



Oak Leaves

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Old and New Territory: A Website for Scarville and Center Lutheran Churches By Peter Faugstad

The roots of the Scarville Lutheran Church (in north central Iowa) can be found under the oak trees at Lime Creek. The history of Center Lutheran Church began with another church in the area, North Prairie. In 1917 some, desiring to continue their faithfulness to the Confessional Lutheran doctrine of their forefathers and to continue the Norwegian Synod tradition, formed Scarville and Center Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Churches and joined the reorganized Synod. But to begin their historical legacies here would be to deny half a century of orthodox Norwegian Lutheranism.

The culmination of this historical research was a website project intended to display both the important histories as well as other pertinent information about the Scarville and Center Parish.



T. A. Torgerson and His Legacy
After immigrating to America in 1853,

Torger Andreas (T. A.) Torgerson moved to Wisconsin and worked on the family farm. Encouraged by his pastor, Torgerson entered the Missouri Synod seminary in St. Louis in 1858, studying under the prominent Lutheran theologian C. F. W. Walther. He graduated in 1865 and in August was called to the Iowa congregations of Silver Lake, Lime Creek, and Shell Rock. In serving this parish, he was the furthest west of any Lutheran pastor, and he soon found himself traveling great distances to the settlers in the area.

At the height of his frontier work, he ministered to twenty-three different groups spread 150 miles north to south and 50 miles east to west—an amazing feat considering his workload and the methods of travel at the time! A newspaper article written just after his funeral in 1906 concluded that

doubtless the strong machinery was breaking down under the strain of his more than sixty years of strenuous life, for it appears that he died of a general collapse of all the vital forces. His mind, however was clear to the very last and his faith burned bright while heart and flesh were failing.

Lime Creek Lutheran Church was organized in 1860, so the Rev. Torgerson arrived only a short time after its origin. Within the next two decades, Rev. Torgerson advised a group of people living in the area later known as the Scarville township to meet under his guidance in their homes. The Rev. T. A. Torgerson served this group until 1887, and

his son the Rev. A. M. Torgerson took over some of these duties after joining his father as assistant pastor in 1894. The Scarville group built a church in 1901 just after the establishment of the town (1899, incorporated 1904), calling it the Immanuel Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church. The 1917 merger and compromise soon divided this church. Eight families left Immanuel with their pastor, the Rev. Emil Hansen. By 1918, they had formed and built another church in Scarville just one block away from Immanuel. These were bitter times. Families split and friends became enemies in the close confines of a small Midwestern town. When merger and non-merger people approached each other on the sidewalks of Scarville, one would cross the street to avoid the other.

The divide was equally difficult in the North Prairie congregation. The same Rev. T. A. Torgerson had first held services among the people of this church in 1866. Three years later North Prairie Lutheran Church was officially organized. In 1907, it formed a parish with the Immanuel congregation in Scarville.



Center Lutheran Church, 1919

Consequently, when a number of people left North Prairie to form Center Lutheran Church following the merger, the new Center group established a parish with the new Scarville group, an arrangement that remains to this day.

The “Why” of Church History

Tracing the histories of Scarville and Center to the 1860s instead of 1918 is important

for three reasons: to honor, to teach, and to admonish. The work of the Rev. T. A. Torgerson and other Lutheran pastors who served and established churches in Iowa and Minnesota is monumental, for it built a strong Confessional Lutheran foothold in the area. To forget their difficult work would be ungrateful and unjust, and today’s churches would also lose a fascinating history of churches on the American frontier.

Much can also be learned from the desire of these early settlers to establish and build churches for the work of God in their midst. These faithful settlers would not settle for just any church or denomination; they were Lutherans! And they were willing to fight for the pure doctrine of the Word of God. This set a precedent for their children who would be faced with compromise in 1917 and in later years.

