



Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

Volume 19

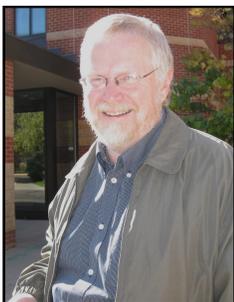
August 2015

Issue 2

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- John Wycliffe: The Morning Star of the Reformation by Herman Harstad
- BLC 2015 Commencement Speaker, Rev. Mark Bartels

**A report on the
SYMPOSIUM ON THE 1913
LUTHERAN HYMNARY**
at the ELS Historical Society
Annual Meeting that was held
6 pm, Sunday, June 21, 2015
Bethany Lutheran College
Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center



by Mark DeGarmeaux

Mark DeGarmeaux serves as chapel organist at Bethany Lutheran College, and teaches music, language, and religion courses.

The *Lutheran Hymnary* from 1913 was the topic for the 2015 ELS Historical Society meeting. The meeting was dedicated to the memory of Prof. Mark O. Harstad who had been a key figure in the Historical Society and its program planning for many years.

Professor Emeritus Erling Teigen gave background on the development of liturgy and hymnbooks in Norway and Denmark after the Luther-

an Reformation. Hans Tausen, later chaplain to King Frederick I, had studied in Wittenberg and preached a Lutheran sermon in Denmark in 1525. Frederick's son (later King Christian III) was present at the Diet of Worms in 1521 and heard Luther's "Here I Stand" speech. Through these kings, the kingdoms of Denmark and Norway became Lutheran in 1536.

The liturgy used in these kingdoms was based on Luther's German Mass and included chanting the Epistle and Gospel. In 1537 Luther's colleague Johannes Bugenhagen came to Copenhagen to organize the church in a Lutheran fashion with a Latin document called the *Ordinance*. This order of service, revised by Christian V in 1685, is in the ELS constitution. The revision added the Opening and Closing prayers that are familiar to many of us and also included some changes regarding the version of the Kyrie and the Preface before the Lord's Supper. Another revision in 1889 gives us the service as it appeared in the 1913 *Lutheran Hymnary*, or Rite One in the 1996 *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*. Prof. Teigen spoke of three resources for studying this history: books by C. T. Engelstoft, Tønder Nissen, and Wilhelm Rothe.

Seminary student Andrew Soule spoke of early Norwegian Lutheran hymnbooks in the United States. Norwegian immigrants knew the order of service described by Prof. Teigen. They commonly brought with them to America: a Bible, a Catechism, a hymnbook, and often a book of Luther's sermons. The first hymnbooks brought to America



were Kingo's (1699), or sometimes Guldberg's (1778). At first, immigrant families worshipped at home, before pastors arrived from Norway. Later, Landstad's 1869 hymnbook was imported and also printed in America. The Norwegian Synod also produced its own hymnbook in 1879.



Hymnbooks only had the words. There were separate chorale-books with the music for the *klokkers* who led the singing, and later for organists. This is still the practice in Europe. Chorale-books were prepared by Knud Henderson (1866) and Erik Jensen (1879) in America, and by Magnus Lindeman (1871) in Norway. Eventually, English hymnbooks were prepared, but the early ones often included only weaker non-Lutheran hymns. The work of finding English translations of the Lutheran chorales and translating the treasured Scandinavian Lutheran hymns was yet to come. This resulted in 72 new translations in the 1913 *Lutheran Hymnary*.



Pastor Peter Faugstad spoke about how the 1913 *Hymnary* was intended as a book to unite most Norwegian Lutherans in America. After Norway gained independence in 1905, nationalism swept over the immigrants as well, and the Hauge Synod invited the Norwegian

Synod and the United Church to participate in doctrinal discussions. These groups were not united in teaching and practice. The Hauge Synod was pietistic and had a low view of clergy and liturgy. The United Church and the Norwegian Synod were divided on predestination. Nevertheless, in 1908 the Norwegian Synod invited the others to work on a joint English-language hymnbook. In 1917 these synods merged into the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America.

The *Lutheran Hymnary* of 1913 was a good start at preserving the Lutheran heritage for Nor-

wegian immigrants. Words and music were printed together, which was becoming the norm in American hymnbooks, but a pocket-sized text-only edition was also available. There were 72 new translations of Danish and Norwegian hymns.

Pastor Faugstad also listed these weaknesses:

- Too many hymns by non-Lutheran authors
- Too many pietistic hymns
- No hymns on the doctrine of election
- Poor selection of sacramental hymns
- Some stilted translations.

