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# Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

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Volume 3

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## The Norwegian Synod – Concordia College St. Paul Connection

A Remembrance by Bjarne W. Teigen

Not known to many in Evangelical Lutheran Synod circles today, there is a significant connection between the Synod and Concordia-St. Paul that came into existence nearly 80 years ago. In July 1998 two Synod pastors remain (Milton Tweit and myself) who were involved in this connection.

This essay will call to remembrance this arrangement. In 1917 three Norwegian churches merged, to form the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. This was done at the loss of the confession of the doctrine *SOLA GRATIA*, so clearly proclaimed in Scripture for the comfort of sinful man. The old Norwegian Synod had been in fellowship with the Missouri Synod. When a remnant refused to enter the merger and reorganized in 1918, it resolved to remain in fellowship with the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference.

But the new synod had no college or seminary to train their students for the public ministry. Quite logically they turned to an institution known to them, Concordia College located in the Midway area of St. Paul, Minnesota. There was a personal connection involved in this for me because my father, Martin Teigen, had graduated from Luther Seminary in 1900. This Norwegian Synod seminary had been moved, in 1898, from Robbinsdale to a location on Hamline Avenue, located just a few blocks from Concordia. My father was well aware of Concordia College and its president, Dr. Theodore Buenger.

Early in 1919 our Synod's Board of Directors wrote to Concordia asking that it receive the Synod's young men as their students. In the words of Concordia College historian Professor Oswald B. Overn: "The board of Concordia College was delighted to cooperate with the Norwegian brethren and arranged a joint meeting of the Board of Control, the Board of Electors, and representatives of the Norwegian Synod, held on June 7, 1919. It was agreed to call a professor to be added to the faculty of Concordia College who would be especially responsible for the Norwegian Synod boys, but would also teach other classes. His salary would be paid jointly by Concordia College and the Norwegian brethren."

Our Synod then called Prof. S.C. Ylvisaker who for conscience reasons had recently resigned from the faculty of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. He accepted the call and began his work at Concordia in September 1919. Professor Overn notes that Dr. Ylvisaker brought with him "eleven boys of Norwegian descent, who intended to study for the ministry." Not all of these students continued on their original purpose, forty nine entered the program and about one third of them became pastors.

The first to finish the preparatory courses for entrance to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and to become Synod pastors were Joseph Runholt, Sophus Lee, Adolph Harstad, Morris Dale, and Ahlert Strand. The last students to complete

their pre-seminary training at Concordia-St. Paul graduated in 1930. These students were Milton Tweit and Erling and Bjarne Teigen.

Milton and Erling entered Concordia Seminary in the fall of 1930. I did not enter the seminary until 1931 because of the Depression. My brother Erling was killed by a reckless driver while involved in church week six weeks after entering the seminary. In addition to those already named were the following: Monrad Gullerud, George Gullixson, and Neelak Tjernagel.

A number of students from Missouri Synod congregations who had graduated from Concordia-St. Paul were ordained in the Norwegian Synod upon graduation from Concordia-St. Louis. These names include Stuart Dorr and Milton Otto. Pastor H.A. Teiste, after coming to the United States from the mission field in South Africa to live with relatives in the United States, studied at Concordia College-Oakland, California. Two brothers (Chris and Nils Oesleby) of Staten Island, New York, did their preparatory work at Concordia College-Bronxville. All were ordained in the Norwegian Synod.

Doctor Ylvisaker was a graduate of Luther College (1903), Luther Seminary-St. Paul (1907). In 1910 the University of Leipzig conferred on him a Ph.D. in Semitics. After serving as pastor at Minot, North Dakota, he became professor of History and Greek at Luther College in Decorah from 1911 to 1919. As previously mentioned, he was at Concordia-St. Paul from 1919-1923. At that time Ylvisaker accepted a call to Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Madison, Wisconsin. When he came to Concordia-St. Paul there were faculty instructors who taught Hebrew: Professors Fred Wahlers and Fred Schlueter. Ylvisaker taught Norwegian to the Norwegian students and served as their counselor. He

taught very little Hebrew but he filled in whenever there were teaching vacancies, both in the high school and the college.