Finally, the early histories of Scarville and Center are important in order to show a direct, continuous, unchanging line of doctrine from 1860 or 1869 or 1901 to the present. The churches that went with the 1917 merger cannot claim this continuity of doctrine. They later merged with more and more churches, eventually forming the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) in 1988. This mega church body remains Lutheran by title only and has long since rejected its heritage of Confessional Lutheranism.

A New Frontier: Developing a Website

These days, there is almost no better way to disseminate information than through the Internet. More and more, churches are coming to this realization and are establishing websites to show the general public what they’re about. A great deal of information can be included on a website in a more efficient, easily readable, and attractive way than by using any other forum. The website goals for the Scarville and Center Churches were not necessarily complex, but they were fairly time consuming. The two churches wanted to set forth their historical and doctrinal heritage in

the community and offer other information ranging from a school page to church locale directions to photos. In this way, any individual in the community and beyond would be able to understand where Scarville and Center came from, where they are now, and in what direction they might be headed.

Historical research alone is very time-consuming, but historical research culminating in a website greatly increases the necessary level of dedication to the project. One must find both aspects rewarding and enjoyable in order to present an interesting and appealing end product. But with an interest in the history of one's church and a basic knowledge of computers, the job is already halfway done! Many website creation programs are available with instructions and tutorials to help interested individuals learn their various features.

After that, it's trial, error, patience, and ultimately great reward when the project is finally completed. Then important church history can be more easily shared with members of the church who don't have time to compile history but would love to read it. Also, this historical work can position a church more firmly in the surrounding community, enabling that church to better reach the community with the message of Christ crucified—an old message that is new each day.

www.wctatel.net/web/scarvillelutheran

Peter Faugstad is a 2005 graduate of Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN, and plans to attend Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. He developed the website listed above.

“The Germans Are Coming” ... to the Norwegian Synod

Review of the Annual Meeting

By Ryan C. MacPherson

The Ninth Annual Meeting of the ELS Historical Society explored the “German Influence on the Norwegian Synod” in terms of doctrine, educational institutions, and hymnody. About 80 members and guests gathered in the Silber Recital Hall of Bethany Lutheran College's Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center on Saturday, June 18, 2005.

Dr. Thomas Kuster led the opening devotion, based on Hebrews 13:20-21. He reminded the historically-interested audience that their eternal salvation is founded on Christ's historic death and resurrection, and that their faith in Christ gives meaning to the study of their synodical history, for it is God's action in people's lives that constitutes our worthwhile heritage.

Doctrine

Prof. Erling Teigen spoke of the doctrinal heritage that German and German-American Lutherans bequeathed to and shared with

Norwegian and Norwegian-American Lutherans. Most obviously, the Lutheran Reformation began in Germany. From there, it was spread to Norway through the work of Johann Bugenhagen.

German influence on Norwegian Lutheranism is seen also through the work of Carl Paul Caspari. He studied Lutheran theology in Leipzig and Berlin before teaching at the University of Christiania (Oslo) in 1847. Gisle Johnson learned of Caspari's reputation as an Old Testament scholar while studying in Erlangen in the 1840s. Johnson and Caspari shared a common passion for the Lutheran Confessions and together translated the *Book of Concord* into Norwegian. Their students included several founding pastors of the Norwegian Synod that was established in America in 1853: A. C. Preus, H. A. Preus, J. A. Ottesen, U. V. Koren, and Laur. Larsen.

In the U. S., German-American Lutherans of the Missouri Synod greatly encouraged and