He also noted some unique features of the book:

- Two hymns by Francis Scott Key
- Two hymns on Mission to the Jews
- Singing *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* to a different tune.
- Singing *How Firm a Foundation* to the tune for *O Come, All Ye Faithful*.
- A different translation of *Silent Night*.

In 1941 the Synodical Conference published *The Lutheran Hymnal*, but it did not contain the "Bugenhagen" liturgy or very many Scandinavian hymns. A proposed supplement by the ELS was planned but never appeared, probably due to World War II. Many ELS congregations continued to use the *Lutheran Hymnary* until 1996 when the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* was published. Pastor Faugstad said the "new" *Hymnary* combines the best of the 1913 *Hymnary* and the 1941 *Hymnal*.

The meeting was very well attended and was followed by singing several hymns from the old *Lutheran Hymnary*, and then a short business meeting. ■



Minutes of the ELS Historical Society Annual Meeting Sunday, June 21, 2015

The annual meeting of the ELS Historical Society was held immediately following the symposium

program on the liturgy and agenda of the 1913 Hymnary. Presenters for that program were Prof. Erling Teigen, seminarian Andrew Soule, and Rev. Peter Faugstad.

Erling Teigen called the meeting to order at 7:45 p.m. The secretary's report was read and approved followed by brief summaries from the board meetings during the previous year. A new treasurer will be selected from among the board members at the autumn meeting so there was not a treasurer's report at this time.

It was announced that Rev. Paul Madson would be retiring from managing the synod archives and Rev. Ted Gullixson would be replacing him in that capacity. Rev. Gullixson will then also serve as ex-officio member on the ELSHS board.

The next order of business was the election of new board members. It was announced that Rev. Peter Faugstad is the new presidentially appointed member of the board replacing the late Mark Harstad. Betsy Hermanson has served the maximum three consecutive three-year terms allowed in the by-laws. The board nomination for that position is Bergetta Abrahamson. No further nominations were presented from the floor and her election was moved, seconded and passed. The board nominated Marge Lillo (with her permission) to fulfill the final two years of Rev. Jerry Gernander's term due to his resignation from the board. No other nominations were presented from the floor and her election was also moved, seconded and passed.

Erling Teigen announced that the autumn board meeting had been set for October 3, 2015. He also reported that there are no electronic copies of the constitution and bylaws so there will be work upcoming to rectify that.

The meeting adjourned.
Respectfully submitted,
Lois Jaeger▪

Ottesen Museum Update

by Becky DeGarmeaux

This month the Ottesen Museum is looking for your help. This quilt was made by ladies of several

of the Wisconsin congregations in 1978 when the first seminary building was built. Each square is unique and it seems that the only instructions that went out were to use yellow as the main color and to include the church's name and the date it was made. Someone then sewed all of the squares together and used fabric in yellow and brown to tie everything together. For many years the quilt hung in the student lounge at the seminary but was not moved to the new building in 1997. In about 1994, parts of the seminary building were being used as a temporary library while a new one was being built on the Bethany campus. Apparently, the thought was to throw the quilt away, but it was rescued by the library director and his wife and the quilt spent the next 20 years in their home. Recently they donated it to the Ottesen Museum.



The congregations involved in the project were: Holy Cross, Madison; Our Savior's, Elderon; Western Koshkonong, Cottage Grove; St. Paul's, Portage; Holy Trinity, Okauchee; Our Savior's, Madison; First Trinity, Marinette; St. Paul's, Clintonville; St. Martin's, Schawano; and Our Savior's, Amherst Junction.

There are many questions about the history of the quilt. If you know any details—who spearheaded the project, who from each congregation made the squares, who finished it—please contact Becky DeGarmeaux at museum@blc.edu.

You can also help with this year's Christmas Open House. The theme this year is "Christmas Across the ELS." The Museum is looking for donations of pictures, bulletins, decorations, and descriptions of celebrations from our ELS congregations. For more information, contact Museum Director, Becky DeGarmeaux.

(The Museum's regular hours are Tuesday through Thursday from 1:30 - 4:30 or contact the Museum at museum@blc.edu to set an appointment to visit the Museum at other times.)▪

Diana Marzinske
HIST 460
Dr. Ryan MacPherson
May 1, 2014

Editor’s Note: Students in Dr. Ryan MacPherson’s class wrote oral history reports in the spring of 2014. Mrs. Holte was interviewed by Diana



Marzinske and we are pleased to print the interview in her memory. Her obituary said “Violet Evelyn Holte, age 94, of Mankato, was called home to her Savior on Friday, April 17, 2015...” Violet and her husband Norman were friends and supporters of the ELS Historical Society. Blessed be her memory.

