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# Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

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Volume 1

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Issue 1

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## SØREN URBERG TO SPEAK AT FIRST MEETING

Rev. Søren Urberg will be the speaker at the first annual meeting of the ELS Historical Society on June 14.

Rev. Urberg currently is the pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church; Hawley, Minnesota and Calvary Lutheran Church; Ulen Minnesota.

He came to our Synod from the LC-MS, previously having served ELCA congregations. He is a pastor, historian, educator, and lecturer.

He is the author of a number of books, which include The Revival of Norseball, the reconstruction of an ancient Norse sport. He also has been a lecturer in Scandinavian Studies at Scandinavian festivals, educational institutions, and the American Institute for Scandinavian Educators.

He has been active in numerous historical societies and frequently lectures in Scandinavian Studies, especially in Pre-Columbian history. He has served as president of the North American Knattleikr Association, Inc. and is the designer and leader of Norwegian tours.

He is a dynamic and sought-after lecturer. We are fortunate to have him with us.

## U.V.KOREN A BIOGRAPHY

by H.A.Preus

At the funeral of Dr. U.V. Koren, December 23, 1910, Dr. H.G.Stub, who succeeded Koren as president of the Norwegian Synod, paid this tribute to the deceased: "President Koren, one of the greatest men God has given to the Norwegian Emigrants to America, has passed away."

Ulrik Vilhlem Koren was born in Bergen, Norway, December 22, 1826. In his remembrances from the pioneer days here in Northeast Iowa Koren tells about himself coming from an old family in Bergen, out of which stemmed several clergymen over a period of two hundred years.

His education started when he was enrolled at the Lancaster school, where a system has been introduced from England. There the older students were used to teach the younger ones. Koren thought that was an enjoyable phase of his early school. In 1833 Crown Prince Oscar of Sweden-Norway paid his first visit to Bergen. For the occasion the school children had Prince's Holiday for eight days.

Later on Koren entered the "Real Skole" with the famous Lyder Sagen as teacher, who also continued in the "Latin Skole." One of the first text books he had was "Thiemes første næring for den sunde menneskeforstand." That shows the rationalistic trend.

Koren says that neither Sagen who left a marked imprint on his students, nor any other teacher could be likened to Gamaliel in guiding them. The clergy of Bergen at that time were of two types. One was rationalistic and the other

was of the Herleb Stenersen type. The Bishop of that section of Norway, J.N.Brun, was a conservative and his commanding presence helped check the liberalism in his bishopric. The people had the use of Kingo's hymnbook, and in some places Guldberg's. There was little real Christian testimony in those days that had any regenerating effect on the people. V.Koren was instructed for Confirmation by a rationalistic pastor who meant well. In the catechization the question was put to him as to what color of blood the fish has. That it was "red and cold" was supposed to be evidence of God's wisdom.

They got no idea of what the difference between the Christians and the "world" should be. There were quite a few Haugians who made themselves obnoxious by their separatism and their endless judging. That, of course, was brought on mostly by the State Church form of Christianity with its liberalism. Fortunately Koren was reared in a home where Bible reading and prayers were the order of the day and everything was done as before God, and in a strictly Lutheran atmosphere.

Then, finally, he became a student at the University of Christiania. It was the year in which King Carl Johan died. Henrik Wergeland, the famous author and friend of Jews, lived at the "Grotto." The following year Koren was one of the pallbearers at his funeral. Welhaven, also a noted author, was seen strolling about the streets of Christiania telling tall tales. He loved to have some one stroll with him. V.Koren often had the privilege of going with him, which pleased Welhaven especially, since in bygone days he knew several of the Koren family, and loved to reminisce about them.

Prof. Monrad, bishop Jögen Moe and the university's senior professor Aschehang were the young candidates. Prof. Gisle Johnson, later a famed theological professor, was a student then.

H.A.Preus became a student the year before. I.A.Ottesen [sic] became a student the same year as Koren, as did also N.Brandt, O.Duus, N.E.Jensen, L.Steen who all were pastors in

the old Norwegian Synod. To most of the students it was merely "bröd-studium," a matter of getting some knowledge to make a living. There was regard for Christianity, but there was very little spiritual "Erkenntnis" among them. With but a few exceptions the students conducted themselves respectably and decently. This was especially true of the group Koren associated with, among whom were Pastor I.M.Lund, the literary Harwig Lassen and the Singer Behrens.