A year before I entered Concordia-St. Paul, our family went on a visit to a neighboring Missouri Synod pastor whose son was attending Concordia. The son (Felix Fubbert) told us that when he was a high school sophomore Dr. Ylvisaker had taught him geometry. He found Ylvisaker to be an excellent teacher and was quite proud that he had learned geometry from a Hebraist.

The second Norwegian Synod professor to be added to the Concordia faculty was Oswald Overn whose father was a Norwegian Synod pastor, Anton G. Overn. Overn was a graduate of the University of Minnesota and received a MS degree from the State University of Iowa in 1918. He also continued additional graduate studies at the Universities of Iowa and Chicago. At Chicago he studied with the great nuclear and theoretical physicist Nils Bohr.

In 1913 Bohr had proposed a theory stating that electrons revolve in definite orbits around a nucleus. His theory contributed to a more profound understanding of nuclear physics, preparing the way for the production of nuclear weapons in the 1940's. Overn was an instructor of physics and mathematics at Luther College from 1912-1919. For conscience reasons he, too, felt that he could not enter into fellowship with the 1917 merger of the three Norwegian Synods. In 1920 Concordia College called him to teach mathematics, chemistry, and physics. We all profited greatly from his courses in these areas. In later years he also taught music and art and served as Academic Dean retiring in 1963.

When Dr. Ylvisaker accepted the call to Madison, Oliver Harstad became the Synod's representative on the Concordia faculty, serving

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**Membership**  
*All membership renewals due on June 1*  
Voting Membership:  
\$10/year - individual  
\$15/year - husband & wife  
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\$15/year - individual  
\$25/year - institutional  
\$ 5 /year - student  
Life: \$200

CONCORDIA COLLEGE  
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTATHEO. BUENGER, D.D.  
LATIN AND ART APPRECIATION

October 16, 1942

*Rev. Norman A. Madson  
Princeton, Minnesota.*

*My dear Reverend Madson,*

*Just now I read your article in the October number of the Conc. Hist. Institute Quarterly. Let me thank you most sincerely I am deeply moved. Moved not only an account of those words of appreciation of my work but especially because I have a feeling that some of our own men are not appreciating Walther's standpoint as the Norwegian Synod did and you are now doing. Burdorf in his Confessional Lutheranism certainly is not doing some of our brethren injustice [sic], when he is not satisfied with their position. But this subject is too far reaching than that I could discuss it in a letter.*

*You will be interested that one of my early boyhood recollections is the meeting that Walther had with 3 or 4 of the Norwegian fathers from Wisconsin in our house in Chicago. It was winter-time and the Norsemen came with large fur coats something that caught my eye. I must have been 8 or 10 yrs (1868-1870).*

*When I was a student in St. Louis 1879-1882 a few of the Norwegians came to visit Dr. W. (I was his regular beneficiary for noon-day meals) and I remember how Dr. W. gave instructions to his wife and the maid as to the meal; one thing was that they must not forget to put on the table jelly as the Norwegian take that in the soup and on meals.*

*On page 69 you mention that J. Preus was the last listed of the Norwegian students and that in the class of 1880. I presume that is to be understood in a limited way because in 1882 John Koren and Thorgrimsen graduated with me and after me O. Brandt and several others.*

*God bless you and strengthen you in your stand for genuine Bible theology.*

*Yours most sincerely,  
Theo. Buenger*

submitted by  
Rev. Paul Madson

from 1923-1929 and then became a faculty member at Bethany Lutheran College. At Concordia he not only taught Norse and history but he also served as athletic coach. Harstad was a 1914 graduate of Luther College where he participated in several varsity sports and distinguished himself in baseball. After serving a tour in the U.S. Army, he played professional baseball with the Omaha team in the Western League. Before coming to Concordia he had been Superintendent of Schools at McVillage, North Dakota from 1919-1923.