Oral History Report:
Interview with Violet Holte

Mrs. Violet Holte (Fevig) was born November 27, 1920 in Volt, Montana, but most of her childhood was spent growing up on a farm in Clay County near Ulen, Minnesota, with her siblings Laurel, Joyce, and Alvin. Coming from a Norwegian heritage, she remembers large family gatherings that always included lefse and lute-fisk. Her family attended the local Lutheran church. Violet and her siblings were educated in a little country schoolhouse that was a half mile away from home.

Violet furthered her education by attending Bethany Lutheran High School for three years followed by Bethany Lutheran College for two more years. While there, she enjoyed learning and studying many subjects, but her favorites were English and mathematics. One of her fondest memories was participating in the Bethany choir. During her high school years, she stayed in the dormitories and “studied a lot, and had a great time, too.” Violet’s other favorite part of the Bethany experience was meeting her now late

husband, Norman Holte, a “wonderful man,” with whom she was classmates from 1940–42.

After college, Violet taught in several Christian day schools and vacation Bible schools in Sauk Rapids, Norseland, and Long Prairie. In 1947 she married Norman and together they raised four children, three boys and a girl. Violet remained involved at Bethany Lutheran College because her husband taught there for many years and even served as president for a short time. The main differences that Violet observed about Bethany today concerns mostly size. There are many more students, faculty, and buildings than when she attended.

During most of her married life, Violet described her daily routine as a “typical housewife.” She cooked, cleaned, sewed, and took care of the children. She would not have given up that life for anything, though, as she cites her children as her greatest accomplishment during her earthly life. All of her children attended Bethany Lutheran College, just like their parents. Today, Violet also has nine grandchildren and “quite a few” great-grandchildren.▪

Amanda Johnson
HIST 460
Dr. MacPherson
May 6, 2014



Editor’s Note: Students in Dr. Ryan MacPherson’s class wrote oral history reports in the spring of 2014. Amanda Johnson interviewed **Amanda Madson**, a member and supporter of the ELS Historical Society as is her husband Norman.

Oral History Report:
Interview with Amanda Madson

It's Somewhere in the Third Article:
A Play by Mrs. Madson

On June 22, 1993, fifty-five people performed a play called *It's Somewhere in the Third Article* for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Convention held at Bethany Lutheran College. The author of this play was Mrs. Amanda Madson, who told me about it one day when I was visiting her.

“How did you get the idea to write this play?” I asked her. “I didn't,” she said. “The president of the synod, Pastor George Orvick asked me to write it, and the reason he asked me to write it was because I had written a poem about the history of the Norseland Congregation, which was acted out at their 125th anniversary on June 26, 1983. All the children of the congregation were in that play.” They practiced and learned it all in five days of VBS. “It was so fun, the kids had such a good time learning this,” said Mrs. Madson.

One day, ten years after the successful performance at Norseland, Pastor Orvick invited Mrs. Madson into his office. “It took him five minutes,” said Mrs. Madson. “He said, 'I want you to write a play about the history of the ELS for the 75th Anniversary of the synod, and I want these particular chapters in it,' and he didn't give any more instructions than that. I knew right away what I wanted to do.”

First, Mrs. Madson researched the synod's history. She sat in her dining room and read books like *City Set on a Hill* and *Grace for Grace*. She also called and interviewed elderly people in the synod who remembered things like the early years of Bethany Lutheran College, the Merger of 1917, and the meeting at Lime Creek in 1918. “How many people did you interview for the play?” I asked. “Many, many,” she said. “I had so much fun discovering those little details.” Mrs. Madson showed me one of her letters from Mrs. Anna John Silber, a former student of Bethany Lutheran Ladies College, which she used when writing the play. The letter was full of detailed information, like what Mrs. Silber wore for class every day.

When Mrs. Madson wrote the play, she wrote it in pencil because she didn't have access to a typewriter. “You must have heard so many stories when you were writing the play,” I said, “how did you pick which ones to put in?” Mrs.

Madson replied, “I put them all in.” When the play was finished she dictated it to Jean Annexstad, who typed it down as fast as she could as Mrs. Madson read it out loud. The finished play contained six acts. Prof. Sig Lee and Prof. Erling Teigen cast Bethany students and staff as actors for portions of the play. Other acts of the play were performed by local congregation members. “I asked for volunteer actors from the Norseland and Norwegian Grove congregations, and the Mt. Olive people picked their own characters.” said Mrs. Madson. Bethany provided the costumes.