assisted the Norwegian Synod in maintaining its confessional identity. Both Koren and Ottesen corresponded regularly with C. F. W. Walther. Since the Norwegian Synod had no seminary of its own, its men enrolled at the Missouri Synod's St. Louis seminary, where a special Norwegian Chair was established in 1859 to assist their instruction. Laur. Larsen initially held that chair, but in 1872 a Missouri German, F. A. Schmidt, assumed that duty. At first Schmidt had a positive influence, but by the 1880s his dispute with Walther over the doctrine of election led to turmoil within both synods. The Missouri and Norwegian Synods backed Walther, as did the German-American Wisconsin Synod, but some Norwegian Americans followed Schmidt's false accusations that Walther was promoting Calvinism. These so-called "anti-Missourians" joined with others to form the United Norwegian Lutheran Church (or United Church) in 1890.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the United Church courted the Norwegian Synod for a merger. The Synodical Conference (a fellowship of the Wisconsin, Missouri, and Slovak Synods) tried to support the Norwegian Synod, but the majority of the Norwegian Synod resolved, nevertheless, to merge with the United Church and the Hauge Synod in 1917. Encouraged by their German brethren in the Synodical Conference, a minority within the Norwegian Synod resisted doctrinal compromise and broke away, reorganizing a new, remnant Norwegian Synod at Lime Creek, Iowa, in 1918.

The reorganized Synod, like its larger predecessor, arranged to train many of its pastors at the St. Louis seminary. During the early 1940s, some Norwegian synod men also studied at the Wisconsin Synod's seminary in Thiensville, WI. The Norwegian Synod established its own seminary in 1946, Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, MN. Meanwhile, a generation of teachers for the Norwegian Synod had been trained at the Wisconsin Synod's Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, MN. Thus, the Norwegian

Synod continued to appreciate support from its German-American brethren.

After the Norwegian Synod — by this time renamed the Evangelical Lutheran Synod — and Wisconsin Synod broke fellowship with the Missouri Synod in the early 1960s, some Missouri Synod pastors continued to preserve close ties with the ELS, and several of them have colloquized into the ELS. One of the most recent "German influences on the Norwegian Synod" has been the introduction of former Missouri Synod congregations into the ELS, as they seek to re-establish the confessional fellowship once enjoyed in the Synodical Conference.

Education

Following Teigen's address, Pastor Craig Ferkenstad of Norseland and Norwegian Grove Lutheran Churches (St. Peter and Gaylord, MN) discussed the German influence on the Norwegian Synod's educational institutions, focusing particularly on elementary schools. He began by contrasting the motivations for mid-nineteenth-century emigration from Germany versus Norway. Norwegians came to America primarily for economic reasons, whereas the Germans who founded the Missouri Synod came largely for religious reasons.

The Prussian Union of 1817 forged an unwelcome compromise between Lutheran and Reformed doctrine in German states, and although religious liberty had expanded in the 1840s, public schools remained under the influence of unionistic doctrine. Consequently, when German Lutherans came to America they preferred to establish their own schools rather than risk repeating the same dilemma by enrolling their children in America's public schools. Often, Missouri Synod congregations built schoolhouses before building sanctuaries. In 1847, the synod had 15 congregations and 14 schools, and steady growth in each category resulted in 419 congregations and 408 schools by 1871. One pastor wisely observed in 1857, "*Next to pure doctrine, our schools*

are the greatest treasure we possess.”

Norwegian-American congregations, by contrast, seldom established full-time schools. They instead followed the “rotation” practice of their homeland (in which the pastor or teacher met in various homes from time to time) or else offered classes at church for a few weeks during the summer (from which our present-day vacation Bible schools seem to have originated). By the late 1800s, however, Norwegian Synod pastors were urging their congregations to establish more permanent schools for their children, warning of the spiritual dangers inherent in public education. Few congregations heeded this advice until the early twentieth century. Though some parishioners acknowledged the value of Christian education, they worried about the cost and, moreover, thought it their civic duty to support the public schools.

Ferkenstad suggested that the initial failure of the Norwegian Synod to provide for Christian education may have contributed to the theological liberalism that precipitated the unionistic merger of 1917. As C. A. Moldstad inquired in 1930, “*Would the storm of 1917 have destroyed the old Synod house, if the Synod had practiced what it preached [concerning the importance of Lutheran day schools]?*” Fortunately, the Norwegians did learn from the Germans. Ferkenstad reported that as of 2003, the ELS had 15 schools (representing 11% of its congregations) serving 1,232 students (representing 28% of its youth). Today, the synod’s Lutheran Schools Initiative seeks to expand the Christian day school system even more.