Koren's studies were often interrupted by being called on to teach. He was not much influenced by the theological teachers before Gisle Johnson and C.P.Caspari (a converted Jew) began lecturing. (My father, who studied at the Christiania university under them for a year, spoke very highly of them for their sound orthodoxy). The outstanding Bible preacher then was W.A.Wexels. When Koren came to the university the two leading churches of Christiania, Our Saviour's and the "Garnison's" church, were practically empty at Sunday services. But after Wexels had preached there a while the services conducted by him drew nearly full house. It seemed strange as Wexels had a rasping voice. He read his sermons and hardly looked at his audience. It must have been his deep earnestness and his presenting of the old Gospel that improved the church attendance.

In 1848 occurred the February revolution in Paris, followed by upheavals in Hungary, Berlin, Dresden and Vienna. Thereupon Denmark became involved in a three year war with the Schleswig-Holsteins, which has a considerable effect in Norway as regards religious matters. At that time appeared a very remarkable man in Denmark. Koren says he was profoundly affected by him, namely the noted Sören Kierkegaard. Koren claims that Kierkegaard fostered in his hearers or readers "a more ideal outlook on life and on people; an insight into the dissimilarity between Christianity and the essence of the world; the ability to recognize all "shams" and humbug; and unconditional regard for the Word of God and submission to the same; recognition of the tremendous requirements of the ministry, and

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**Oak Leaves** welcomes articles of both synodical and local significance for publication; articles may be edited for style, clarity, or length to allow for publication; submitted manuscripts will be deposited in the Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

the many pitiful caricatures thereof as in the kindly, happy-go-lucky preacher who goes about in a spiritual stupor while he otherwise eats, drinks, sleeps and performs the duties of his office as a matter of business, - or it is the talented preacher who with his great and bold eloquence carries his audience away with him in admiration of the beautiful and touching words, while in reality neither he nor his hearers have any use for it all when the speech is finished. "Get into the world and to work" was emphasized by him. The positive content of faith was not brought out by Kierkegaard." Once he stated that "in Luther there is never any nonsense." Koren became a diligent student of Luther.

Then Koren became candidate of theology and teacher at Nissens "Latin Skole." At first the need for workers in the church in the United States of America did not seem to have any effect on Koren, although several of his friends had already gone over there. But one evening in January 1853 he sat on his lodgings in Christiania, when a close friend of his and an admirer of Kierkegaard and a follower of Gruntvig, called on him. The conversation was about Conversion, work and strive, etc. No mention was made of America. Upon his friend's leaving, Koren followed him a way toward his home. They came to a cemetery and Koren turned back to his lodging. Then suddenly the thought struck him: "Supposing I do go to America! There is need for me there." He did not sleep that night. For several days he debated this question with himself, and then decided to go to the United States. He wrote about it to several relatives and friends, who all discouraged the idea, except his mother. And his intended replied that she was reluctant about leaving Norway, but if Koren would go, then she would regard it as her duty to go with him.

In February he wrote to A.C.Preus, pastor in Wisconsin, that he was willing to accept a call to a parish among the Norwegians in the United States of America. At that time there were six pastors among the Norwegian Lutherans in the Midwest: H.A.Stub (since 1848), A.C.Preus (1850); Gustav Dietrickson, H.A.Preus, and U.Brandt (1851) [sic]; and I.A.Otteson (1852) [sic]. The last three and the first one were acquaintances of Koren from the days as students. At that time in February 1852, these men had been making preparations for organizing a Synod, which was done in

## H.M. TJERNAGEL

The fourth president of the ELS (1930-34) was the Rev. H.M.Tjernagel.

H.M.Tjernagel joined the ELS in 1923 when he was called to serve at the Saude and Jerico congregations in Iowa. "That the Lord of the Church willed the acceptance of this call was evidenced in many ways, also by this, that the Board of Indian Missions, which at first said almost sternly, 'We cannot let you go,' later, when the struggles of the Norwegian Synod and its handful of pastors were understood, urged, 'It is your duty to go.'"