Mr. Sigurd Lee, a theater professor at Bethany, edited and directed the play. “All I did was write the words down,” said Mrs. Madson, “but Sig Lee brought it to life.” When he learned how long the play was “Sig Lee was gently firm,” said Mrs. Madson. He told her to cut some out. “I was not a very outspoken person,” said Mrs. Madson, “but I said, 'No, these people have been practicing and they are so excited about this.' And so most of it remained as it was.” In addition to Mrs. Madson's script, Erling Teigen wrote Act Two for the play. “It was also too long,” Mrs. Madson laughed. “Sig Lee said he had to trim it, but he didn't.”

Since all the learning was done in individual congregations and groups, everyone met just the night before the performance to practice together. At the end of the lengthy practice, a Norseland member became visibly emotional. “He stood up, and he was crying,” said Mrs. Madson. He said when he was a young boy his father died and even though he wanted to be in his school's plays, he never had time because his family needed his help on the farm. This was the first play he had been in. “I think that's my favorite memory of doing this play,” said Mrs. Madson.

The day of the play, there were so many people the theater couldn't hold all of them. In the early stages of planning the play, Mr. Lee decided to perform it only once, but Mrs. Madson said to him, “You can't just put this on once! There isn't going to be room in the auditorium. You've got to put it on twice that evening!” And still there wasn't room for everybody,” said Mrs. Madson. “Mr. [Rudolph] Honsey came to the second performance and they wouldn't let him and others in because it was full, and he never got to see this play.”

The play began in 1938 in Tomine Moen's dining room, where a group of Lutherans were worshipping because their church was damaged by rain. After their service, the Lutherans mingled and talked. Tomine tells her friend Inga that a neighbor asked her why she didn't join a bigger (but more liberal) congregation, and Tomine replied to her neighbor "I can't explain why real good right this minute, but I know it's somewhere in the Third Article" (hence, the play's name). The second act (written by Pastor Teigen) taught the audience about the Election Controversy through a professor and his students during their classroom discussion.

Act Three was about the infamous merger, where three Lutheran synods united on June 19, 1917, at 10:00 a.m. In spite of the popular consensus to merge, a large minority of about 200 pastors and delegates were opposed to the union, but joined anyway because they didn't know what else to do. The second part of this act was about the pastors who refused to join the union and met at the Aberdeen Hotel the same day of the merger. This was the beginning of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Act Four was set in 1918 at Lime Creek Lutheran Church, where the new synod was officially launched. The character of Bjug Harstad, the synod's first president, was included in this act. Act Five was called "The Purchase of Bethany College." It was Mrs. Madson's favorite act. The final act was called "The Opening of Bethany Seminary." It told how Paul Andersen traveled from Luverne, MN to Concordia Lutheran Seminary in St. Louis, MO. Along the way, he explained to travelers on the train and taxi that he was willing to travel far from home to study Lutheran doctrine.

It's Somewhere in the Third Article brought ELS members together for a day of fun and learning. The day of the performance, Mrs. Silber's brother-in-law and sisters brought her from Minneapolis. She was 96 years old. She said, "This is the first time I've ever been portrayed in a play." In addition to the fun and excitement of producing and performing a play, Mrs. Madson's play re-enacted historical figures so quickly forgotten by everyone but Lutherans. Like Tomine Moen's neighbor, many people don't see anything special about the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, but in her play, Mrs. Madson

helps us understand how the examples these Lutherans set are worth more than diamonds. ■

John Wycliffe: The Morning Star of the Reformation

by Herman Harstad



Pictured: a stain glass window featuring the 14th century religious reformer and Oxford theologian John Wycliffe, who produced the first English translation of the Bible (c. 1382). Wycliffe's writings inspired the pre-Reformation reform movement known as the Lollards.

John Hus lived about a hundred years before Martin Luther. He was from Bohemia (in present day Czech Republic). He was burned at the stake for apostasy in 1415. He had been tried and found guilty of **Wycliffism**. Englishman John Wycliffe (also spelled Wyclif, Wycliff, Wiclef, Wicliffe, Wickliffe) was one of the first voices to boldly and publicly declare his conviction that the Roman Church had fallen into apostasy and corruption. A thorough housecleaning was needed just as the unclean temple needed it at the time of Jesus. We are told in Luke 19:45&46: Then he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling. "It is written," he said to them, " 'My house will be a house of prayer'; but you have made it 'a den of robbers'."

Wycliffe's Early Years

Wycliffe was born in the village of Hippswell in Yorkshire in the mid-1320s. He was a good student and thrived in the academic community at Oxford where he studied natural science, mathematics, and theology. He acquired a deep and abiding interest in Biblical studies and eventually earned a Doctor of Divinity Degree in his later years. His goal was to serve Christ and teach the truths of Scripture. Just as Jesus felt compelled to drive the money changers out of the temple, Wycliffe was intolerant of error and refused to remain silent about the errors of the church even though clerics had the will and authority to punish dissenters.