Hymnody

After a brief business meeting, during which Peter Anthony was elected to replace Amanda Madson on the Board of Directors, the assembly sang “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” in four-part harmony as Dennis Marzolf introduced his presentation concerning German musical influences on the Norwegian Synod.

Prof. Marzolf began by explaining the “chorale,” a Lutheran innovation in church music. Introduced during the Reformation, chorales were derived from chant melodies (e.g., *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* #40), medieval carols (e.g., *ELH* #33), and secular music (e.g., *ELH* #247). When borrowing from secular sources, Luther sometimes composed according to the “bar form,” which refers not to taverns (as a popular myth has it), but rather to a rhythmic pattern used by Meistersingers.

Choral harmony had received little attention during the Renaissance, but then three new approaches were taken as the Reformation progressed. The *Tenor-Lied* style built a complex harmony of point and counterpoint around the tenor melody, resulting in a piece that only a trained choir could perform. In the *Cantionale* style, the melody was shifted to the soprano (as is now the norm), and the other voices took supporting roles. Most modern hymns follow the rhythmic style of chorales, but some include chorales in the Baroque *harmonic* style, where more elaborate harmonies are involved. The *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* includes both a Renaissance *rhythmic* (#123) and Baroque *harmonic* (#124) setting for “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come.”

Johannes Bugenhagen brought Luther’s *German Mass* to Norway through his *Church Order for Denmark* (1537). (At the time, Norway and Denmark were politically united and had a common Lutheran state church.) In 1699, Thomas Kingo introduced a congregational hymnal to Norwegian Lutherans that organized hymns according to the church calendar. Previously this sequencing had been employed for graduals, sung by the choir, but Kingo’s hymnal, and several later ones, created an annual cycle of hymns for the congregation, too. The *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (1996) has retained this tradition in our own day, as the *Lutheran Hymnary* (1913) had done for our Norwegian Synod ancestors a century ago.

During the late nineteenth century, many German chorales were translated to English for the first time. Christians are especially indebted to Catherine Winkworth, who translated 77 of the hymns appearing in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*. By the early twentieth century, the Norwegian Synod's worship practice in America included a mixture of German, Norwegian, and English traditions. German settings were particularly prominent in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941), which was prepared by the Synodical Conference and used by Bethany Lutheran College and many ELS congregations. Ironically, it was the work of three men (Dennis Marzolf, Mark DeGarmeaux, and Harry Bartels) raised and trained in German Lutheran synods who ensured that Norwegian hymn settings and Kingo's liturgical hymn sequencing, both characteristic of the 1913 *Lutheran Hymnary*, would continue and become more widespread in the ELS with

the 1996 *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*. Some German influences on the Norwegian Synod have been quite Norwegian after all!

Recommended Resources

- Aaberg, Theodore. *A City Set on a Hill: A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod*. Mankato, MN: Publications Board, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1968.
- Larson, J. Herbert, and Juul B. Madson. *Built on the Rock*. Mankato, MN: Lutheran Synod Book Company, 1992.
- MacPherson, Ryan, ed. "Historical Bibliography of American Lutheranism." Online: <http://www.evangelicallutheransynod.org/history/bibliography>.
- Marzolf, Dennis, ed. *With Hearts and Lips Forever We Shall in God Rejoice! An Anecdotal History of the Choirs of Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota*. Mankato, MN: Bethany Lutheran College, 2002.

Ryan MacPherson is a board-member of the ELS Historical Society and professor of history at Bethany Lutheran College.

From the Archives

Did your church ever look like this? Does it still? Learn more about these chancel furnishings in the next issue.



