



# Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

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Issue 2

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## Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary — A Brief History 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year — 1946-2006 By Jonathan N. Madson



In the early years of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, following the reorganization of 1918, the synod did not operate its own seminary. Pastors were trained in the seminaries of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. The synod convention of 1931 arranged to appoint a committee of 3 to study the matter of having its own seminary. In 1938, the synod encouraged the Board of Regents:

to continue considering the matter of training our own ministerial candidates, and also the question of adding a normal department to Bethany College. (*Synod Report*, 1938, p. 71)

It was not until 1942 that the urgency of having its own seminary was becoming more

pressing. One year later, 1943, the synod convention authorized the Board of Regents to establish a seminary as soon as possible. Unfortunately a roadblock appeared from the federal government and the Selective Service Administration. Since the United States was presently involved in World War II, it seemed that exemption from the draft for its seminary students would not be possible for a newly established seminary.

While the synod attempted to receive exemption for its seminary students, a committee from the synod met with officials of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WELS) in Thiensville, Wisconsin to discuss having a Norwegian Synod professor of Theology on the staff of the seminary. Theological students for the

ELS would be sent to Thiensville instead of the seminaries of the LC-MS. The proposal with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary did not need further action as the Selective Service Administration adopted a new ruling that would allow the institution of a seminary connected to Bethany College and permit theological students to be exempt from the draft.

The 1946 synod convention resolved:

- 1.) to establish a full Theological Seminary course at Bethany Lutheran College, this course to begin in the fall of 1946;
- 2.) to call one professor of theology who shall be Dean of the Theological Seminary. (*Synod Report*, 1946, p. 65)

The Rev. Norman A. Madson of Princeton, Minnesota accepted the call to be the dean of the seminary. The result of these actions led to the seminary dedication service on September 24, 1946. The first seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod officially began. There were five students enrolled in the first year. Additional teachers to Dean Madson were President S. C. Ylvisaker, Professor Alfred Fremder, Professor Martin Galstad, Prof. B. W. Teigen and Professor P. A. Zimmerman. Norman A. Madson served as dean until 1959.



*Prof. Honsey teaches seminary students in college classroom space*

Prof. B. W. Teigen served as acting dean of the seminary from 1959-1968. Prof. Milton Otto was appointed by the Board of Regents to serve as dean beginning in 1969. Pastor Theodore A. Aaberg became the first full-time seminary president in 1976. Prof. Glenn Reichwald was appointed to serve as acting

president of the seminary during the 1978-1979 school year when Pres. Aaberg was forced to take a leave of absence due to illness. Pastor Wilhelm Petersen succeeded President Aaberg in the office of seminary president beginning in 1980. He was followed by Pastor Gaylin Schmeling in 1997, who currently serves as president of the seminary.

The seminary has had a few different “homes” since it began in 1946. In the first couple of decades of its existence, the seminary classroom space was provided in Old Main on the Bethany Lutheran College campus. In 1968 the seminary was moved to new quarters that had been prepared on the ground floor of Old Main at the college.



*Seminary building 1977*

In 1977 a separate building to house the seminary was completed on the campus, just across Division Street from the gymnasium. The building was erected with some of the funds gathered in the “Gratitude for Grace” synod-wide offering. This building housed the seminary until the current seminary and synod offices were constructed on Browns Court and dedicated on Synod Sunday in June of 1997.

The Lord has blessed Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary for many years. He has provided faithful professors to teach men studying for the preaching ministry. God be praised for his wonderful blessings upon the seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. ❁

*Jonathan N. Madson is Pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Okauchee, WI. He is also a grandson of Prof. N. A. Madson*