Previously H.M.Tjernagel, who was born in 1871 at the Tjernagel family farm near Story City, Iowa, had served congregations in Washington, California, and Minnesota. While serving the congregation in Washington, he met and married the church organist, Anna Brue.

Pastor Tjernagel also served as a Norwegian Synod missionary to the Eskimos. The Norwegian Synod has begun mission work among the Eskimos in Alaska in 1894. "The mission there was at a reindeer station where a herd of reindeer was kept. The reindeer provided a source of income to the mission and the mission helped train boys to become reindeer herders" (Built on the Rock, p. 11). Pastor Tjernagel served this mission for three years. His work there is chronicled in his writings of *Breezes from Alaska*.

Following the "Merger of 1917" he served for six years as a Missouri Synod missionary to the Winnebago Indians near Gresham, Wisconsin

"H.M." and Anna had twelve children, eight of whom survived to adulthood. Anna died several days after the stillbirth of her last child. A log cabin was erected, by her husband, on the Saude, Iowa parsonage grounds in her memory and is, yet today, known as the Strandebarm (the name of Anna's family farm in Norway).

Here, in 1929, Pastor Tjernagel began a school with this announcement: "It is five years since their mother left them. The cabin is a memorial to her and a play house for her little girls. It is their father's ambition that they may follow after her in the paths of righteousness, and by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, be reunited with her at the right hand of God. A Christian day-school is therefore conducted for her girls, and others who wish to come, in the memorial cabin."

October 1853 - the Norwegian Synod just a few weeks before Koren arrives in New York.

As a result of the correspondence with A.C.Preus, a letter of call was sent from some settlements in Allamakee, Winneshiek, Clayton, and Fayette counties in Iowa. This letter upon the request of the congregations concerned was issued by the temporary church directors in Wisconsin, and was received by Koren in June. (A letter from Wisconsin or Iowa to Norway required four to six weeks travel and cost about 54 cents postage.) Koren then delivered his "dimis" sermon. It was the first time he had been in a pulpit. In the morning he preached in the jail and in the

afternoon at the guard house at Akershus fortress. In the morning, he says, he saw a mass of heads before him, but he wasn't aware of seeing any faces. In the afternoon it was a little better. An old friend of his comforted him by telling him that he had a sympathetic voice. But nothing about the sermon. July 21<sup>st</sup> he was ordained in Oslo. "Stifsprost" (Circuit Visitor) P.A.Jensen, took part in ordination (intimerede). Koren spoke to him about what an ordeal the sermon had been for him. Jensen comforted him by saying that "Bishop Arup had heard many poor sermons." There were the only two sermons Koren had delivered before his initial sermon in Iowa.

*to be continued ...*

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submitted and edited by Joseph Abrahamson

## I Owe A Debt of Gratitude

I owe a debt of gratitude  
To those who went before,  
The sturdy pioneers who came  
From Norway's rocky shore;  
Who on the prairies made their homes  
Upon the untilled sod,  
While on the highest hills they built  
A stately House of God.

I owe a debt of gratitude  
That faithful pastors gave  
Their lives to tell their fellowmen  
How Jesus came to save;  
In deepest woods, on prairie trail  
They labored, suffered, died,  
To tell of God's great love to man,  
And Christ, the crucified.

I owe a debt of gratitude  
To every one who taught  
A child to know his Father's will,  
And how He's dearly bought;  
To all who worked with faithfulness,  
Through happiness and tears,  
Within my own beloved church  
Throughout a hundred years.

I'll pay my debt of gratitude  
To those who went before  
By never yielding up my place  
Though weary and footsore.  
With faithfulness I'll work, and walk  
The way the father's trod;  
Some day I'll thank the pioneers  
In heaven at home with God.