From the last issue:



This communion set (also pictured at the left) was used at Rose Dell Trinity Lutheran Church near Jasper, MN. Because these vessels bring us Christ's Body and Blood, congregations treasure their communion ware and give special gifts that the very best might be used in God's House, even in difficult pioneer days and hard financial times.

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.

Parish life in the 1950s. Please send us some of your memories and anecdotes.

Interview with the Rev. Milton E. Tweit (1908-2005)

By Jeff Merseeth & Lisa Burcham

Vita

Milton Elmo Tweit was born on December 4, 1908 in Glenwood, MN, the fifth of seven children of Bernt and Mabel (Anderson) Tweit. He was baptized and confirmed at Chippewa Falls Lutheran Church in Terrace, MN. He attended rural elementary schools; Concordia Lutheran Academy and Junior College in St. Paul, graduating in 1930. He then attended Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, and graduated in 1935. On October 11, 1936, he was ordained into the public ministry by Rev. Norman A. Madson, Sr.



Milton served these congregations:

Our Savior's, Princeton, MN	1935-37
Norseland-Norwegian Grove, St. Peter, MN	1937-1958
Saude and Jerico, Lawler, IA	1958-1971
Bethany and Rose Dell, Luverne, MN	1971-74
East and West Paint Creek, Waterville, IA	1974-81

He served as President of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) 1957-1962 and Vice President 1950-1954 and 1956-1957. He was a member of the Board of Regents of Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary. He served as Circuit Visitor of the Iowa and Southern Minnesota District of the ELS, and many other synodical committees, as well as the Committee of the Synodical Conference.

Milton married Delphine Sonstegard in 1937. She was killed in an automobile accident in 1961. They were the parents of six children. Milton was married to Dagny Dale in 1962.

Rev. Milton Tweit was called to his heavenly home on June 22, 2005, at the age of 96.

Note: This interview was conducted in 2000 for a Lutheran church history course with Prof. Erling Teigen at Bethany Lutheran College.

I learned a lot when Lisa and I went and talked to Milton Tweit. He is an old man full of knowledge just waiting to be released if you can find the right questions. He gave us the best answers he could at a moment's notice. I'm glad we had the opportunity to speak to him because it helped me to understand a little of our Synod's history. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity. I also think it was good since we should be aware of our history because it gives us a better knowledge and un-

derstanding of who we are.

Opening given to us in writing

"I want to start our interview with this preface: To God be all glory, praise and thanksgiving for having so richly blessed the work of our Synod, Seminary and College. All our accomplishments are due to the guidance and blessing of God through His Word the Holy Scriptures. It is from that standpoint I want you to understand all that I may say."

How did you become involved in the Norwegian synod?

My folks belonged to the Norwegian Synod Church, the Old Norwegian Synod, and were very conservative. They were well informed in doctrinal matters and so when the union came about in 1917, my father was at the convention in St. Paul. He was with the minority group, but our congregation went along with the merger. There were neither Missouri nor Wisconsin Synod churches near us. My hometown was Glenwood, Minnesota, and my father kept in touch with the minority group. In 1924 when I was to attend high school he offered me an opportunity to attend Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota, Missouri Synod school, and so that's where I landed. I graduated from there and then from the seminary in St. Louis. And because H. M. Tjernagel and Dean Madson kept in touch, my first call was to teach Christian day school at Princeton, Minnesota, where Madson was pastor. So that was my start. I taught there for two years (1935-1937), and I should also mention that the Teigens were members there. I was at school, you see, with B. W. (Bjarne), and his brother Erling [uncles of Prof. Erling Teigen]. So that was another connection.

Could you tell us about your days at Concordia College in St. Paul?

There weren't many Norwegian students there when I entered. There had been more actually earlier, but at the time I went there we were only about six or seven in my first year.

