



Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

Volume 14

May 2010

Issue 1

The Many Facets of Ulrik Vilhelm Koren

The annual meeting of the ELS Historical Society will focus on the life and work of pioneer pastor Ulrik Vilhelm Koren. He immigrated to Iowa in 1853 and was the first resident Norwegian pastor west of the Mississippi River.

His work eventually covered the area of over 80 congregations in northeast Iowa and southeast Minnesota. He was influential in the establishment of Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and Luther Seminary. A careful and capable theologian, his writings and leadership in the Iowa District and the Norwegian Synod had a long and powerful impact. In 1912, two years after Koren's death, his son Paul published four volumes of Koren's works in Norwegian.

Koren was pastor, theologian, missionary, church leader, synod president. He was well respected for his utmost regard for the Holy Scriptures, for his careful approach theology, and for his devoted pastoral care to parishioners and fellow pastors.

Koren's work was among the Norwegian-American immigrant community, but his legacy lives on wherever the gospel is proclaimed freely and clearly to all people. The Evangelical Lutheran Synod is dedicat-

ed to that legacy of proclaiming the gospel to all nations. We can learn from Koren how he did that and how we can continue to do that in the church and world of the 21st century.



Bethany Lutheran Church Celebrates 25th Anniversary in The Dalles, Oregon

By Linda Griswold



The first service of Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church was held on February 17, 1985 at the Kopper Kitchen restaurant in The Dalles, Oregon. The interim pastor was Rev. Daniel Sabrowsky. On May 12, 1985, the services were moved to Old St. Peter's Landmark, an old Catholic church, listed on the National Registry of Historic Places.

On July 7, 1985, Rev. Frank Fiedler III was installed as pastor at Bethany. The next few years were abundant with many "firsts": baptisms, weddings, the establishment of the Mary Martha women's group, scholarship awards to college students, confirmations, Easter Breakfasts, Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinners and receptions. Because the congregation had no official church building, many of these events were held in members' homes and community meeting rooms.

Rev. Karl Anderson was installed as pastor on June 2, 1993. He and Hannah Wobrock were married later that year. The church continued to meet in the historic Catholic church. Rev. Anderson was installed at Concordia Lutheran Church, Hood River, in 1996, resulting in the formation of

a joint parish.

The ideal church property, on the corner of 12th and Thompson Streets in The Dalles, was purchased in May of 1989 and the congregation began the process of raising building project funds. In November of 1994, The Dalles City Planning Commission approved the 2800 square foot church and new home of Bethany Lutheran at 2323 East 12th Street in The Dalles. The official ground breaking ceremony took place on the tenth anniversary of the congregation. The "Official Groundbreakers" were Maury Sholl, chairman; Bertha Dutro, eldest member; and Hunter Whitmire, the youngest member. Member Ray Hammer was the general contractor for the building, providing guidance and coordinating the many skilled volunteers who built the church. The new church was dedicated on October 22, 1995.

In June of 1998, Rev. James Larson, from Hood River, became the interim pastor after Rev. Karl Anderson accepted a call to another parish. Pastor Cory Hahnke was installed on July 8, 1999. In the spring of 2000, work began on a new addition to the church. That new wing included a fellow-

ship hall, a small library, a large kitchen and four Sunday School rooms. The dedication of the addition was held in October. Pastor Gaylin Schmeling of Mankato, MN was the guest speaker.

In January of 2006, Rev. Jesse Jacobsen was installed as pastor at Bethany. The church continued to bring the Gospel to the community with events such as a one-day Christmas for Kids Vacation Bible School and Mother's Day Party. Vicar Samuel Gullixson began a year's service in 2009, and a narthex was added to the church build-

ing in 2010.

Throughout its history, Bethany Lutheran Church has been blessed with many fine musicians, especially those who played the organ and piano: Suzanne Bialkowsky, Donna Larson, Ingrid Sherman, Bette Nelson, Erica Jacobsen and Anna Gullixson.