## Graduates of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary: First 60 years

1947 Robert D. Preus	1959 Gunnar Staalsett	1976 Erwin J. Ekhoﬀ Theodore G. Gullixson	1985 Timothy J. Bartels Markos DeGarmeaux	1996 Erik Gernander Jerome Gernander
1948 Levine K. Hagen Iver C. Johnson	1960 David Lillegard	Dennis Schlicht E. C. F. Stubenvoll	John J. Petersen Thomas L. Rank Donald L. Moldstad Frank Fiedler III	Konstantin Mamberger Anthony Pittenger Terry Schultz Stephen Schmidt Bruce Schwark
1949 Leigh D. Jordahl Reuben Stock Neil N. Hilton	1962 George H. Gullixson Theodore F. Kuster Peter Chang	1977 Charles J. Keeler Nile B. Merseth Steven P. Petersen Kenneth V. Schmidt	1986 Harvey Abrahamson Richard Gudgeon David J. Hoyord Robert A. Lawson Jonathan Madson	1998 Aaron Hamilton Jesse Jacobsen Timothy Zenda Paul Sullivan
1950 Theodore A. Aaberg John Moldstad, Sr.	1963 James Olsen	1978 Theodore E. Aaberg Timothy E. Erickson	1987 Mark F. Bartels Michael K. Smith	1999 Steven Brockdorf Arlen Dethlefsen Paul Fries Cory Hahnke Phillip Lepak Bernt Tweit
1951 Neil Jordahl Ruben Ude	1966 Wayne L. M. Halvorson Thomas A. Kuster Erling T. Teigen	1979 Michael C. Krentz Gaylin R. Schmeling Otto Trebelhorn William B. Kessel Juan Rubio	1988 Micah W. Ernst Daniel K. Schroeder	2000 Matthew Brooks Matthew Crick Charles Howley Bradley Kerkow Shawn Stafford
1952 Hugo J. Handberg Stanley Holt Paul G. Madson Paul G. Petersen Lyle Rasch	1967 Rodger M. Dale James Lillo Steven P. Quist	1980 Bruce R. Bestervelt Jerrold R. Dalke Philip M. Vangen	1989 Daniel A. Basel Michael A. Madson Richard P. Tragasz Gregory R. Bork	2001 William Grimm Timothy Hartwig Karl Hermanson Lawrence Wentzlaff
1953 Gerhardt Becker Elmer Boniek Otto Drevlow Julius Larsen George M. Orvick Glenn E. Reichwald Wilhelm W. Petersen Arthur Schultz	1969 Roger Falk Paul Jecklin	1981 Joseph P. Burkhardt Craig A. Ferkenstad Matthew E. Luttman Daniel P. Metzger John A. Moldstad, Jr.	1990 James M. Braun Mark A. Wold Kurt A. Smith	2002 Michael Dale Kurt Kluge Robert Lawson, Jr. Gregory Schmidt
1954 Richard Hawley James Hanson Richard A. Newgard	1970 M. Dale Christopherson Paul J. Haugen Ronald L. Mathison David J. Nelson John K. Schmidt Frederick W. Theiste	1982 Roger R. Fehr Russell R. Halverson Gregory J. Haugen Bradley J. Homan David C. Thompson John R. Wilde Richard C. Long	1991 Victor Settje Richard Fyffe	2003 Andrew Palmquist Glenn Smith
1955 Keith Olmanson Desmond Jose	1971 Warren A. Granke Tosten D. Skaaland John E. Smith	1983 John S. Dukleth James A. Krikava Glenn R. Obenberger Thomas E. Petersen Martin J. Doepel Allen J. Quist	1992 David L. Meyer Alexander K. Ring	2004 Christopher Dale Erich Hoeft John Merseth, Sr. Timothy Schmeling
1956 Richard Kuehne Herbert Larson Robert A. Molstad Victor I. Theiste	1972 Martin Teigen	1984 Darryl L. Bakke Thomas H. Fox Daniel J. Larson Daniel F. McMiller Steven R. Sparley Kenneth E. Mellon	1993 Kent T. Dethlefsen Mark W. Tuffin	2005 Daniel Finn Samuel Schmeling S.Piet Van Kampen
1957 Norman A. Madson, Jr.	1973 Mark Marozick Thomas Mickelson Christian G. Morales Paul Schneider John Shep	1985 Joseph C. Abrahamson Ronald E. Pederson Ernest B. Geistfeld Gundars Bakulis Gene R. Lilenthal Michael J. Langlais	1994 Jon S. Bruss James R. Krueger Roger C. Holtz	
1958 Robert Thorson Gerhard Weseloh	1974 Mark O. Harstad		1995	
	1975 Howard F. Aufderheide Wayne Dobratz			