Then the next year the Teigens came in so we were a few more. As you know the set up was different. I went there six years, since it was a [high school and] junior college. We had as many as 21 or 22 hours of studies, because of the languages, Latin, Greek. Latin to start with, Greek later, then Hebrew, and of course I had to take a little German which wasn't too difficult because I could speak Norwegian. There is a connection; there is a resemblance. So it wasn't too bad. Then of course we had English and the math studies and history and what not. So they were pretty busy days and frankly I am not the fastest learner so it took many hours to get ready for the day, for classes. But we had some very good teachers at the school, which I appreciated very much. It prepared me for the Seminary very well later on.

Then, of course, there were all kinds of activities outside of the classroom. There were societies that we belonged to. Erling Teigen was instrumental in starting the band which they didn't have before that. I played in that band — I played the French horn, which I had to learn because I didn't know it. Our Norwegian group was very active and very well received by the teachers and the students. So all in all I would say that my experience at Concordia was good. There were down times naturally but in general a good period of my life.



Bjarne Teigen, Neelak Tjernagel, Erling Teigen, Rolf Tjernagel, Milton Tweit

Could you tell us about your time at the seminary in St. Louis?

Well, I started there in the fall of 1930.

And Erling Teigen, Bjarne's brother, was there. You will remember that those were poor times, depression times, so that the Teigens couldn't send both of them, though Bjarne and Erling were in the same class. My very sad experience there was that Erling was killed. He was out on a trip with young people and a car hit him. That was in October and he hadn't been there very long you know. And I was a very good friend of Erling's so it was a sad time for me.

From the college to the seminary there is an adjustment to make since there is quite an upgrade in teaching and so on. So the first half of first semester was catching up, you know, getting fully aquatinted with the methods there. There too we had excellent teachers. Nothing new — you think some are better than the others. In general the faculty was well prepared. So I went there 1930-1931. The depression time hit our place too, so my younger brother had stayed home when I was there and I stayed home when he was there. We alternated years so I didn't graduate until 1935. Bjarne Teigen and I graduated the same year. So my experience at the Seminary again over all was very good. I've always felt that it could have been better if I had four years of college instead of two, but it worked out quite well because we had to take extra courses usually during the year so you made up a little bit.

I would like to say that I am very thankful that the Missouri Synod who took in me and others of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, they treated us like their own. And by the way, I should say the Wisconsin Synod did the same but since I graduated from Concordia, St. Paul, Missouri school, it was quite natural for me to go on to St. Louis. But during those troublesome years in our Synod it was very, very good of Missouri and Wisconsin to take us in. And we got good conservative training and conservative theology.

Could you tell us about what it was like to serve as supervisor on the Board of Regents?

If my memory could serve me better, I

could keep you here all day. When I moved to St. Peter in 1937, I got involved here because I always had an interest in Christian education whether elementary or higher. And so I knew some of the people up here, knew some of the people on the Board. Rev. John Moldstad “Sr., Sr.,” (the father of the present chairman) was the chairman at that time and the Board was very scattered and they didn’t always want to travel to Mankato. So he suggested that I be a liaison from St. Peter, so I was that for a year. Then I was elected to the board in 1945. I served on the board until 1982 with the exception of the years that I was president of the synod from 1957 until 1962, and I’ve been an advisor since then. So all in all, just for history I’ve been with the Board of Regents for 51 years. As to the school itself, when I came on the Board we were still struggling to pay off the debt of buying the college. The depression years were difficult, but we paid off debt early in 1940, so finally we did own the college.

Dr. Ylvisaker was the president of the College who was very instrumental in giving it direction. He was there until approximately 1951 then President Teigen took over and was president until 1970. During Ylvisaker’s presidency the troublesome thing was to find money enough to run the school. There were times when they weren’t able to pay the salaries for the month and the teachers sacrificed and kept on in spite of everything. Sophia Anderson was the treasurer and she certainly sacrificed a lot in order to keep things going. But at the same time that they were struggling, we always managed to come through at the end of each school year.