Looking forward, Bethany Lutheran Church continues to confess Christ's name and glory in the place where He has put us.

Linda Griswold is a member of Bethany Lutheran Church, The Dalles, Oregon.



A Tale of Two Churches

By Gerald Peter Tjernagel

There was a small white church in Bygland Township in rural Fisher, Minnesota. Another small white church could be found in Scott Township in rural Story City, Iowa. What is the tale behind the churches located over four hundred miles apart?

My mother, Gertrude Anderson Tjernagel, died in February of 2005. At the funeral, an individual came up to me, shook my hand, expressed her sympathy, and made the statement that it was special to meet an individual with the blood of two founding families of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod running through his veins. The statement was humbling and caused me to think about its significance. I believe the significance of the statement is that it is a tale shared by many other families throughout the ELS. Permit me a few minutes to share some family history.

My mother's maiden name was Anderson. This family was the Anderson family from Bygland Township in rural Fisher, Minnesota. Peder Anderson took possession of farmland in Bygland Township in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Peder was father to seventeen children that lived to adulthood. One of the children was my mother.

My mother's married name was Tjernagel. She was the wife of Sigurd Tjernagel. The Tjernagel family came from Scott Township, Hamilton County, in rural Story City, Iowa. Ole Andreas Larson [OAL] Tjernagel took possession of farmland in Scott Township in 1864. Most of my dialogue will focus on OAL's son Peter Tjernagel who took possession of the farm in later years. Peder was father to nine children that lived to adulthood. One of the children was my father Sigurd.

What does *A Tale of Two Cities* have to do with this historical narrative? As a young child we would visit my grandparents'

homes in Iowa and Minnesota. What was so neat was that they both owned their own church, on their own land, and became members of the Little Norwegian Synod. Why?

Until 1917 the Anderson family worshipped in the Bygland Synod Congregation Church. In similar manner, the Tjernagel family worshipped in North Saint Petri Lutheran Church until 1918. During this period of time, three Lutheran churches with Norwegian background agreed to merge and form a new church body called the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. These three bodies were commonly known as the Hauge Synod, the United Church, and the Norwegian Synod. There were deep doctrinal differences between the three bodies and there was no doctrinal agreement on some of these differences when the three groups merged. A belief supported by some members of the new synod was that each individual could contribute something (human good works) towards his/her salvation. The Anderson and Tjernagel families simply would not accept this belief. They believed that salvation came through Christ alone and his saving and redeeming work. These families were conscience-bound to leave the newly-merged synod. Two families, over four hundred miles apart, felt it was necessary to leave their respective churches in 1917 and 1918.

The faith and conviction that these two families shared, together with their deep desire to worship together with others of similar faith and conviction, began the practice of worshipping in each other's homes. Very soon the two churches would make their appearance.



Bethany Lutheran Church, Story City, Iowa

In 1919, several Lutheran Christians gathered at the Tjernagel Brothers' farm. Following the worship service, the following resolution was unanimously adopted; "We, Lutheran Christians, resolve to form a Lutheran congregation." Thereupon a congregation constitution was read, point by point, and adopted. Bethany Lutheran Church was born and joined the Little Norwegian Synod. In 1920, the Methodist Church in Ellsworth was not being used so it was bought and moved at once to land on the Tjernagel Brothers' farm.

For more than four decades, worship services were conducted in this church. During its early years, the spiritual needs of the congregation were met through the services of pastors associated with the Little Norwegian Synod or Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) and later the congregation became a member of the ELS. In 1968, several older members had passed away, younger ones had gone off to college and to work elsewhere, and members were getting married and moving away. In order for Bethany Lutheran Church to survive, the congregation decided some changes must be made. The congregation was relocated to Ames, Iowa in 1969. In later years, the rural church was

demolished.