In the World but Not Of the World

Unlike Rome's view, Wycliffe believed the true church was invisible and was made up of all believers and that Christ was the head, not the pope. At the end of his career, he saw the papacy as the antichrist. The papacy endorsed many unbiblical practices such as monastic orders that had acquired large tracts of land for secular uses. Monks' idle lifestyles were modeling laziness instead of industriousness among the people. He accused the pope of simony (the buying or selling of a church office). The pope gave monks the authority to hear confessions and to grant pardons, even to criminals, which they did in exchange for money. Wycliffe wrote tracts against the abuses among the monks and priests.

Separation of Church and State

In Wycliffe's time, the Catholic Church owned a third of the land in England. While acting as the chaplain to the king, Wycliffe was instrumental in drafting an answer to the pope's demands for taxes to be paid to Rome. He argued that either King Edward was king or Pope Urban was king. Wycliffe asserted that reason and scripture supported the position that Edward was king and he had no moral or legal obligation to send tax money to Rome, a foreign power. The pope withdrew his demand for money. But he bristled at the notion that his universal sovereignty over church and state was questioned.

Translation of the Bible into English

Wycliffe believed the most powerful weapon against church corruption and apostasy was the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God. Therefore he worked on overseeing the translation of the Vulgate (the Catholic Bible written in Latin) into vernacular English and it is believed he translated much or all of the New Testament himself. But widespread dissemination was hampered by the fact that the world had to wait over a hundred years until German inventor Johannes Guttenberg invented movable type in 1456. Wycliffe's translation had to be hand printed and the process was so labor intensive and expensive that only the wealthy could purchase an entire Bible. Some bought only portions and others pooled their resources and took turns reading the precious book. When Luther posted the 95 theses in 1517, Gut-

tenberg's technology made it possible to rapidly print hundreds of copies. When the Germans had copies of the Bible in their own language in their hands, it was not a translation of a translation but a translation of the original Hebrew and Greek done by Luther. Wycliffe is known as the "**Morning Star of the Reformation**" because he rediscovered two critically important truths of Christianity—salvation by grace through faith and the Holy Scripture was the final authority on faith and doctrine and not changeable traditions of men.

Wycliffe's Legal Opposition and Death

Wycliffe faced charges of three tribunals during his lifetime and death. The first was before a synod of bishops at Oxford, November 17, 1382, that had declared the reformer's writings heretical. They had convinced young King Richard to issue a royal decree imposing prison sentences to anyone who held to the condemned doctrines. Wycliffe appealed his conviction and sentence to Parliament. He and his supporters argued their case so persuasively that the charges were dropped. All England was divided between Wycliffe's enemies and supporters. Then he was summoned before the papal tribunal in Rome. Wycliffe responded in a respectful letter indicating that his conscience was bound to obey God rather than men just as Peter and the other disciples appearing before the Sanhedrin said, "We must obey God rather than men!" (Acts 5:29). Before he could be arrested and transported to Rome, Wycliffe suffered a stroke and died December 31, 1384.

Several years later in May 1415 (the year Hus was burned at the stake), the Council of Constance declared him to be a heretic. His writings were banned, burned, and his remains exhumed and burned—his ashes thrown into a river. At the time the big question was—Would anyone be brave enough to challenge Rome in the future? Stay tuned.

References

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- J. D. Douglas, Walter A. Elwell, Peter Toon. The Concise Dictionary of Christian Tradition. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1989.
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Commencement Ceremony

May 15, 2015

Bethany Lutheran College

(One way to view the video is to go to BLC.edu, click on the YouTube icon, and choose the upload of Spring Commencement 2015)

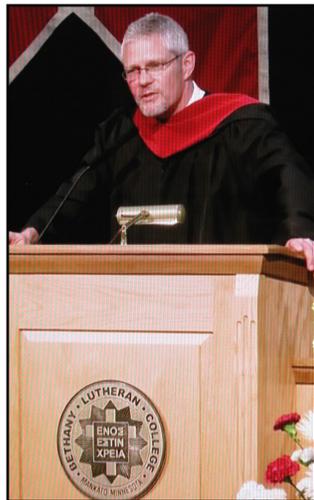
President Dan Bruss introduced Rev. Mark Bartels, Commencement Speaker

(Editor's Note: both edited and condensed slightly)

It is my pleasure to introduce Rev. Mark Bartels. ... I was teaching Chemistry at Bethany and Mark was pre-engineering but our paths didn't really cross again until Mark was on the Board of Regents when I returned as President in 2003. Mark had a close working relationship with the board. I appreciated his thoughtfulness, his ability to zero in on issues, his counsel, and he was not afraid to challenge the group or me. He is really focused on student success. He has a tremendous passion and heart for the students at Bethany. As a side note, one of his sons Jonathan is part of the graduating class. Please welcome Rev. Bartels to the podium.