In 1925 Dick (Lefty) Siebert enrolled as a high school sophomore at Concordia graduating in my class of 1930. Under the tutelage of Coach Harstad, Siebert developed into a superb baseball player, playing first base under Connie Mack on the old Philadelphia Athletics. Siebert invited me into the locker room at Comiskey Park in Chicago while I served as pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Chicago during the war years.

One more Norwegian Synod pastor, Christopher U. Faye, was an instructor at Concordia-St. Paul from 1922-1924. Faye served as a teacher in Norse and mathematics. Later he earned a graduate degree in Library Science from the University of Illinois and became bibliographic consultant and cataloger of Illinois. After retirement in 1952 he moved to Mankato and cataloged the Bethany Lutheran Seminary Library according to the Congressional Library system. His work at Bethany Seminary was used by the Library of Congress as the original cataloging of the Synod's magnificent rare book collection.

We students were well served by Concordia College. Concordia offered a rigorous liberal arts program which was integrated into a six year curriculum, from the first year of high school to second year college. My brother Erling and I had our first year of high school in Newburg, North Dakota public high school. Our father, Martin Teigen, at the suggestion of Dr. Theodore Buenger prepared us for entry into Concordia. We studied Latin and German with our pastor William Gierke, a graduate of Concordia. We entered Concordia as high school sophomores.

Besides six years of study of Latin and German, we had four years of Greek, two years of Hebrew, and, of course, some

Norwegian. We studied science, math, and history with a concentration in English. Six years of Religion was required. The entire curriculum called for a great deal of theme writing.

There were two literary societies at Concordia: the Demosthenian and Ciceronian, and all students were expected to join one of them. Here we prepared separate material for public speaking and debating. The college newspaper, *The Concordia Comet*, gave opportunities for developing our literary talents. The new James J. Hill Reference Library had just been opened in St. Paul and we were encouraged to make good use of it.

There was only one area in which I felt there was a lack: the practical subject of typewriting. In my five years at Concordia I do not remember any encouragement to learn to use the typewriter. It was a skill taught in high schools and would have been an important tool for a profession such as the ministry. We did all our theme-writing in longhand. The only typewriter I was aware of was on the desk of the president's private secretary.

Our curriculum was summarized in the Concordia College Seal which President Buenger had designed in 1895. In a circle there was a lamp of learning. The lamp symbolized the light of the knowledge of God's Word, illuminating the minds of the students as well as of the darkness of the world. Under the lamp a crossed quill symbolizes the writing of the students and the writings of the great men of history from whom the student learns. The moccasin flower below the crosses quills symbolizes the State of Minnesota, the location of the college, and the beauty of God's creation. Doctor Buenger surrounded these symbols with a Latin inscription: IN LITTERIS PROFICERE VOLO; MALO DELIGERE JESUM. This phrase means: "I wish to make progress in knowledge, but I have a greater desire to love Jesus." The Scripture verse on which this motto is based is Ephesians 3:19: "And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."



Rev. B.W. Teigen  
July 1998

## The Bethany Gates

In 1936 Bethany Lutheran College observed the tenth anniversary of its reorganization as the high school and junior college of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the twenty-fifth anniversary of its original founding as Bethany Ladies' College.

From the *Bethany Lutheran College Bulletin* of October 1936 the following is culled:

"The tenth anniversary celebration was held in a most auspicious setting. Elected representatives of a large number of young people's societies from

congregations of our Synod were here from Friday evening, October 16, and on through Sunday, the 18th, to organize a general young people's association for our Synod. A number of pastors had come from far and near to attend this meeting and various Board meetings held on the following Monday. And this particular Sunday had been set aside since last spring as Bethany Day, our annual open house and homecoming day, bringing former students, members of our congregations and other friends. The festival was opened on Sunday forenoon by a divine service, in which the sermon was preached by the Rev. Erling Ylvisaker of Madison, Wisconsin. The afternoon program began at 3:30 and included musical selections by Mrs. Silber and a male chorus number with Rev. G.A.R.Gullixson of Chicago as soloist. Addresses were delivered by Superintendent A.C.Stellhorn of St. Louis on "Christian Education" and by the Rev. J.A.Moldstad of Chicago, president of the



Board of Regents, on the significance of this tenth anniversary. He also acknowledged on behalf of the Synod and Bethany the so-called G.A.Gullixson Memorial, a gift brought by friends of the sainted Rev. Gullixson as a tribute by which we should all be spurred on to a similar love and enthusiasm and spirit of sacrifice for the cause which Bethany represents among us. Rev. Gullixson was from the start a member of the Bethany Board and an untiring advocate of Christian training for the youth. It was most fitting when last year's senior class decided to let their class gift become a memorial to this man, to whom our school under God owes so much."