Bygland Synod Lutheran Church, Fisher, Minnesota

In protest to the doctrine of the newly formed synod, a few families began to worship in their own homes. In 1926 a church was erected by these people on land donated by Peder Anderson. For over three decades, worship services were conducted in this church. The first organized meeting of the church was held in 1933 and a constitution was drafted and adopted. In similar fashion to the congregation in Iowa, the first pastors were from the ELS and membership in the ELS became formal. In 1956 a canvass was made to determine what possibilities there were for growth in the north end of East Grand Forks. Following incorporation and a change of the church's name of the church to River Heights Lutheran Church, land was purchased and a worship facility was built. Although the Bygland Synod Lutheran Church was torn down, the bell was salvaged and put into use in the new church.

Tjernagel meets Anderson

I have just explained how these two churches came to be. The next question is how it came to be that I have the blood of two founding families of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod running through my veins. The answer is an equation that has been repeated countless times. The equation is:
Bethany Lutheran College + Love = Marriage

Both of my parents attended Bethany College and love wrote the rest of the story. The gap of distance between the two churches was bridged by marriage and raising a family. I inherited a lot of history. I am both proud and thankful of the position my grandparents took in the face of doctrinal

discord. It is my prayer that when faced with similar discord I will have the conviction and strength to make a similar stand. To my satisfaction, the “Tale of Two Churches” has been told.

Gerald Tjernagel lives in North Mankato, MN.

John Robert Christianson to Speak at the Annual Meeting



John Robert Christianson is Research Professor of History at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. A native of Mankato, Minnesota, he holds the Ph. D. in history from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. He

taught history at Luther College from 1967-97.

He has written, edited, or translated 15 books, 130 articles, and 50 reviews on various aspects of Scandinavian and Scandinavian-American history, including several on U. V. Koren and his wife, Elisabeth Hysing Koren. His biography of U. V. Koren in *The Biographical Dictionary of Iowa* (2009) is online at <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/uipress/bdi/DetailsPage.aspx?id=213>.

Dr. Christianson was Chairman of the Luther College 125th Anniversary Committee in 1986 and served on the Board of Directors of the Norwegian-American Historical Society 1971-2004. He and his wife led five study and alumni tours to Scandinavia between 1976 and 2003. In 1995, he was dubbed Knight of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit by His Majesty Harald V, King of Norway.

He is married to Birgitte Christianson, and they have two sons, Erik and Paul.

Address At The Dedication Of Albert Lea Lutheran High School

By Ulrik Vilhelm Koren (Excerpts), Translated by Mark DeGarmeaux

Note: From *The Lutheran Witness*, Volume 10, November 7, 1891:

“The Albert Lea Lutheran High School is the name of another new institution that was dedicated on the 6th of October at Albert Lea, Minnesota. It is a fine structure 70x76 feet with a tower 100 feet high. Cost complete \$30,000. There are four stories and recitation rooms for 200 students. Seventy-five boarders can be accommodated. It is built of brick and Mankato stone. Mr. L. S. Swenson, A. M., is principal. The first term of this school began November 1st, 1888, and the school has been in operation ever since in a suite of rooms rented for the purpose; the new building will offer much better accommodations. The studies comprise a regular academic course on the basic principles of true Lutheranism. The Rev. V. Koren, President of the Iowa District of the Norwegian Synod, preached the dedicatory sermon on the basis of 2 John 4. Rev. O. H. Smeby, of Albert Lea, who has pushed the work for this school, also took part in the exercises. A collection amounting to \$122.00 was taken. In the afternoon the festivities were continued and speeches delivered by Hon. W. E. Todd, of Albert Lea, Rev. O. P. Vangnes, of Minneapolis, and O. Skattebøl, of Blue Earth. The exercises were closed with prayer and benediction by Rev. L. P. Jensen.”

History of the Scandinavians and Successful Scandinavians in the United States, Olof Nelson, 1900, p. 192, reports that Albert Lea Lutheran High School had an attendance of 200 in 1892.

In the name of God and our Savior Jesus Christ, I greet you, dear friends, brothers and sisters in our common holy faith.