**Learn more about Bethany Seminary at [www.blts.edu](http://www.blts.edu) !**

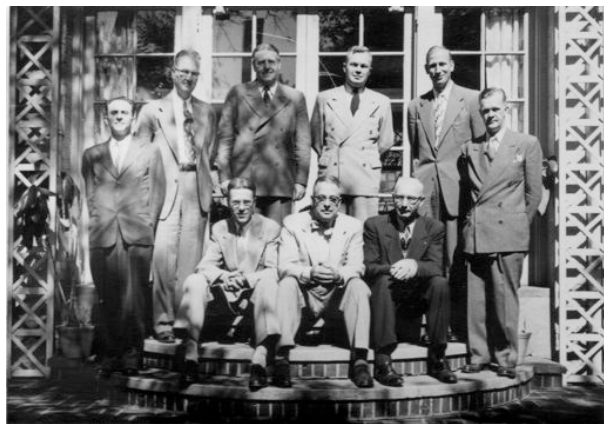
## A Day at Norseland: Tenth Annual Meeting Review

By Robin Ouren

The tenth annual meeting of the ELS Historical Society was held Saturday, June 17, 2006, at Norseland Lutheran Church, rural St. Peter, Minnesota. The program for the day was “A Legacy of Christian Ministry: Pastor M. E. Tweit”.

The morning began with an opening service, led by the Reverend Bernt Tweit, grandson of the late Pastor Tweit (December 4, 1908 – June 22, 2005). A Men’s Chorus, made up of members from Norseland Lutheran Church, sang during this service. Pastor Tweit founded a men’s chorus while he was pastor at Norseland (from 1937-1958).

Society President Robin Ouren welcomed those in attendance, and noted that there were ninety-nine people registered for the day, a record crowd.



*Mission Board meeting*

The day was divided into three sessions, with panels discussing various aspects of Pastor Tweit’s ministry and contributions to the synod. Those presenting were Reverend Erling Teigen, Reverend Theodore Gullixson, Reverend Glenn Obenberger, Camilla Dashcund, BLC President Emeritus Marvin Meyer, Reverend John Smith, Robin Ouren and Oakleigh Natvig. Topics discussed included Pastor Tweit’s role as synod president during the Synodical Conference dissolution and as circuit visitor, his legacy in Christian education (Christian Day Schools, Bethany Lutheran

College and Seminary) as well as his work in parish ministry — as Catechism instructor, preacher, and shepherd to his many flocks over the years.



*Preaching for Norseland Centennial*

During his ministry, Pastor Tweit served parishes at Princeton, Minnesota; St. Peter and Gaylord, Minnesota; Lawler, Iowa; Luverne and Jasper Minnesota; and Waterville and Waukon, Iowa. Members from several of these congregations were present for the meeting, and shared many anecdotes about Tweit and his time in their congregations through the years. Many others shared recollections of Pastor Tweit, who made a lasting impression on so many during his half a century doing the Lord’s work.



*Confirmation at Jerico Lutheran Church*

At the business meeting, Betsy Hermanson was elected to the board of directors, replacing Albin Levorson, who had served on the board

since the founding of the society. Albin was thanked for his years of service. Board member Ryan MacPherson gave a report on a new project, “*Train up a Child: A Collection of Essays on the Importance of Christian Education in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.*”

The afternoon concluded with a photo presentation on Pastor Tweit, put together by Professor Mark DeGarmeaux. The Tweit family provided many photos for this “Life and Legacy of Pastor M. E. Tweit.”



*Paul Anderson, Milton Tweit, Bjarne Teigen at the ELS Historical Society meeting 1999*

Speaking for the family, Pastor Tweit’s son, Paul, thanked the historical society for the program, and closed by saying, “on behalf of my father; ‘Soli Deo Gloria’ (To God Alone Be the Glory).”



*Historical Society Charter members present in 2006. Present but not pictured: Herb and Roberta Fischer, Peter Anthony, Ryan MacPherson*



*Tweit family members present in 2006.*

*Robin Ouren is chair of the ELS Historical Society and a member of Norseland Lutheran Church, rural St. Peter, MN. Pastor Tweit was her confirmation pastor.*

Send us *your* ideas, articles, and suggestions for **Oak Leaves**. We welcome information and articles on church anniversaries, and articles of Synodical and local significance.

