



# Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

Volume 17

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Issue 2

## Annual Meeting held at BLC on Synod Sunday, June 16th

### Preserving Your Congregation's History by Becky DeGarmeaux

At the ELS Historical Society's annual meeting this year something new was introduced. The Ottesen Museum, ELS Historical Society, and ELS Archives put together a packet of information for new congregations in the Synod. This packet is meant to encourage new congregations, right from the start, to save and protect items connected with the congregation's history. Along with a list of basic supplies was included an outline of why historical conservation is important and how to preserve and protect articles connected to the congregation's history. The new "Welcome Packet" was met with much enthusiasm and during Synod Convention week, the first packet was given to Rev. Brad Kerkow of Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cedar Park, Texas.



The Synod, however, is full of congregations of many ages and it's never too late to start protecting,

and even displaying, articles of historical significance. The question then becomes: "Where do we begin?"

Especially in a well established congregation, this may seem like a daunting task. A packet similar to the one developed for new congregations can be obtained by contacting the Ottesen Museum. Or, contact the Museum's Director of Programming for information on a more in-depth article on the whys and hows of artifact preservation and display. ■

### Historical Society Business Meeting by Mark O. Harstad

The Business Meeting portion of the 2013 Annual Meeting came to order at 5:30 pm on Sunday, June 16. The chairman began with a review of some of the highlights of the past year. This included the awards conferred by the Concordia Historical Institute on our two ventures into publishing books, *Store Per* by Dr. Peter T. Harstad, and *Telling the Next Generation* edited by Dr. Ryan MacPherson, the Rev. Paul Madson, and Mr. Peter Anthony. Doctors Harstad and MacPherson attended the November, 2012, CHI banquet to receive their Merit Awards in person.

*Oak Leaves* co-editor Herman Harstad and Ottesen Museum Programming Director Becky DeGarmeaux delivered oral reports about their areas of work.

Two members of the Board who have served long and faithfully ended their terms of service. Our bylaws required that Dr. Ryan

MacPherson step down after serving three consecutive terms. Dr. Marguerite Ylvisaker chose not to seek reelection for health-related reasons. The Society has benefited greatly from their willing and able service.

A new project of the Society which is in progress is the publication of the writings of Dr. Ulrik Vilhelm Koren in an English translation by Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux. The plan is to bring out one volume a year for each of the next four years.

Formal action by vote of the membership was required in the following matters:

1. Erling Teigen and Lois Jaeger were elected to three-year terms on the board.
2. The "Welcome Kit" project initiated by Synod Archivist Paul Madson and Museum Director Becky DeGarmeaux was formally adopted as a project of the Historical Society.

Peter and Katey Anthony have announced their willingness to lead a group in hiking the Chilkoot Pass Trail from Skagway, Alaska, into Yukon Territory. This was the route followed by Bjug Harstad in 1898 in his attempt to deal with the financial problems of Pacific Lutheran Academy, an institution of the Old Synod, by prospecting for gold. Those who might be interested in the venture are invited to contact the Anthonys or Board Chairman Mark Harstad. ■ (See *Oak Leaves*, Vol. 2, No. 4



(Winter 1999) at [www.els-history.org](http://www.els-history.org) for a biography of Bjug Harstad, written by Dr. Peter T. Harstad. It includes excerpts from Bjug Harstad's *Letters and Articles on A Trip Into the Yukon Region*. Also, a video about the 33-mile Chilkoot Pass Trail by the National Park Service is at <http://www.nps.gov/klgo>. Photo dated March-April 1898 from NPS website.)



Some attendees at the annual meeting.



Erling Teigen gives the background for the events of the play.