Most of you have a greater or smaller part in the work whose successful completion has brought us together here today. What motivated you to participate? I doubt that one single reason can be cited that affected you all to the same degree. There will have been various reasons which to varying degrees and with greater or less clarity were important among the participants, except that there have also been those who were alone only because others were.

For some the main reason has been love for God’s kingdom. Love for children, for the upcoming generation for others. Love for our Norwegian people and love for the country to which we now belong, for America, has been a contributing factor. Other reasons include being convinced that knowledge in general is necessary, and being zealous for our Norwegian-Americans to be able to claim their place among the citizens of this country — and then a main reason we have in common, finally, the conviction that knowledge and culture have a real and lasting value and blessing only when they are built upon the fear of God, on the basis of Christian truth.

Now when I received the honored task of guiding your thoughts at the dedication of the work here completed, I really wanted to consider these various legitimate reasons — and, by pointing out their significance, to encourage you to maintain and support with continued love what you have brought about with so much eagerness and sacrifice under God’s blessing — and as a point of departure or an explanatory superscription I would take the words of the Apostle, St. John, to that mother to whom he writes the second of his epistles (2 John 4): “*I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father.*”

— — — — —

We love our children. One who does not is an unnatural father or mother, and of all the love among human beings there is none so unselfish, so resolute and self-sacrificing as that of a father and mother. Of course, nothing on earth bears a complete likeness to God’s pure and perfect love, — but when God wants give us a picture of His love, He

mentions what comes closest to it: a mother's love for the son of her womb and a father's merciful love. . . .

What the Holy Scripture says about this ought to be assumed as familiar to all of us. It shows that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom,¹ and it orders parents to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.²

The old book by Pontoppidan³ that has been placed into the hands our youth now for so many generations already in its first question refers to the fear of God as the source not only of salvation in heaven, but also of happiness on earth. For Holy Scripture also brings promises for the present life, since the fear of God makes one both good and glad.

So what is said in Scripture is also confirmed in experience through all ages. A famous sage who lived a hundred years ago says somewhere: "*I have been young and I have grown old and I bear witness that I have never found thorough, radical and persistent virtue among any people except among the God-fearing, not according to the modern kind of fearing God, but according to the old childlike manner and way [of fearing God]. Only among these did I also find assurance in life, a brave, victorious obedience and cheerfulness in the mind, of such a remarkable kind that it cannot be compared with any other.*"

But if this spirit of the Gospel is to gain power in young hearts, then it must not be shown to them only through special instruction in religion without connecting it to what they are taught and trained for otherwise — this would all too easily confuse the children as if Christianity were something which they

had no use for except in the set classes and devotion times. No — the whole training and the whole discipline must get its distinctive feature from the spirit of the Gospel. And recognizing this is precisely what has brought this high school to life.

It is actually not a church school [to prepare church workers] that we dedicate today, not a school whose main goal is instruction in Christianity. It will be closest to what we in our old homeland would call a Christian civic school [*borgerskole*]. You would like to train your sons and daughters to be good American citizens. But for that to happen, they must learn something and what they learn must be thorough and good.

Superfluity — this and that and yet nothing at all — is always a dangerous thing, especially in a country where each man has access and duty to participate in public life by exercising his right to vote.⁴ Why are so many thousands of people both here and in other countries such easy prey for demagogues and agitators and faction-makers both in state and in church? Because they lack a thorough insight that alone can prepare them to examine conscientiously what is being said. What excuse can someone have, for example, who has not learned enough to begin to realize that not everything that he sees and hears among Americans is necessarily good and praiseworthy, and that even here in this country one still has a lot to learn? This country is so rich and blessed also in access to knowledge, and a great number of its people are so far advanced that such narrow-mindedness no longer ought to exist here. And even if there are enough of such stay-at-home people both here and in other countries — just as there were in Norway — then they still do no credit to their people or their country.