And remember to visit the Historical Society’s website:

**[www.evangelicalluthेरansynod.org/history](http://www.evangelicalluthेरansynod.org/history)**

or

**[www.els.name/history](http://www.els.name/history)**

## Christian Day Schools — Part 1 of 2

By Theodore Aaberg — Reprinted from the 1951 Synod Report

*Editors: In 2006 the ELS approved the establishment of Lutheran Schools of America to promote education and establish more Christian Day Schools across the United States.*

*This article shows the Synod's long history of valuing Christian education.*

In Deuteronomy 6:6-7 we read: “*and these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*” And in Ephesians 6:4: “*And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*” In these words God tells parents, and especially the fathers, that He wants them to teach their children His Word. Parents are not at liberty to decide whether or not they will teach their children the truths of Scripture, for God simply tells them that they *are to do it*. He will require an accounting from them on the Last Day. It is not enough that parents provide food, shelter, clothing and other earthly necessities for their children; they must also provide the “One Thing Needful” for them; they must teach them of Christ.

The congregation also has a duty towards the children in its midst. Jesus told Peter not only to feed his sheep, but also to feed His lambs. The congregation is to provide for the instruction of both young and old. Children will get much out of a sermon, especially if the pastor makes his sermons clear and plain. But the children also need the special instruction which the congregation offers in its various schools.

Teaching children is a real job, a difficult one. For one thing, most fathers are busy during the day, often away from home, so occupied with making a living for the family that they do not have too much time to teach their

children. Then, too, parents do not always find it easy to teach others. It is one thing to know something yourself; but quite another matter to impart that knowledge to someone else.

For this reason the congregation conducts various schools-in order to help the parents in carrying out their God-given duty of educating their children. Before going on to a discussion of the different types of schools, and especially of the Christian Day School, we should first say a little more about teaching in the home.

While Christian parents ought, as a rule, to make use of the help which the Church offers them in teaching their children, they should not feel that they can place the whole responsibility of teaching their children in the lap of the Church, as though now they are free from that worry, since they send their children to such and such a school. The home will ever remain the most important school for the children. There they will learn the most, both by word and example. Christian parents do not need to be recognized teachers in order to instruct their children. Let the parents be diligent about family devotions every day, let Bible stories be read to the children from an early age, and above all, let the parents lead a truly God-pleasing life, let them live their Christianity, and there will be some real teaching done in the home. If the parents do not have a Christian home, do not live God-pleasing lives, then there will still be teaching done there, but it will be the wrong kind of teaching. Parents need not expect a school of the congregation to train their child in Christianity and be successful, if they tear down everything the school builds up by their God-less living in the home.

In what way does the congregation help the parents to teach their children? Many different schools or agencies are in use in the churches. There is the Sunday School, the

Saturday School, the Summer School, the Release Time School, and the Christian Day School. Perhaps there are still others, but these are the ones in most common use. What about these schools?

We should first of all bear in mind that Christ has never told the Christians that they must conduct such and such a school in their midst. There is no divine institution for any particular type school in a congregation. They are all strictly something that the congregations, in Christian liberty, have established. He has commanded that parents teach their children. The Church is to instruct its members in His Word. He lays down no rules as to the type of school in which this teaching is to be done.

What type of school, then, should a Church establish in its midst in order to teach the children? While God has not given any instructions as to which school to have, as e.g. a Sunday School or Christian Day School, He does expect the Christian to use the head which He has given him. There should be one question uppermost in the minds and hearts of the congregation, and that is: "How can we best train the children?" "What is the best type of school?" What kind of school will do the job the best? If you have to haul ten ton of brick, and you are told to go out on the parking lot and take your pick of the vehicles there to do the job, and you go out and see a car, a pick-up, a station wagon and a large semi-truck, you will not hesitate to pick the "semi" to haul the bricks. So with Christian education. When you see the job that is to be done, you look over the means of doing it, and you pick the best way there is to do the job. Let us then briefly discuss the different agencies which Churches use to educate the children and see which is best.