## *The Oak Trees Still Stand*

A play by

Michael Lilienthal

Introduction by

Erling T. Teigen

ELS Historical Society

Annual Meeting

June 16, 2013

Michael Lilienthal's play portrays an

event that took place in 1919 in a Worth County, Iowa courtroom. The legal case involved a dispute between the factions of a divided parish over church property at Northwood, Iowa. The division was created when three Norwegian Lutheran church bodies merged in 1917. Pastor A. J. Torgerson and a minority of his parish could not accept this merger because it was their conviction that the merger was based on a compromise of the central doctrine of the gospel, salvation by God's grace alone. As a result, the majority asked him to resign his call and vacate the parsonage property, but he refused on the grounds that he could not resign a call he had been placed in by God. The majority then took the case to court, with Torgerson as the defendant and the majority as the plaintiffs.

But this was not simply a dispute over property. The roots of this conflict extended back into the 1880s when a dispute concerning the doctrine of election erupted within the Synodical Conference, to which the Norwegian Synod of the Lutheran Church in America belonged. While the other Synodical Conference synods (Ohio, Missouri, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) were affected by the controversy, it was especially divisive in the Norwegian Synod. While it is referred to as the election controversy, at stake was, in fact, the whole doctrine of the gospel – God’s eternal grace and his power to convert sinners without any cooperation from man’s sinful heart.

Lilienthal's play has artfully compressed all of this into a very compact package with courtroom narrative by President Bjug Harstad, interspersed with scenes giving flesh to the characters mentioned, and it stands very well on its own two feet. But it also offers us an opportunity to review this history in a little more detail in order to better understand our roots and the confession of our church. We will first give a sketch of the property dispute itself and its historical setting. Then we will give brief sketches of some of the characters who appear on stage – and maybe some who don’t – which will also give us the outlines of the doctrinal dispute known as “The Election Controversy” and “the merger” of 1917.

First, the property dispute. It was an experience repeated many times over, also in the 1880s, that congregations were divided by doctrinal controversy. In 1917, the Synod for the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America (referred to as “the old Norwegian Synod”) entered into a merger with the Hauge Synod and the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. One part of the United Church was the group called “the Anti-Missouri Brotherhood.” It was composed of pastors and congregations who had left the Norwegian Synod in 1887. When Pastor Ulrik Koren’s Theses on Election and Conversion (*Redgjørelse*) was published, the Anti-

Missourians declared that statement heretical, and attempted to remove Dr. Koren, president of the Iowa District, and Bjug Harstad, president of the Minnesota District of the Norwegian Synod, from their positions, as well as all who agreed with them. When the Anti-Missourians were denounced as schismatics, they decided to leave the Synod and form their own fellowship.

In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a great wave of Norwegian nationalism swept from Norway to the immigrant population in the U.S. In 1905, Norway finally won its independence after several centuries of rule by Denmark and later Sweden, and got their own king, Haakon VII. The forces of that nationalism also led to a desire to unite the Norwegian Lutherans in America, to give them a more commanding presence in their adopted country. Until 1910, the Norwegian Synod, under the leadership of Dr. Ulrik Vilhelm Koren, had been steadfastly opposed to a union with those other bodies unless real doctrinal unity among them was achieved first. However, after Koren’s death in 1910, and under the leadership of Pres. H. G. Stub, the union committee which had failed to come to agreement was dismissed, and new representatives of the three synods were appointed. They quickly came to agreement on the basis of a document called “the Madison Agreement,” (*Opgjør* as it is famously called). That agreement created a deep division in the Synod, with between 30 and 40 percent opposed to the union. Further discussions resulted in a compromise called the Austin Agreement in which the minority were assured that they would not be required to subscribe to the doctrinal formulation to which they objected. In the agreement, the doctrinal statements of the Anti-Missourians and the old Synod were put side by side, as Form I and Form II, even though they were contradictory.

As a result, while many who were not pleased with the Madison agreement did enter the merger, a small minority, for conscience

reasons, did not, and in some cases this resulted in divided congregations. Mostly, the majority faction joined the merger. In a few cases, pastors were left with no congregation to serve. In some cases, this left the congregation with a dispute over property – church building, cemetery, school, or parsonage.