Dr. Ylvisaker and his family lived in Old Main the first years they were here. There was a set of rooms where Admissions is now, in the southeast corner. That has been entirely redone. They lived there for a while until their house was built. Ylvisaker, of course, as I said, gave good direction for the school so that it was built on a strong foundation of theology and academics. That has always been stressed at Bethany and still is. During Ylvisaker’s

reign he acquired the [old] soccer [now the softball and practice] field, that acreage out there, so that we were able to expand. That’s a story by itself. The Regents and the Trustees of the Synod did not buy it. We formed a private group and bought it. We were able to pay it off after a while privately and of course it has been a good thing for the college to have, to expand.

During the 1940s we began having our problems in the Synodical Conference. We had all kinds of meetings at the time with leaders of Missouri, WELS, at that time there was a Slovak Synod, and then ours. That continued on into the 1950s when Bjarne Teigen was president and then finally, I think in 1962, we broke off from the Synodical Conference. This was a very difficult time for us because the Missouri Synod began withdrawing their students, not sending them, especially in the Minnesota District. And so we really had a tough time to get the numbers of students. But with Teigen’s leadership and support of the Board we struggled through those times too and we were able to come out and exist.

What were some of the main problems with the Synodical Conference?

Chiefly it was the doctrine of fellowship, especially prayer fellowship. However, Missouri Synod had the idea that they wanted to meet with the other Lutheran churches in spite of objections on the part of WELS and us. And it finally led to a breakup. Difficult years. I was president when the breakup came and a few of our pastors left us earlier because we didn’t break up soon enough.

But enough of that, and back to the college. We have been very fortunate in having presidents that are very capable, who were dedicated (Ylvisaker and Teigen) very knowledgeable in both theology and academics, and so able to lead the school in the right direction remaining true to our motto, which is, “One thing is needful.” I would certainly give credit to both of them for keeping us on the right track.

Now I would like to leave a picture with

you that there were real struggles to keep going, but it never affected our theology and our academics. I want that to be understood.

In later years, ever since there was a succession of short-term presidents and interim presidents because they had to have time to choose after Teigen retired. But all in all it has not affected the school again, either way. I suppose, because I've been a member of the Board of Regents, I would like to give the Regents a little credit for keeping the school going. You are aware of the steps now taken to become a four-year college, which caused a lot of debate and a lot of discussion, as it should. But the final decision by the Board and the Administration was to go ahead and develop it to a four-year college—it seems to me that's going very well.

Again we have to be thankful to the Schwan Foundation, of course, for the tremendous financial support we have been getting and are still getting from there. Without it I'm sure we wouldn't have been able to really expand like we have; well, I know we wouldn't have, with buildings and so on. But that has also helped us in our academic side, we could do both (expand and advance in studies).

My association with the college has been a very pleasant one, one that I've enjoyed, and if I've been of any help, I'm thankful. Others can decide that, but it has been a pleasure for me to work with. This gives you a kind of quick overview. You mustn't think that we haven't had other problems but they've all been solved properly. Life is like that, you know!

How has the church changed over the years since you've been involved?

Well to start with from 1917 and on, it was our leaders who took the right direction. They didn't just exist as a Synod, but they supported missions, Christian day schools, and later on they advanced, so that all the time from the beginning of our organization, our church, our leaders have been mission-minded, education-minded, and maybe I should start with thor-

oughly concerned about doctrine all the time. That was always there, but at the same time they were mission-minded and education-minded. And that's been true of our Synod at all times. In that sense I don't see any change. We still operate the same way: our first concern is to remain true to the Word of God and its teachings, spread it abroad, to train our people both for living as a citizen but also to prepare pastors. That's why we had used the seminaries in Wisconsin and Missouri, and we finally had our own in 1946 that we operated and were able to furnish more of our pastors.