Bernard H.J.Habel

ANNOUNCING THE  
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Saturday, June 14, 1997  
Trinity Chapel  
Bethany Lutheran College  
Mankato, Minnesota

9:00 - 10:00	Coffee and Fellowship (Old Main)
10:00 - 10:30	Opening Devotion: <i>ELS President George M. Orvick</i> (Trinity Chapel)
10:30 - 12:00	Business Meeting
	1. Welcome and introductions: <i>President Norman Holte</i>
	2. Acceptance of members
	3. Reading of the proposed Constitution
	4. Organization declared to be in session
	5. Secretary's report: <i>Amanda Madson</i>
	6. Treasurer's report: <i>Albin Levorson</i>
	7. Election of officers
	(nominations to be presented by the Board of Directors)
	8. Date of next meeting
12:00 - 1:15	Lunch (Great Room)
1:15 - 2:00	"It is Written" <i>Rev. Søren Urberg</i>
2:00 - 2:30	Break-out groups for discussion
2:30 - 3:00	Summary and Conclusion
3:30 -	Coffee and Fellowship

**Costs:** \$6.00 - covers coffee, lunch, and incidental expenses.

**Displays:** Four congregations will provide interesting and unique material depicting their history:  
Lime Creek Lutheran Church (Lake Mills, Iowa),  
Norseland Lutheran Church (St. Peter, Minnesota),  
Saude-Jerico Lutheran Parish (Lawler, Iowa),  
Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church (Cottage Grove, Wisconsin),

**Housing:** For those who wish to stay overnight there will be room available in the dormitories. Costs are as follows: Air-conditioned - \$12.00 first night, \$10.50 each additional night  
Non-air-conditioned - \$8.00 first night, \$7.00 each additional night.  
Indicate your preference on the reservation form

Please return the enclosed Registration Form prior to June 1, 1997 to assist in preparations.

Visitors are welcome and invited to attend!

**T**hus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. *Jeremiah 6:16*

## PROPOSED CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Historical Society.

### ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

1. To promote interest in the historical and doctrinal heritage of Lutheranism, particularly of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and its institutions.
2. To stimulate historical research and publish its results.
3. To aid the Archivist in the collection and preservation of articles of historical value.
4. To publish a bulletin containing articles of news and interest.
5. To provide volunteer assistance to the Archivist.
6. To serve as a general advisory and correlating agency for the historical interests within the Synod, including significant Lutheran and Synodical anniversaries.
7. To promote and encourage interest in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Museum.
8. To aid local congregations in gathering and sharing their heritage of historical materials.

### ARTICLE III. NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

It is expressly declared that the Society is not organized for profit and that ordinarily no salary, compensation or emolument shall be paid to members. The officers and editor may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties.

### ARTICLE IV. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Society shall operate under the control of a Board of Directors of nine members (See Bylaws #1)

### ARTICLE V. AFFILIATION WITH THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

This Society shall be subject to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and shall operate under its auspices.

### ARTICLE VI. MEMBERSHIP

1. Voting Member  
Any communicant member of the Synod, or of a synod in fellowship with the ELS, may become a voting member by payment of dues. (See Bylaws Art. III)
2. Associate Member  
Any other individual or any organization interested in the work and purpose of the Society may become an associate member by paying associate member dues. Associate members will not hold office or vote. (Any individual or organization may subscribe to its publication.)

### ARTICLE VII. MEETINGS

1. The annual meeting of the Society shall be held in the spring of each year for the purpose of electing a Board of Directors and conducting such other business as may come before the Society. Written notice of the annual meeting shall be mailed to the membership at least 30 days before the date of the meeting.
2. Special meetings may be called by the president with the approval of the Board of Directors or at the written request of one-fourth of the membership, or twenty members, whichever is the smaller number. Written notice of such meetings shall be mailed to the membership at least 30 days in advance.
3. A quorum shall consist of 15 voting members, including five board members, one of whom shall be the President or Vice-President.

### ARTICLE VIII. BYLAWS

The membership of the Historical Society shall have the authority to prepare, adopt or amend such bylaws as may be desirable to carry out the administrative duties of the Society. The Society's bylaws shall in no way conflict with the constitution and bylaws of the ELS. A majority vote of the members present at a regularly called meeting shall be necessary to adopt or amend the bylaws.