The Worth County court case involved A. J. (Augustinus Jensenius) Torgerson (See *Oak Leaves*, August 2008), son of a Norwegian Synod pastor T. A. (Torger Andreas) Torgerson of the Norwegian Synod parish at Northwood, Iowa. The larger part of his congregation at Silver Lake went with the union and Torgerson was left with a minority, which later became Somber Lutheran Church, which formed a parish with First Shell Rock Lutheran Church in Northwood, also a remnant of a divided congregation. Torgerson had been provided with a parsonage in the form of a small farm, and he refused to resign his call and vacate the parsonage. A dispute naturally arose, which involved the interpretation of a paragraph of the congregation's constitution, and the question was, therefore: Who were the rightful owners of the church property? In the case of a division, the property was to be retained by the group which remained faithful to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. And it is amazing that the judge let the case go to trial.

In the trial, Bjug Harstad, President of the new Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (which came to be "the little synod,") the vice-president, J. A. Moldstad, and a Missouri Synod theologian W. H. T. Dau testified. In the course of Harstad's testimony the origin of the old Norwegian Synod (of 1853), its doctrinal basis, and doctrinal controversies are laid out.

As it turns out the play is not about a stunning courtroom victory, a great victory for the truth, because the minority, the defendants, lost the case when Judge Charles H. Kelley of the 12<sup>th</sup> district court of Iowa ruled against them. But the loss of their property

did not mean that they lost their faith and confession, and they were not daunted in their mission.

Now for some of the personalities who appear in the play.

The testimony at the center of the action is given by President Bjug Aanondson Harstad. Born in Valle, Setesdal, Norway. Harstad had immigrated as a child with his parents who settled in Harmony, Minnesota. Today, there is a memorial monument at Valle, Setesdal, Norway commemorating Bjug Harstad. He attended Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, and then went to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. At that time, the old Norwegian Synod did not have a seminary and so its pastors studied at the Missouri Synod's seminary, where the Norwegian Synod sponsored a chair, or faculty position. That position was occupied first by Prof. Laur. Larsen, and later F. A. Schmidt. Harstad had an illustrious career in the Norwegian Synod. He was pastor at Mayville, N.D., from 1874-91 where he founded the Bruflat Academy at nearby Portland, N.D. During that time he was also president of the Minnesota District (1884 to 92). He served also as pastor in Parkland, Washington, where he was the founder of Pacific Academy, later Pacific Lutheran University. He also substituted for one year in the place of his good friend Hans Stub at Luther Seminary.

As pastor at Parkland, Harstad was one of those who could not go along with the merger, and at the meeting held at Lime Creek in 1918, he emerged as the first president of the Synod. Harstad had a full, adventuresome life, which included an attempt to mine gold in the Yukon to raise money for the school in Parkland. Guro was Pres. Harstad's wife. Through his youngest son Adolph, Bjug Harstad has many descendants still a part of the ELS.

Harstad's close friend H. G. Stub later becomes his antagonist. Stub was the son of one of the founders of the Synod, Hans Andreas

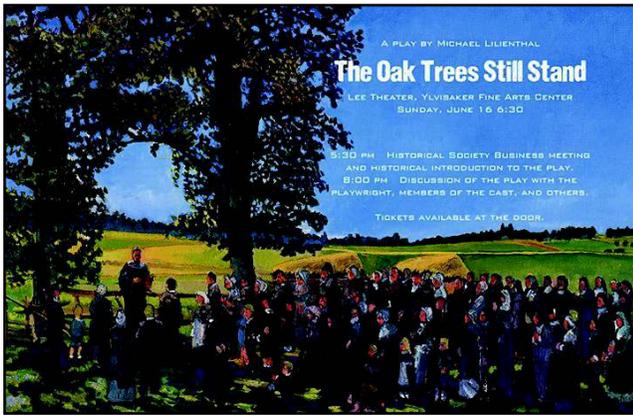
Stub. Hans Gerhard Stub attended Concordia Seminary St. Louis with Harstad and studied under Dr. Walther. He was pastor in Decorah, Iowa, taught at Luther College and then became professor and president of the Norwegian Synod Seminary, first in Madison, Wisconsin, then in Minneapolis. He served as vice-president of the Synod from 1905 to 1911 when he became president after U. V. Koren's death. At some point, Stub was caught up in the wave of Norwegian nationalism, and it is not insignificant that in 1906 he represented the Synod and Minnesota at the coronation of King Haakon of Norway, and in 1908 he was made a Knight in the order of St. Olaf by King Haakon. He also became the first president of the 1918 merged church, the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, later called the ELC.