Earlier that year, BLC president, S.C.Ylvisaker had written:

"Dear Brother,

"Each year the graduating class at Bethany leaves a gift to the school. This year's class has taken kindly to the suggestion to help commemorate the tenth anniversary of our synod's purchase of Bethany and the beginning of our work here. A charter member of the Bethany Board and one most prominently connected with the move to acquire an institution of higher education for our synod was the sainted Rev.G.A.Gullixson. He saw the need more clearly than the great majority of us, and became an enthusiastic instrument in fostering and developing Bethany to meet that need, giving liberally of his time, efforts,



money, prayer, counsel. He expressed the wish that he might have seen Bethany more established before he died.

The seniors have accordingly resolved to make their gift a G.A.Gullixson memorial. We are convinced that many within and without our synod would be interested in supporting the seniors in making this a worthy memorial, and I am doing what I can to bring this to the attention of our friends. A brief notice will be printed in our Lutheran Sentinel. This letter goes to the pastors, with the request that you make the project known where you can, so that those who wish may send their contributions. Likewise that you send us names of individuals to whom we could write a personal letter.

This must not be allowed to stand in the way of any synodical collections, these being needed more than ever. But those who can afford an extra gift may well be encouraged to concentrate their efforts toward a fitting memorial and a worthy celebration of our tenth anniversary.

May I hear from you very soon with the list of names as requested?

Signed,  
S.C. Ylvisaker

The *Bethany Lutheran College Bulletin* of July 1938 stated:

“As a part of the program of campus development, the class of 1938 sponsored the erection of a stone entrance to the college grounds. By using stone largely from the “old foundation,” and by securing the substantial donations from business firms in the city and other friends, the gate has become a rather pretentious one, about which much of the future landscaping naturally will center. The nine-foot pilasters on either side will hold lights, to serve at the same time as street lights for the city and to light up this whole section of our campus. Solid cast bronze plates have also been set in these pilasters, bearing the name of the school. In connection with this project the city has agreed to regrade and resurface the roads on the college grounds and to grade a large part of the campus.

“The entrance was formally dedicated in connection with the class-day exercises and in the following words spoken by the president: ‘In the name and on behalf of our Synod and of Bethany Lutheran College I accept this memorial of the Senior Class of 1938 and by resolution of the Class I dedicate it solemnly to the memory of two departed friends of our school, the Rev. G.A.Gullixson and Mrs. Frieda Schanke. The entrance is opened from within, symbolizing the welcome we extend to the youth of our church to come and enjoy the blessings this institution has to offer. It is massive, to symbolize that these blessings are lasting and a solid foundation on which to build in life. It is lighted to remind us of the light of the Gospel and of Christian faith pointing a sure way. It is a thing of beauty to symbolize the beauty of Christian character as the goal of our every endeavor here. And may God bless this memorial in the name of His dear Son.’”



submitted by  
Rev. Walther Gullixson,

**THIS IS YOUR FINAL ISSUE OF Oak Leaves  
UNLESS YOU RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!**

**All annual memberships are due on June 1 of each year.**

**Membership Rates are:**

**Voting -- \$10/year for individual or \$15/year for husband & wife**  
**Associate-- \$15/year for individual, \$25/year for institutional, or \$5/year for student**  
**Life-- \$200**

**Send membership Renewals to ELS Historical Society, 6 Browns Court, Mankato, MN 56001**

**Dates of significance—**

- 80 years ago – the Evangelical Lutheran Synod applies for membership in the “Synodical Conference”
- 80 years ago – the Evangelical Lutheran Synod establishes a professorship at Concordia College-St. Paul, Minnesota
- 80 years ago – the *Lutheran Sentinel* first appears as a companion to the Norwegian edition of *Luthersk Tidene*
- 40 years ago – the Gymnasium-Auditorium [now, South Gymnasium] is dedicated at Bethany Lutheran College.
- 10 years ago – the cornerstone is laid for the Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center at Bethany Lutheran College.