Thank you very much, President Bruss. ... To you President Bruss, to the faculty and staff, to you family members who have prayed for and supported these graduates and especially to you parents who I know dearly, dearly love the ones who are to graduate today, it is a real honor for all of us to be here for the graduating class of 2015.

And to the graduating class of 2015, your relationship with Bethany is about to change. Before the clock strikes noon today you will become alumni, and an alumnus is a former student of BLC and Bethany will become your alma mater. And an alma mater is the school you used to attend. In Latin, the phrase alma mater means either nurturing mother or foster mother and the word alumnus can either mean pupil or foster child. So today I want to focus on the fact



that as of today Bethany becomes your alma mater, and you are the foster child.

You have eaten at your foster mother's table, you've sat at the feet of Jesus with her and you've learned your lessons and she's about to put her arms around your neck and look you one more time in the eye and then she's going to say goodbye and that's with real mixed emotions. Because as your foster mother looks at these grown children of hers, on the one hand her heart is torn because I know this foster mother would love to have you stay here—you're so dear to her. On the other hand, it's time to go. It is with deep love and respect and confidence that you're prepared to leave her sheltered side. You've sung in the Bethany song, "As we leave your sheltered side, may we all your hopes fulfill." If Bethany could give you words of advice right now, what words of advice would she give you? I'm going to take you, of all places, to a church basement in Madison, Wisconsin, ten days ago. And gathered in that church basement of Our Savior's Lutheran Church were 12 ladies from the Madison area in their 70s, 80s, and 90s. And I want to share a bit of advice from those 12 ladies.

I'm going to let them speak on behalf of your foster mother, Bethany Lutheran College. But let me give you a little backstory. When your foster mother was 14 years old, just a young college, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod was only seven years old, your foster mother almost went out of existence! She was on the verge of bankruptcy. The bank was almost ready to foreclose on her. In an effort to save your foster mother Bethany Lutheran College, which was owned by a consortium of Lutherans, an offer was made to this tiny new synod of about 5000 members. The offer was this, you can have Bethany Lutheran College. All you have to do is take up the mortgage payments and pay her operating expenses. That was like offering a 10 carat diamond ring to a pauper girl. And our synod desperately wanted Bethany Lutheran College. They saw this as a treasure, to be able to have a Christian school with Christian teachers, teaching a Biblical world view; and as they met in convention in 1925, our little church body said, "We can't do it. We can't afford it. We can't make the payments." So they said no. And Bethany Lutheran College slipped out of the hands of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. And then it was offered to the Wisconsin Synod. The Wisconsin Synod said the same thing. Then, in 1926, there was a group of members, private individuals from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, who were convicted in their hearts—we need Bethany Lutheran College. We need it! This would be such a treasure to our church body. We've got this problem presented before us by God. This college is about to collapse. We could have it. How could we make that happen? Here's what happened.

One hundred private people, private individuals, pastors and farmers and a few other people got together and the hundred of them together bought Bethany Lutheran College. They bought it! They risked their farms, their own homes, their mortgages, their retirements, and they said, “We will take up the mortgage payments. We will take up the operational expenses. We need this college!” That’s what you call the courage of conviction and “We will carry the weight of this college until our little church body, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, is capable of carrying it on its own.”

The next year, 1927, when our synod met at convention, not much had changed as far as size or anything but our church body was so emboldened by the act of these 100 people that one of the delegates stood up—his name was G. A. Gullixson (many of you have lived in Gullixson Hall, named after him)—and he said, “I move we take over the school.” And they did and it was by the courage of conviction that our little church body threw its heart and soul into making sure that this treasure, where we have Christian teachers and a Christian education and Christian training of young people, can somehow work and everybody threw themselves into it. Everybody! It was going to take everybody’s work.

There was a club called the Paint and Varnish Club and they got together to paint the walls and varnish. There were people who wished they could be part of the Paint and Varnish Club but they lived too far away and so they started these little groups called Bethany women’s auxiliaries and these women threw their hearts and souls into doing whatever they could to make sure that Bethany could make it. They sewed clothing and did whatever they could. And so those groups, those women’s auxiliaries, they still exist today and that’s who I was meeting with in the basement of Our Savior’s Lutheran Church ten days ago.