## ARTICLE IX. DISSOLUTION

In the event of the dissolution of the Historical Society, its property, funds and other assets shall pass to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

## ARTICLE X. AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this constitution must be proposed in writing by at least five members and filed with the secretary sixty days in advance of the annual meeting. Copies of the proposed amendments shall be mailed by the secretary to all members at least thirty days in advance of the annual meeting. A two-thirds majority of those members present and voting at the annual meeting is required for passage of an amendment.

## BYLAWS

## I. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## 1. Members

The Board of Directors shall consist of nine members: The President of the Synod, the Secretary of the Synod, the Synod's Archivist, an individual appointed by the President of the Synod for a three-year term, the remaining five members to be elected by the membership of the Society for three-year terms, one or two to be elected each year. No elected director may serve more than three consecutive terms.

## 2. Duties of the Board of Directors:

- a. The Board shall select from its membership the officers of the Society: a president, a vice-president, a secretary and a treasurer.
- b. It shall facilitate the achievement of the purposes for which the Society was established.
- c. It shall provide for the publication of a bulletin and appoint an editor of the same.
- d. It shall arrange for the annual meeting of the Society, prepare an agenda, provide for an interesting and informative program and present a report on the activities of the Board and the Society.
- e. It shall serve as a nominating committee which shall present a slate of candidates to the annual meeting of the Society. Additional candidates may be nominated from the floor.

## II. DUTIES OF OFFICERS

1. The President shall preside at the meetings of the Board of Directors and of the Society and shall perform such other duties as may be entrusted to the office by the Board of Directors or by the Society.
2. The Vice-President shall conduct meetings in the absence of the President and perform such duties as may be entrusted to the office by the Board of Directors or by the Society.
3. The Secretary shall keep the minutes of all meetings of the Society and of the Board of Directors. Such minutes shall be duly signed by the secretary and presented to the aforementioned groups.
4. The Treasurer shall have charge of the financial affairs of the Society, subject in all matters relative thereto to the control of the Board of Directors. The Treasurer is authorized to receive and to receipt, and, upon vouchers duly authorized by the Board of Directors, to make disbursements from all funds of the Society. All funds shall forthwith be deposited with the financial institution designated by the Board of Directors. Regular and faithful accounts of all monies thus received or disbursed must be kept, and all accounts must be submitted annually for audit.

## III. CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP AND DUES (Cf. Constitution. Art. VI)

## 1. Voting membership

- a. Any communicant member of the Synod or of a synod in fellowship with the ELS, with dues at \$10 annually.
- b. Family membership, with dues at \$15 for husband wife.

## 2. Non-voting membership/Associate membership

- a. Associate member, with dues at \$15.
- b. Institutional membership, with dues at \$25.
- c. Student membership, with dues at \$5.

## 3. Dues: The Board of Directors shall establish dues to be ratified at an annual meeting.

## IV. DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERS

All members shall advance the objectives of this Society by:

1. Attending its meetings and taking part in the discussions.
2. Contributing to and reading its publications.
3. Increasing its memberships.
4. Paying dues and adding, as possible, to the historical collection of the Synod's archives and museum.
5. Providing volunteer assistance to the Archivist
6. Encouraging and assisting congregations in establishing their own archives and historical groups

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

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## THE ELS HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS BRANCHING OUT

The Oak trees at West Koshkonong are important to members of the ELS as it was there that Rev. J.W.C.Dietrichson conducted a Service in 1844.

The Oak trees at Lime Creek Lutheran Church are important to members of the ELS. Here the Evangelical Lutheran Synod was organised in 1918.

Leaves from these trees figuratively have fallen through the ELS. **Oak Leaves** is the newsletter of the ELS Historical Society. Here we wish to remember, and record, these events and the other events of our church history which branch out through the many congregations of the Synod. There are stories and histories worthy of being recorded. These are the events which, under the Savior's almighty hand, have shaped the earthly heritage leading up to today.

Members of the ELS Historical society are urged to submit articles for publication. The goal is to publish this newsletter four times annually; but this is dependent upon the submission of materials. Articles, photographs, and historical information is sought concerning both synodical and local congregation history.

Anyone who becomes a member prior to the Constituting Meeting on June 14 will be considered a Charter Member of the Society. As of the time of publication, the ELS Historical Society has over one-hundred members!