“On March 6, 1959, groundbreaking ceremonies for our new Auditorium-Gymnasium were held at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota. We hope that this is only the first of several new buildings that will be erected at our Bethany College in the coming years. May the Lord bless our College and its work so that it shall prosper in its service of the Lord. God willing, there will be Cornerstone-laying ceremonies on Synod Sunday, June 28<sup>th</sup>.”

1959 Synod Report

## M.K.Bleken early ELS pastor

President Theodore Aaberg, in the seminary classroom, said there were only three locations where unity was strong enough to host the re-organizing convention of the Norwegian Synod in 1918. They were:

- Lime Creek Lutheran Church – rural Lake Mills, Iowa – Rev. H.Ingebritson, pastor
- St. Mark's Lutheran Church – Chicago, Illinois – Rev. J.Moldstad, pastor
- Saude-Jerico Lutheran Parish – rural Lawler, Iowa – Rev. M.K.Bleken, pastor.

Who was this third pastor, who firmly stood on the doctrine of the old Norwegian Synod but, who did not attend the 1918 reorganizing convention?



Martinus Kristiansen Bleken was born in Norway and emigrated to the United States at the age of 18 years. He graduated from Concordia Seminary (St. Louis, Missouri) in 1892 and was ordained at Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church. From 1892-1897 he served Liberty Prairie Lutheran Church (rural Dane County, Wisconsin) and Our Saviour's Lutheran Church (Madison, Wisconsin). Both congregations had suffered division in the mid-1880s during the "election controversy." It is said "He was instrumental in building Our Savior's church [constructed in

1894] ... and succeeded in establishing a well organized church there." [G.A.Gullixson *Evangelisk Luthersk Tidende* 6(December 20, 1922) 396]

The mission field of St. John's Lutheran Church (Chicago, Illinois) was his next field of labor. A church building was constructed there in 1904. After serving in Chicago for nine years, he was called to Luther College (Decorah, Iowa) as a professor of religion and Norwegian.

The tumultuous years prior to "the merger" had begun. In 1905 the invitation had been extended which eventually was to lead to the Merger of 1917. "After the convention of 1908, the interests of the Synod became more and more centered in the efforts toward union of the various Norwegian Lutheran Church bodies" [*Grace for Grace*, p. 96]. Leadership of the minority, who knew it was not God's will to enter into a unionistic merger, centered in Decorah. Again, Theodore Aaberg writes: "Prof C.K.Preus, president of Luther College, and the Rev. I.B.Torrision, pastor of First Lutheran Church, Decorah, became the acknowledged leaders of the Minority" [*A City Set on a Hill*, p. 58-59].

Meanwhile, talk of merger also was beginning to take place in the congregations of the Norwegian Synod. The pastor of the nearby Saude-Jerico Lutheran parish received a call in 1909; as he was a supporter of the Merger, he congregations advised him to accept the call. [G.A.R.Gullixson, interview with, 19 October 1975]. Prof. Bleken, from Decorah, was now called to serve these two congregations. He served here from 1910 until his death in 1922. As in his previous parishes, he witnessed the construction of a church building (Jerico in 1913) and he also guided the congregations through the years of merger and reorganization.

There is no record of Pastor Bleken's attendance at Lime Creek in 1918; however, the following year he was received into membership in the re-organized Norwegian Synod (ELS). In 1920 he preached the Opening Sermon at the Third Annual Convention of the Synod. In the introduction he said:

"We have come here, a small group of men and women, from various parts of the country for the purpose of holding a church convention. The aim of our meeting is to be

built up in Him, Christ Jesus, and to be established in the faith (Col. 2:7), and take counsel together concerning those things that pertain to our position and our work. We are not regarded as being of much account, it is true, but we ought not to seek after those things that count in the eyes of the world, neither will our meeting attract much attention, a thing which we do not deplore, since we have in mind only that which is pleasing to our Master.