Here these 70, 80, and 90-year-old ladies, who still have this courage of conviction that we need Bethany Lutheran College, are going to do whatever they can to support Bethany. They love this college, they love you, they love the teachers, they love Jesus, they love His Word and the 12 of them were meeting and no Bethany representative could be there so they heard a letter read from Jake Krier. They watched a video of the honor’s recital and they drank that all in and said, “Wow, God has really blessed this college!”

Then they heard another message from Jake Krier and in the message it said that Pastor Mark Bartels will be the graduation speaker at Bethany Lutheran College, and they said “Oh, that’s nice.” And I said, “Yes it is.” And they said, “What are you going to be talking

about?” And I said “I’m going to tell them that Bethany is about to become their foster mother. And as they’re about to leave home, I’m going to give them some advice from their foster mother.” All of a sudden I thought, “Here’s my chance.” These women who love Jesus, love his word, love the college, love the students, I looked at them and I said, “You know, If Bethany could throw her arms around these students’ necks as they go, as a mother, what do you think she would say?” All 12 of them, almost as if on cue, put their heads down and thought for about 15 seconds, and then the answers came.



And these are some awesome answers. The first one said, “Bethany would look them in the eye and she would say, ‘Be true to the faith.’” Be true to the faith! You know, if she could look you in the eye and put her arms around your neck, I think she would say, “You, more than any other class that has preceded you, will have more challenges. You are about to go into a world where Christianity is on the decline, where there are more temptations than there have ever been, where there is more violent hostility to Christianity, there is more open antagonism toward the Christian worldview than there has ever been in any graduating class that’s come out of Bethany Lutheran College.” And so, your foster mother would put her arms around your neck and say, “That is why our culture needs you so badly.” And she may compare you to, for example, Daniel. Daniel, in the Old Testament, was a highly educated young man, just like you are. Daniel was deeply steeped in a Biblical world view just like you are. Daniel was thrown into a culture that was oftentimes very contrary to the Biblical world view that he had. Daniel loved the Lord, as do you. Daniel faced serious, serious threats to himself. And yet Daniel, by the grace and power of God, was able to have a huge impact on his culture.

He had the courage of conviction to stand up for the truth, for what is right, to live his faith, and he was placed in positions to use his abilities and leadership skills. He had a real impact on his culture. That's why we need you, 2015 graduates of Bethany Lutheran College. You are highly educated. You have a Biblical world view. You're going out into a culture that needs your impact and your influence and we will need people from amongst this group so when you are challenged about what you believe and why you believe it are able to speak, as it were, with the tongues of men and angels. And there are people here who have that capability. We'll need people amongst this group that when there are problems that are being faced, you have a faith that can move mountains. And there are people here who have that kind of faith. We're going to need people that when the going gets tough they will be willing to sacrifice, to surrender their bodies to the flames.

So those women looked at me and the first answer was "She'd tell them to be true to the faith." But on the heels of that was the next answer, "She'd tell them, 'Let Jesus shine.'" Here's why. Because if you can speak in the tongues of men and angels but have not love, you're just a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If you have a faith that can move mountains but have not love, you're nothing. If you surrender you body to the flames but have not love, you gain nothing. So your foster mother would tell you, "Let Jesus shine."

If there is anybody, and I mean anybody in the world, and I'm not exaggerating, who has been bathed in the love of Jesus, it is this class of 2015 here at Bethany Lutheran College. You have been bathed in the love of Jesus for the last four years. You've seen it on the walls of Bethany, you've heard it in the songs, you've heard it in the chapel, you've heard it in the classroom. You have been immersed in the love of Jesus. It's a love that cannot be surpassed. It can't even be compared to. It's a love that is based on nothing but absolute mercy. It's a love that looks at you and is filled with mercy for you though you're all undeserving. It's a love that is filled with mercy in spite of all your sins. It's a love that says I will make the choice to do whatever it takes to meet your needs. It's a love of Jesus that says, "If I need to take your sins as my own, I'll do it. If I need to go to the cross, I'll do it. If I need to have nails driven into my hands, I'll do it. If I need to bleed and die, I'll do it. If I need to suffer everything for you, I'll do it." And he did.