Mentioned in the play, is another Synod man who testified, the vice-president J. A. Moldstad, another of the 13 pastors present at Lime Creek. American born, and trained at Luther College and Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, he was a long-time pastor at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Chicago. He had a brother Christian who also joined the little Norwegian Synod as a pastor and teacher at Bethany.

Dr. Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, one of the founders of the Missouri Synod, was chiefly known for his theological leadership of the Synod and the Synodical Conference. His book of lectures, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* is considered one of the most important Lutheran books produced in American Lutheranism. He came to be close friends with the leadership and many others of the Norwegian Synod – Ulrik Koren, Jakob Aal Ottesen, H. A. Preus, Laur. Larsen and others. He also taught many in the next generation, including Bjug Harstad and Hans Stub. There is a very friendly correspondence especially between the first three and Walther which shows a deep affection and mutual respect between these men. The

roots of the election controversy were in F. A. Schmidt's response to what Walther taught about the doctrine of election in a paper presented to a Missouri Synod convention.

U. V. Koren, J. A. Ottesen, and H. A. Preus (see Reformation lectures 2004) were not among the first founders of the Norwegian Synod. The real beginnings are to be found in the work of J. W. C. Dietrichsen who came to America to serve Norwegian immigrants in the 1840s. The official church of Norway, though quite confessional at the time, was not very interested in serving them – perhaps rooted in the fact that the earliest immigrants were extreme pietists, and followers of Hans Nielsen Hauge, and also under the influence of an even more radical pietist, Elling Eielsen. Dietrichsen nevertheless belonged to a more churchly-inclined movement in the church of Norway, which had a high view of the Lutheran liturgy and its emphasis on the Word and Sacraments. Dietrichsen, however, was influenced by some unorthodox ideas of the Danish theologian and poet N. F. S. Grundtvig. Two of the closer allies of Dietrichsen at the beginning were A. C. Preus (older cousin of H. A. Preus), and H. A. Stub (father of Hans Gerhard Stub). Although Dietrichsen had returned to Norway, the first attempts to organize a Norwegian Synod based on the confession of God's word in the Book of Concord, took place in 1851, when the congregations were prepared to adopt a constitution prepared by Dietrichsen. Soon after that, Preus, Koren, and Ottesen arrived, and they noticed that the constitution contained the so-called "Grundtvigian error" — an idea which made the Apostles Creed in itself the Word of God. The congregations then stopped the organization process and started over again with a revision of that constitution, and successfully organized the following year in 1853. In any case it is to J. W. C. Dietrichsen that the initial work of organizing what became the Norwegian Synod belongs, and to him also belongs the title of the play, since on Septem-



ber 2, 1844 Dietrichsen preached and administered the sacrament to a gathering of faithful Norwegian immigrants under the oak trees near the present day Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church, a member congregation of the ELS.

Ulrik Vilhelm Koren became the leader of the more western segment of the Synod, which, with the rising tide of immigration, spread into Iowa. Long-time pastor in North-eastern Iowa near Decorah, Koren came especially into prominence with his role in the election controversy, being the author of *Re-degjørelse*, or Accounting, which brought the election controversy in the Synod to its conclusion, and the departure of the followers of F. A. Schmidt. One of the most beloved hymns in our Synod, “Ye Lands to the Lord” is by Koren. Also, for many years, you could always spot the blue four-volume, set of books, *Samlede Skrifter*, the collected writings of U. V. Koren, published by Koren’s son Paul, who also appears in the play.