There was a time when the greater majority of our pastors had been trained in St. Louis, Missouri Synod school. Of course that's not true any more, there are just a few of us older ones that are still of that group. So from 1946 it began to change. As with all conservative churches, there will always be controversies and we have had our share. We had our controversy with the Synodical Conference, as I mentioned, and we have had other doctrinal discussions, which, I have maintained, are good for the Synod because it drives you into Scripture to really establish the truth so that you also hold on to it. So doctrinally, mission-wise, education-wise, I see no big change that is to the attitude and the spirit, which we have cultured.

However, we were only a small group of congregations chiefly in the Midwest: Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. We did have strangely enough, a congregation in Boston, and on the West Coast in Seattle. Now look at us, we are from coast to coast, North to South, and that's an evidence of our mission-mindedness. However, a goodly number of our congregations have come to us from Missouri, because of their problems, in more recent years. But that doesn't minimize the mission expansion that we have had on our own. Furthermore we also expanded into foreign missions, Peru, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, and now also in Latvia, and connection with Scandinavian countries.

We have maintained our fellowship with

WELS, and there we meet regularly between boards. There is a forum with representatives that meet every other year. That includes people from administration, missions, and education, with representatives from both sides, so that we look at what both of us are doing. I should mention that there have often been suggestions that we should join the Wisconsin Synod, not only the way we operate now, but actually join so we are one instead of two. But the good advice that our forefathers got at the time of the [1917] union, especially by people from Missouri and WELS that we should stay separate because we do have a mission; we are a little different in make-up than Missouri and Wisconsin. We have stayed and we have been able to withstand.

Again we mustn't forget the Schwan Foundation which has helped us expand both in missions at home and in foreign missions. You can't operate without money, unfortunately, and that's been a real blessing to us. I think that gives you an overview on how I feel on things. Others may disagree on some things but that's it.

In regard to the Synod, there's always a danger of losing your confession, so I have a concern that we continue there. After all, this has been seventy-five years and we still hold true to the founding confession of our fathers. And so my thoughts would be that we have to be alert at all times to the danger of losing our confessional status.

The seminary has been a struggle because it is a different set-up. We have to have a three-year system rather than having people being able to come in at all times and so we only usually have two or three professors and that's a pretty small seminary. And we've had capable people there too, and so the seminary has developed. For a long time we functioned in a room over in the college. Finally we got our own building over here and that has, of course, been an advance for students and faculty in the seminary, but has also left more room for the college. And the seminary has grown both academically and otherwise

(building), and in general has done well in preparing pastors for our synod. We have never been able to prepare quite enough. But the seminary has functioned well ever since it started and has been operated by the same Board of Regents as the college.

My prayer would be that we remain true to the scriptures and its teachings so that our confession is that of God's Word. I have had the feeling that we need to be especially watchful as we become a four-year college. The staffing, faculty, and otherwise becomes much greater, becomes much more difficult to find dedicated people who hold to the "one thing needful." To staff the college is a concern and my prayer is that they will always be able to find teachers and administrators who will remain true to what we call the one thing needful, true to the Word of God, and may you also be true to Him throughout life.

Closing statement given in writing

"By His Word, 'the one thing needful,' God has brought spiritual and earthly blessing to the members of our synod and the students who have attended our seminary and college. They have learned to know 'the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent,' John 17:3. By the Word of God we have prepared our people and students for living a life of faith in Christ here on earth and for eternal life in heaven upon death. The students in turn have been a blessing to our seminary and college by their support in many ways. For this we are thankful to them and to God.

"May God continue to bless our synod, seminary and college by keeping us true to 'the one thing needful.' I close with the words of Grundtvig:

God's Word is our great heritage
 And shall be ours forever;
 To spread its light from age to age
 Shall be our chief endeavor;
 Through life it guides our way,
 In death it is our stay;
 Lord grant while worlds endure,
 We keep its teachings pure,
 Throughout all generations. Amen!"



Jeff Merseth and Lisa Burcham (now Petersen) are recent graduates of Bethany Lutheran College.

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