“Because our conscience has been bound by the Word of God, we have not been able to join the many who have united into a larger church body, but we will, as far as we are able, by the grace of God, continue the old Norwegian Synod and maintain its principles in doctrine and practice, because they are in agreement with the Word of God, our fathers who have labored, sacrificed, suffered and fought for those principles; this we believe, we owe ourselves and our fellowmen, especially our own countrymen. This is the heritage, received from our fathers, that we feel in duty bound to preserve and transmit to others no matter what the cost. For it is not a matter of supreme importance to gather all those of Norwegian parentage into one great church organization, with utter disregard for the foundation upon which such an organization is built, but to do what is in our power that there may be one church body—large or small—among our countrymen, which is faithful to the scriptural and confessional principles of the Lutheran church. This is of paramount importance. This we have tried to do. But because we have tried to do this, because we would not yield and follow the others, we have called down upon ourselves the contumely and scorn of our adversaries, and many of us have had to suffer on that account. We have labored and we have been heavy laden. And we must beware lest we imagine that we shall have much else to expect in the future if we remain faithful.

“Do we, then, come here as a discouraged lot—to bewail our position, because we have suffered, have been reviled, have not been able to get the recognition of the majority and because many even among those who consider themselves as our friends predict a dark future for us and the cause for which we stand? Far from it! But consolation and encouragement we may well need all of us. This we look for not among men, but where we are sure of finding what we seek, namely the Word of God.

“Let me, therefore, at the opening of our convention read such a word of encouragement and draw a lesson therefrom. May God by His Holy Spirit help us to take it to heart! Amen.” [Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of The Norwegian Synod of the American Ev. Luth. Church, 1920, pp 3-4]

We remember this early pastor of our synod who stood firm upon God's Word. He died on December 7, 1922 at the age of 57 years and was buried in the Calmar [Iowa] Lutheran Cemetery where the grave marker bears the words which he supposedly said so often: “Thank you Jerico and Saude Churches.”



The synod president, Rev. G.A.Gullixson, wrote:

“Bleken was beloved by all who knew him. First in his Faith, he was compelled to differ with many former brethren, but there was no bitterness and no unkindness in his heart toward his opponents.

“Though missed by a large circle of friends, his loss is most keenly felt by the small circle of brethren with whom he so gladly cast his lot. He was a loyal son of the old Norwegian Synod, and the love for the true doctrines of God's word awakened in his heart permitted no compromise with man-made doctrines. His battles were numerous and severe oft-times, but he fought with the weapons of God and won. As a faithful servant he won in Christ the victory even over the last enemy, death.” [G.A.Gullixson Evangelisk Luthersk Tidende 6(December 20, 1922) 396]

Tidende 6(December 20, 1922) 396]



Announcing the  
Third Annual Meeting  
of the  
**ELS Historical Society**

Saturday, June 19, 1999  
Bethany Lutheran College  
Mankato, Minnesota

- 9:30 am - Registration in Trinity Chapel
- 10:00 am - Devotion in Trinity Chapel  
*The Rev. Craig A. Ferkenstad*
- 10:30 am - Presentations by congregations:  
*How have we preserved our history (Parkland Lutheran; Tacoma, Washington)*  
*How we intend to preserve our history (Resurrection Luth; Winter Haven, Florida)*
- 11:00 am - Ceremony of presentation of papers to the ELS Department of Archives and History by pastors:  
*George Lillegard, Milton Otto, Bjarne Teigen, Torald Teigen, Milton Tweit.*  
*There will be a brief response by each donor or representative*
- 12:00 noon - Luncheon in the Great Room in honor of the donors
- 1:00 pm - Preserving our history through the collections of personal and institutional archives. Dr. Philip Teigen, Library of Medicine, Washington, D. C.
- 2:00 pm - Business Meeting
- 2:30 pm - Coffee

**Cost:** The noon luncheon will be served at a cost of \$5/person in the Great Room of Bethany Lutheran College.

**Housing:** For those who wish to stay overnight, synod convention housing will be available in the dormitories. The following rates for lodging will be in effect: Browns Court Dormitory (air conditioned)—\$15 per person per night, double occupancy (single—\$30). Teigen Hall (not air conditioned)—\$10 per room, single or double. RV Hookups are also available \$10 per night. Bring towels, wash cloths, and soap, as well as pillow and blankets if possible. Sheets and pillow cases will be provided. Contact Mary Hansen, 507-344-7313.