What is the best school that a congregation can have in its midst? The Sunday School is an excellent missionary agency; it is a wonderful school to have in order to get unchurched children to the Savior. And the children, in turn, can be a great help in getting their unchurched parents to the Lord; but as a

school in which to teach children the Word of God, it has its weak points. For one thing there is the matter of time. One hour a week, nine months of the year, about 36 hours of instruction. Then subtract about one third to half of this time to allow for opening devotions and other affairs, and there isn't much time left for actual instruction in God's Word. And what about the teachers? Many of them are not only consecrated workers, but also able teachers, but then again, there no doubt are many who are very consecrated, but yet do not have great ability in teaching. If the Sunday School is all the instruction that a child gets from the Church, then he is living pretty much on crusts of bread. The odds are too much against the Sunday School to make it a thorough agency for bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The Saturday School, where the children, instead of coming to Sunday School, assemble on Saturday morning for three hours of instruction is a much better agency than the Sunday School, as far as thoroughness in teaching is concerned, since there is three times as much time for instruction.

The Summer School, or Vacation Bible School, as it is more commonly called now, is an excellent agency for reaching the unchurched, and also for teaching children of the congregation. Congregations would do well to conduct such a school every summer, especially with the view to reaching the unchurched children. But that too has serious limitations. Time is short, and it lasts only two or three weeks. This is not the best agency the Church has to offer.

What about the Christian Day School? It is without a doubt the best school which a congregation can have for the thorough teaching of the children. To find out *why* it is the best school, one needs to consider what the Christian Day School is, how it operates, what it does for the child.

*To be continued...*

*Theodore Aaberg was president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, 1976-1978.*

## Margaret Annexstad, Organist

By Robin Ouren

In May of this year, Margaret Annexstad of Norseland Lutheran Church, rural St. Peter, Minnesota, retired as organist of that congregation.

Born February 24, 1921, to Martin and Louise (Lillegard) Tjernagel, Margaret was the oldest of four sisters, and grew up on a farm just north of Story City, Iowa. Her father was a musician, directing a community band. Her mother played piano, and served as organist at Bethany Lutheran Church, rural Story City.

All four sisters took piano lessons from their mother, and Margaret recalls that once she could read notes, she did the rest on her own. “I was always at the piano,” she says. “The day that ‘Etude’ (music magazine) came in the mail was the best day of the month. Then I had new music to sight-read.”

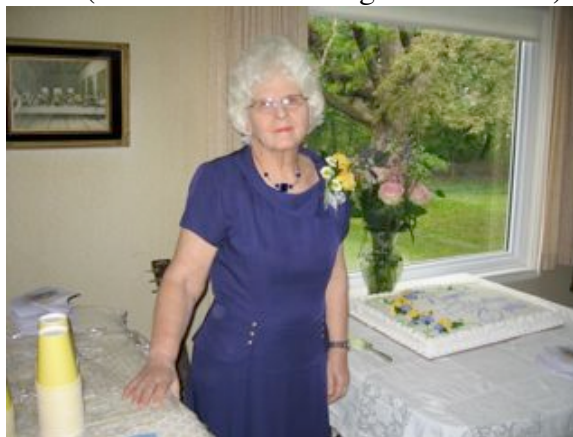
When Margaret was twelve, her mother thought she “should get started” as church organist. There really was no one else in the congregation who could do it. Practicing on the family’s pump organ at home helped her prepare. At first, Margaret’s mother sat in the church balcony with her during services, because Margaret was nervous about playing.

Margaret played organ at her home church occasionally until she left home to attend Bethany Lutheran College. During those years, she taught piano lessons on the side, and served as accompanist for the Bethany Choir, under the direction of Ozzie Hoffmann. She graduated from BLC in 1941, and then taught Christian Day School for two years, first in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and then at Norseland, where she also met the man she would eventually marry: Ingvald Annexstad.

But first, Margaret returned to Bethany, this time as a teacher, giving piano instruction to students. She also accompanied the Bethany Choir again, now directed by Paul Ylvisaker. After this stint at Bethany, Margaret lived in Webster City, Iowa for a time, to be closer to

her family. While there, she twice accompanied a community choir on piano, for their performances of Handel’s “Messiah.”

On June 7, 1946, Margaret married Ingvald Annexstad, and moved to Norseland, where she has lived (in the same house) for the past sixty years. She began playing organ at church again from time to time. Around 1950—she isn’t exactly sure—Margaret began playing for church full-time, and continued doing so until about ten years ago, when she went back to playing one or two Sundays a month (and for most weddings and funerals).