You know that love. You've heard that love. You've been immersed in that love. It's a love that says I forgive you every day no matter how many times you sin against me. It's a love that says there's nothing you

can do that can make me love you more than I already do. And there's nothing you can do to make me love you less. I love you unconditionally. It's a love you've been immersed in. It's the love of Jesus that saves. It's the same love that transforms. The love of Jesus that you've experienced here at Bethany Lutheran College transforms lives. And Jesus is the one who says, "If you remain in me as a branch is in the vine, you will bear much fruit." If there's anybody in the world of whom there are high expectations to show the love of Jesus, it's you. You have been immersed in his love and the expectation is that you will bear much fruit. So as you go into the world and as you work in the office, do it with the love of Jesus, the merciful love of Jesus. As you work in the factory, do it with the merciful love of Jesus. As you speak with the antagonists to the Christian faith, do it with the love of Jesus, the merciful love of Jesus. As you hold the little baby that the Lord gives you someday in your arms, love that one with the merciful love of Jesus. As you hold your spouse in your arms someday, love him or her with the merciful love of Jesus.



The last thing those twelve ladies said was, "If Bethany could throw her arms around those graduates and give them a bit of advice before they left, she'd tell them, 'Go to church.'" Your foster mother, Bethany Lutheran College, has the name Bethany for a reason. She was named after the town Bethany where there were two women who dearly loved Jesus. Mary and Martha. And Martha showed her love for Jesus by the service she provided him. And that's what you're going to do when you leave these hallowed halls. But the other sister, Mary, sat and listened to the voice of Jesus. Martha said to Jesus, "Tell Mary to come and help me," to which he responded—and this is the Bethany motto—he said, "Martha, Martha, you are troubled and worried about many things but only one thing is needed and Mary has chosen that better part and it can't be taken away from her." That one thing needed is the word of God. That's what the Holy Spirit works

through. You cannot have the courage of conviction without the power of the Holy Spirit, you cannot have the love of Jesus without the power of the Holy Spirit. You cannot remain in your faith without the power of the Holy Spirit. The one thing needed is the word.

And I close with this thought. Sports fans will probably recognize the name Pete Maravich. Pete Maravich was one of the greatest NBA players of all time. He played basketball back in the 70s and 80s. When he retired he led a reclusive life and became kind of a wild-living anti-Christian type guy. He had a heart attack and almost died and he actually converted to Christianity and became a very outspoken Christian. At the same time there was a Christian counselor who had a very popular radio show called "Focus on the Family" and his name was James Dobson. James Dobson heard that Pete Maravich had converted to the Christian faith and how important Christianity was to him so he called him and said, "Could I interview you on my national radio program about Christianity?" Pete Maravich said, "That would be great." James Dobson said, "Before we interview you, before we eat, we play a little basketball. Would you mind playing a little pick-up basketball with us?" So these guys on "Focus on the Family" would get to play with the great "Pistol Pete" Maravich! Pete Maravich said, "Well, I did have a heart attack and my doctor told me to be really careful but I feel really good so I'll do that." And so, he showed up. They played basketball.

When they were done playing, James Dobson looked at Pete Maravich and asked "How are you feeling?" Pete Maravich said "I feel great!" And then he collapsed on the floor. And James Dobson laughed because he thought he was joking. And he said, "Come on, Pete!" Pete convulsed and James Dobson got on his knees and took Pete Maravich in his arms and he said, "Pete!" Pete Maravich convulsed a few more times and then he died in the arms of James Dobson.

As soon as he could James Dobson got in his car and drove home, found his son Ryan and told him what happened. He said, "Someday you're going to get a phone call that tells you that I've died. And Ryan, when you get that phone call I want you to know that I'm in heaven by faith in Jesus as my savior, and Ryan, I'm going to be waiting for you. Be there!"

Graduating class of 2015, this may be the last time you ever set foot on this campus, the last time your alma mater puts her arms around your neck. But I know from the bottom of her heart she would say, "Be there!"

Go in peace. Go and serve the Lord with gladness. And may God bless the graduating class of 2015. ■

Camp Lor-Ray

Twin Lake, Michigan (near Muskegon)
celebrated 50 years of serving ELS
and WELS children and families
July 3-4, 2015

Kathy Bruss reporting, with photos by her brother Tim Moldstad (the anniversary service; the cooks preparing the food for the dinner, and the people waiting to eat).

Camp Lor-Ray was such a big part of our growing up years. With Dad [Robert "Bob" Moldstad] as the Camp Director and Mom [Mary] as the nurse, we went every year for two weeks, even before we were camper age. To this day, whenever I meet a Lutheran from Michigan or other feeder locations, I always ask them if they ever went to Camp Lor-Ray. Invariably they have and there is an instant common bond—the joy of feeling more independent, the beloved routines, the friendships made, even the Bible lessons seem more meaningful. It is a truly wonderful experience.

It was heartwarming to see people still totally committed to Camp Lor-Ray, investing their time and talents at both keeping the place in shape and running the different camps. ■





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All membership renewals are due **June 1**

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