That is why we will have schools where our children can be thoroughly and well ed-

¹ Psa. 111:10, Prov. 1:7; 9:10.

² Eph. 6:4

³ Pontoppidan's *Catechism Explanation* was printed in 1737 and used in Norway at least until 1900. Erik Pontoppidan (1698-1764) was born in Denmark but served as bishop in Bergen, Norway, 1745-54, where he instituted several education reforms.

⁴ Women did not yet have the right to vote in American when this address was given.

ucated. We originate from a country which has a good reputation in the world. That distant harsh rock-solid land⁵ has nurtured capable, hardy, unassuming, honest men and women, and its children have the reputation of being among the kind of immigrants that this country needs most and are therefore most highly prized. Nor has a generation passed since our people first came here that did not give evidence of the energetic and powerful activity of the immigrant Norwegians. I do not stand here to flatter you, but neither should this be kept secret as we surrounded by striking testimony of it everywhere here in the Northwest⁶. Yet — the influence that our Norwegian-Americans have had up to now essentially and for the most part has been limited to the rather hard work of clearing land. Certainly year by year there is already an increasing number [of people] who have entered into positions of more responsibility, but that is precisely what urges us even more strongly to see to it that those who according to their abilities and opportunities enter such positions both maintain the honor of the good reputation they inherited and become a true benefit for the country and people to which we now belong.

We want to raise our children to be good and useful citizens. Who then is a good citizen? Is it the one who scrapes the most money together? It is all too certain that such people want to gain both name and honor, that does not mean that they benefit their people and their country. But one who does [benefit his people and country] is someone who spreads happiness and joy and satisfaction and love, in broader or narrower circles, in his house and his neighborhood

⁵ *klippeland*

⁶ Through early American history a region called the Northwest Territory consisted of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota. Albert Lea was not in the part of Minnesota that was part of the Northwest Territory, but the expression did have a wider usage as well.

and in the state. ...

The character of a good citizen is to regard it as a duty and an honor to obey parents and superiors, law and authority, and a well-organized school will teach that to its disciples. ...

Among the demands that you will undoubtedly make of a good citizen is also that he should be willing to do some kind of honorable work and honestly support himself with it. It has been rightly said that of all the many advantages America has above most other countries, this was the most important, that all honest work is respected. ... But has that not changed in many ways? What does the tremendous streaming to the cities mean? What is it that in many places makes it nearly impossible to find young men willing to work, for example, at farm labor? Is it that they no longer have strength in their back and arms? It does not require as hard an effort as their fathers made. What is it that makes so very few young men willing to learn a craft? For many dare it be partly that they want to get rich quickly by speculations of various kinds, partly that they want to have the kind of job where they can avoid hard work and where they can have an opportunity for fun and to wear nice clothes?

Day after day, week after week, the newspapers report how first one person, then another falls and is destroyed under the mad race to get rich without work, through speculations and “gambling” of various kinds, and that meanwhile the innocent all too often have to suffer along with the guilty. Like a dangerous virus this direction of spirit spreads in all directions. The difference between what is mine and what is yours is not recognized among those who at any cost and by any means are only looking for a way to scrape money together as quickly and easily as possible. What do we have to counter this temptation and danger?

Teach the young people something bet-

ter! Do not give them just knowledge, but establish their character! Teach them to see the difference between appearance and reality! Teach them to despise what is despicable! Teach them to honor what is honorable! Teach them to distinguish between the value of human beings and the value of money! Teach them to understand that here in this world we are to be prepared for another life! Help them toward an independent view of life, so they do not become irresponsible mimics who repeat what they hear and imitators of what they see around them! But where shall we get this wisdom for life that can serve the goals mentioned here? Have you noticed that what I presented here by way of example as pieces of the intellectual development that we would like to see in our children are no different from what our God has commanded us, although I present it in a different form? What I have pointed to is from the Fourth Commandment and from the Sixth Commandment and from the Seventh.