On May 14, Margaret played for her last church service at Norseland, opting to finally retire and pass on the musical torch. After the service, Margaret was greeted with applause and a standing ovation for her sixty years as Norseland organist, and more than seventy years serving the Lord faithfully through her gift of music.

Margaret thanks the Norseland congregation for “giving me the privilege of playing” all these years. “Everybody has been so good to me,” she says.

Ever humble, Margaret downplays her accomplishment, and says simply that her years of playing organ have been “to God’s glory.”

The ELS Historical Society would like to thank Margaret Annexstad for her many years of service: *Mange tusen takk!* (*Many thousand thanks!*)



## Remarks at the 125th Anniversary Banquet of Mayville Lutheran Church, Mayville, North Dakota, July 8, 2006

By Mark O. Harstad, Grandson of the Founding Pastor, the Rev. Bjug Aanondson Harstad

My thanks to the organizers of this event for inviting me to say a few words today. I am very happy to speak in commemoration and celebration of the work of my grandfather, the Rev. Bjug Aanondson Harstad. Twenty-five years ago I was present here along with my father, Pastor Adolph Harstad, the youngest son of Bjug Harstad, who spoke briefly on the occasion of your centennial observance. I am the youngest grandchild of Bjug Harstad, born 100 years after my grandfather. Needless to say, I never saw him, but my respect for him and his work continues to grow.

Bjug Harstad played a role in the establishment of historic Christianity as defined by the Lutheran Confessions in the Valley of the Red River of the North. A by-product of that work was that this area became a magnet for wave after wave of Norwegian immigrants. This was demonstrated in the articles by free-lance writer Curt Eriksmoen which appeared in the Fargo Forum in January, 2005.

Bjug Harstad saw himself as one who stood in a continuity which extended back in time from the rekindling of interest in confessional Lutheranism among German and Scandinavian immigrants to America in the 19th century, to the Lutheran *Book of Concord* of 1580, to the reforming work of Dr. Martin Luther, to the creeds of the Early Christian Church, and ultimately to the Apostolic and Prophetic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Having arrived in America as a 12 year old boy in 1861, Bjug Harstad made the transition to life in the new world. While working for Yankee farmers around Seneca,



Illinois, he acquired the English language and mastered it to the extent that he did not have a recognizable brogue or accent. Through his education at Luther College and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, he also learned German, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He was able to conduct worship services and preach in Norwegian, English and German.

The first 17 years of his long career in the ministry were spent in the Red River Valley. His career would also take him to the Pacific Northwest, and to a series of short-term ventures in Alaska, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and back to the Midwest as a substitute professor at Luther Seminary at two different points in his career.

The pioneers who settled here in the years around 1870 and following brought their faith with them from the old country. It was Bjug Harstad's role to help them organize Lutheran congregations and call pastors so that the Gospel in Word and Sacrament might continue to do its work among Christian people, and also to initiate educational programs and institutions for the perpetuation of the faith. He did this work with a level of physical and mental energy which is amazing. He had a direct hand in the establishment of at least 17 congregations up and down the valley, and several educational institutions.

The challenges before him were many and great. He attacked them all with energy.

A dugout in a hillside sloping down to the Goose River near the Gran Church provided his first shelter from the harsh Dakota elements for several months in the fall of 1874.

If a river had to be crossed and there was

no easy fording place or ferry boat, he stripped down, tied his clothes on his head and swam across.

If there was business to tend to miles away in Crookston, MN, in the dead of winter, he strapped on his skis and headed out across the wind-swept prairie.

If the American theological environment produced challenges to confessional Lutheran theology, he took them on armed with Scripture and the Confessions.

When death overtook his first two children in infancy, he and his beloved wife Guro laid them to rest in the Gran cemetery, believing the promises attached to Holy Baptism, and clinging to the hope of resurrection to eternal life.

When reports came of a new Norwegian settlement far to the west along the Mouse River, he organized an expedition, loaded the wagons with the necessary equipment, hitched up the horses, and went in search of them. There were souls to be served there, human beings who needed the Gospel, and if he didn't go in search of them, who would?

