Lake Mills, Iowa, where

he served as pastor for forty-four years along with the congregation in Lake Mills. Because the congregations had lost the parsonage due to the merger of 1917, the host pastor lived in the newly constructed barn, and it was there that he entertained guests during the 1918 convention. He is remembered for his outstanding musical ability and directed the choral union choir in 1918. He is also remembered for his staunch support of Christian education. He served as the synod's president, 1936–41. He married Ella Thompson and following her death, Inger Honsey. He died in 1959.