**Registration:** To assist with preparations: please return the Registration Form, which is being mailed under a separate cover, prior to June 11. Or telephone 507-344-7354

**Visitors:** are welcome and invited to attend!

## He Loved His Church

by the Rev. Justin Petersen

reprinted from: A Blessing in the Midst of the Land

I still see him at times—that massive-framed man, with the unusually large head. Of face he was frank featured, quite rugged—a face one doesn't forget so soon.

I had seen him at a number of times at Circuit Meetings and Synod Meetings, but did not really learn to know him and appreciate him until he became a member of our Home Mission Board several years ago. There were two lay-men on the board, both of the type any Church Body could be proud of. In his home congregation he was a pillar. Believe he served, and faithfully, as the janitor of his home congregation for many years.

Mr. J.A.J.,—these were his initials—was a farmer by vocation, and I am confident he must have been a good one. At the time I knew him best, he lived on the edge of a small village in Southern Minnesota. He still milked three or four cows, kept a few chickens, and likely a hog or two.

Mr. J. was always present at the meeting of our Home Mission Board. Can't recall that he ever missed a single meeting. He was a good listener, but sparing with his words. He didn't say much, but when he did, his words counted. Brother J. was a man of good judgement—though he never acted as though he were aware of it.

The Home Mission Board had difficulty and delicate problems those days, as it also has today, and likely will continue to have as long as the Church is in this world. The devil, the world, and our flesh will see to that. No matter how discouraging and unpleasant things were, Mr. J. kept his head. Calm and composed he remained at all times.

But what impressed me most about this man was his big heart, a heart which beat warmly for the cause of Christ's kingdom. He knew his Church, her Confession, her Doctrine and Practice. Nor was he blind to her faults and shortcomings. He **loved** his Church—the Norwegian Synod. That he showed more than once, in word and deed.

Do you wonder now that I can't forget him, and that the news of his death—he was gathered to his people about three years ago—brought me to pause, and thank the God of all grace for this humble lay-man and his work in and for our Church. How much blessing one good man or woman can be to the Church, I often think; and also how much harm one man or woman can do to the Church, alas!

His wife I did not know so well, though I visited in their home a couple of times. I have been told by her pastor, however, that she was of the same spirit as her husband. In a letter he describes her in these words: "She was a queen of real nobility, helping the sick and needy—training her daughters to do the home work, so when she heard of a need, she was there before the party line heard of it." Both are now resting side by side in God's Acre, awaiting the glorious Resurrection Morn.

Dr. Walther in one of his writings once wrote: "God preserve unto us a pious and faithful ministry." We also need to pray: God raise up among us a pious, enlightened laity—men and women workers in our congregations. May you grow up to be a worker in the Kingdom!

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ... and their works do follow them. Rev. 14,13





Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Historical Society  
6 Browns Court  
Mankato, MN 56001

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Rev. J.W.C. Dietrichson was the first regularly trained pastor to come from Norway. He came to the United States in 1844, lived at Koshkonong, Wisconsin and finally returned to Norway in 1850.

The Rev. U.V. Koren writes about him in *Symra*, 1905: "In [King] Christian III's church ordinance there is a provision that states: 'Pastors shall always be dressed in the right garments.' This he carefully observed, and it is told how he standing in his wagon had transported firewood or water, and occasionally 'other substance' dressed in his long ministerial garments and with a ruffed collar around his neck which had lost its starch, so that it hung as best it could."



selected from:

Odd S. Lovell, *The Promise of America*,  
The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1984, page 58