His theology can be summarized in the following way: Historic Christianity as set forth by the Lutheran Confessions is a religion that places in the spotlight what God has done for the redemption of humankind, not what we do for God. That simple principle, the "Grace Alone" principle, which he learned from Scripture and found clearly confessed in the Lutheran *Book of Concord*, shaped his approach to every important theological issue. His career was an affirmation of that "Grace Alone" principle. He did not hesitate to utter a firm "No!" to whatever contradicted that principle.

He affirmed the Bible as the authoritative and powerful revelation of God to humankind. He said "No!" to all efforts to make the Bible into a mere historical record of man's quest for God.

He affirmed the Biblical teaching about the fallen human condition as one of helplessness and hopelessness apart from the

Christian Gospel. He said "No!" to all efforts to attribute some ability in spiritual matters to human reason and will.


He affirmed that the Son of God in human flesh is the sole redeemer and justifier of mankind. He said "No!" to all efforts to find redemption apart from the life, death and resurrection of the Son of God.

He affirmed that the Gospel in Word and Sacrament is the powerful means by which forgiveness, life, and salvation are really given to human beings in their fallen condition. He said "No!" to denials of the power of the Gospel in Baptism, Absolution and Sacrament of the Altar.

He affirmed that faith in the human heart is entirely a work of God which enables people to embrace the Gospel message. He said "No!" to various efforts to make faith a product of human decision and will.

Writing in the year 1930 when Bjug Harstad was in his early 80s, historian of the Norwegian immigration Hjalmar Rued Holland included the following words in his description of my grandfather's place in the history of the Red River Valley:

[Bjug Harstad] had a favorite expression that became a slogan for the younger pastors who came later. 'How glorious it is to wear oneself out in the Lord's service.' But old Harstad seems to be everlastingly durable, for he is alive, vigorous and robust today [1930]. Harstad has seen the Red River Valley and North Dakota transformed from an uninhabited hunting ground to a rich and well-developed modern land.

It appears that O. E. Rølvaag, author of the classic novel about the experience of the Norwegian immigrants, had it right: *I De Dage*, in those days, there were *Giants in the Earth*. Bjug Harstad worked among them in proclaiming historic Christianity. Blessed be his memory. 

Mark O. Harstad is professor of Hebrew and Religious Studies at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN.

## From the Archives

What history lies in this basket?



*From the last issue:*



Cradle from Massachusetts. An heirloom brought to Wisconsin in 1842. Two others exist. One is in the old home of President John Adams. The other belonged to Mrs. Alice Roosevelt Longworth. This one belonged to the Reque family.



**Correction** to last issue, according to a note (c. 1980) by Oswald B. Overn, sent to us by William Overn:

*LARGE SILVER WATER-PITCHER* was presented to my father and mother by the Ladies Society of Our Savior's Lutheran Church of Chicago in 1880. This was the largest church of the Norwegian Synod at that time. My father had been serving this congregation for some months as vacancy pastor while the regular pastor, the Reverend Mikkelson was in Norway. The engraving on the side of the pitcher states (in Norwegian) that it is a remembrance or keepsake from the Ladies Society, Chicago, Oct. 25, 1880. On the other side are engraved the initials of my father and mother (A & R H). This stands for Anton and Rina Helgeson.

*(At that time my father went by the name, Helgeson, since his father's name was Helge.) Later he began to use his surname, Overn, retaining the initial H for Helgeson. Thus his name became A. G. H. Overn.*

*I feel that this pitcher should probably be given to the museum of the E. L. S. in Mankato since that synod is the continuation of the original Norwegian Synod, which was served by my father.*

Oak Leaves  
ELS Historical Society  
6 Browns Court  
Mankato, MN 56001

## Renew your membership!

ELS Historical Society

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Send completed form and check (see box below right  
for type of membership and correct amount) to:

ELS Historical Society

6 Browns Court — Mankato, MN 56001

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**Oak Leaves** welcomes articles of both Synodical and local significance  
for publication. Articles maybe edited for style, clarity, or length to al-  
low for publication. Submitted manuscripts will be deposited in the  
archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

### MEMBERSHIP

All membership  
renewals are due **June 1**

**Voting Membership:**

\$10/year: individual  
\$15/year: husband & wife

**Associate Membership:**

\$15/year: individual  
\$25/year: institutional  
\$5/year: student

**Lifetime Membership:**

\$200