I preferred not to mention these Commandments right away, as everyone thinks they know them, so that if possible I might in this way be able much more easily to show you the necessity of our schools being built on a Christian basis. For it is certain that such people who truly benefit their country and benefit their people must be men and women whose conscience is alert and who have learned to see their own deficiencies and sins, who have found their Savior, and who, because in Him they have learned to fear and love their God, also find it an easy and dear thing to love and serve their neighbor.

We would really like to pass on an inheritance to our children. What should it be? When I look out over this crowd before me, then I believe I can say that there is no one here who may be called rich, according to the times and conditions of our country. Perhaps there are some who are well off —

hardly any are rich in the sense mentioned. I do not sigh over that, and hopefully neither do you. I sigh over it least of all when I think what inheritance you can leave to your children. Inherited riches have seldom made people happy, and, if the generation that is coming after us becomes what we really want them to be, then there will be a better inheritance. If they are to be able to withstand temptations that await them and that will be worse than those to which we have been exposed, then they must be thoroughly strengthened in what is true, what is honorable, what is just, what is pure, what is lovely, what is of good report, in every virtue, and whatever is praiseworthy.⁷ Where will you find this? The words mentioned, as you know, are the Apostle Paul's, and wherever we look, we will not find these things anywhere else than where he found them, namely where God's Word has called them forth. That is why we need Christian schools, where both the foundation is the right one, — namely, our Savior, as was acknowledged last year when the cornerstone for this building was laid, — and where everything that is built on it is in covenant with Him. ...

If we strive for this, then to our inexpressible joy they shall be able to say of us the words with which I introduced this address of mine to you, the words of the Apostle to that mother: "*I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father*" [2 John 4].

Then to this high resolve: As a Christian schoolhouse, by granting thorough knowledge in Christian spirit to help the young entrusted to it to grow in wisdom and grace before God and men—may Albert Lea Lutheran High School then hereby be dedicated to that end, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit! Amen.

⁷ Phil. 4:8.

ELS Historical Society — Fourteenth Annual Meeting

Saturday, June 19, 2010

Bethany Lutheran College
Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center
Mankato, Minnesota

Theme: *The Many Facets of Dr. U. V. Koren (1826-1910)*

- 8:15 – Coffee
- 8:45 – Opening Devotion
- 9:00 – **Dr. Koren, the Immigrant Pastor and Theologian,**
by Dr. John Christianson
- 10:30 – Coffee
- 11:00 – **Domestic Life of Immigrant Pastors,** by Tim
Grundmeier
- 11:30 – **Dr. Koren the Poet,** by Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux
- Noon – Lunch
- 1:15 – Business Meeting
- 1:30 – **Dr. Koren the Citizen,** by Prof. Ryan MacPherson
- 2:00 – Norwegian Church Service
- 3:00 – Coffee



PLEASE REGISTER AND PAY BY JUNE 1.

Because of our obligations with Pioneer Food Service

we will NOT be able to accommodate meals for those who do not pre-register and prepay.

REGISTRATION WITH LUNCH MUST BE PREPAID by June 1
through Elsa.Ferkenstad@blc.edu or 507-344-7354.

For further information, contact Mark Harstad (Mark.Harstad@blc.edu)
or Elsa.Ferkenstad@blc.edu or 507-344-7354.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Reservations and payment must be received by June 1.

Membership dues (see chart on back page) = \$ _____
Registration with Lunch: ___ # attending x \$15 = \$ _____
Registration without Lunch: ___ # attending x \$10 = \$ _____
Additional donation = \$ _____
Total = \$ _____

Please send payment for meeting and membership by June 1 to:
ELS Historical Society - 6 Browns Court - Mankato, MN 56001

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

Renew your membership!

ELS Historical Society

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

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6 Browns Court — Mankato, MN 56001

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

MEMBERSHIP

All membership
renewals are due **June 1**

Voting Membership:

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

Associate Membership:

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

Lifetime Membership:

\$200