F. A. Schmidt is a pivotal character in this history, as, of course, the antagonist. It is impossible to discuss the history of the Norwegian Synod, the Synodical Conference, or the ELS without some knowledge of F. A. Schmidt. Ironically, this man so influential in Norwegian American Lutheran history was originally a Missouri Synod pastor – a *German*! Born in Germany, after attending Concordia Seminary as a student of Walther, he served as pastor in New York and Baltimore, and thus became proficient in English. When

the Norwegian Synod was beginning its school in Decorah, Iowa, led by Peder Laurentius (Laur.) Larsen who had occupied the Norwegian Synod Chair at St. Louis before the outbreak of the Civil War, Walther was asked to recommend someone who would be able to teach English and German and who would be able to learn Norwegian. Walther recommended his young friend and former pupil F. A. Schmidt. In 1872, Schmidt was instrumental in organizing the Synodical Conference, and as a member of the Norwegian Synod, became the Norwegian Synod’s professor at St. Louis. In 1876, when the Norwegian Synod began its own seminary in Madison, Wisconsin, Schmidt was called there, where he taught alongside Johannes Ylvisaker. (Schmidt was the pastor who baptized his colleague’s infant son Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker).

In 1877, Walther delivered a paper on the doctrine of Election at the Missouri Synod’s Western District convention. The thesis of the paper was “The Lutheran Church teaches that it is false and wrong when men teach that the cause of our election is not only the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ, but that there is also within us a cause of God’s election on account of which God has elected us unto eternal life, whether it be the work or piety of man, the proper use by man of the means of grace, man’s self determination, man’s desire and prayer, man’s nonresistance, or man’s faith” (Tappert, 167f.). Walther and the Norwegian Synod repudiated all language that could suggest that God saw something in man that caused him to bring a person to faith.

Schmidt and his Norwegian friends defended the teaching which said that God foresaw something in people which led him to choose them for salvation – that God foresaw that one would believe and therefore elected him. That teaching was called *intuitu fidei*, (in view of faith). Some time after Walther read his paper, F. A. Schmidt objected and charged Walther with teaching Calvinism, which then

as now were fighting words – almost as serious as calling one a pietist.

In the ensuing conflict, which escalated and led first to the departure of the Ohio Synod from the Synodical Conference, and then the Norwegian Synod, the battle raged chiefly in the Norwegian Synod, where there had long been some antipathy toward the Missouri Synod on the part of those with a pietistic outlook. Those who supported Schmidt tended to cite the seventeenth century Lutheran dogmaticians and the Pontopidon Catechism. With Koren in the lead as the dialectician, and H. A. Preus as president of the Synod, those among the Norwegians who agreed with Walther depended on their study of Scripture and the testimony of the Book of Concord as the correct understanding of God’s word.

That dispute, as we can also see in the play, divided formerly good friends, and families — e.g. Walther and Schmidt, Harstad and Stub. But it should be clear that this dispute that we find in a courtroom argument over property, and the discussion framed in that trial about an election controversy, was in fact about the very doctrine of the gospel. It is not about predestining as an abstract concept, but about God’s choosing by grace, so that I know that God has loved me from before the foundation of the world. It is not about who isn’t saved or might not be saved, but it is about the grace of God who has loved us from eternity and has sent his Son, already in eternity, as the sacrificial lamb to return us to himself by grace. Thus, the dispute in the Worth County courtroom was but a symbol of the deep divisions created by a denial of God’s absolute, unconditional grace.

The play ends with words from Bjug Harstad’s sermon at Lime Creek, [“return to the old paths”] followed by a reenactment of a picture of the thirteen pastors seated on the steps of the Lime Creek church. Those thirteen, blessed be their memory, were: Bjug A. Harstad, John A. Moldstad, Christian Ander-

son, Lauritz S. Guttebo, Emil Hansen, Henry Ingebritson, Lars P. Jensen, George O. Lillegard, Guttorm P. Nesseth, Holden M. Olsen, C. N. Petersen, Jacob E. Thoen, and Augustinus J. Torgerson. There were others who were with them in spirit, but were not able to bring their congregations or remnants of them into the “Little Norwegian Synod” until later.

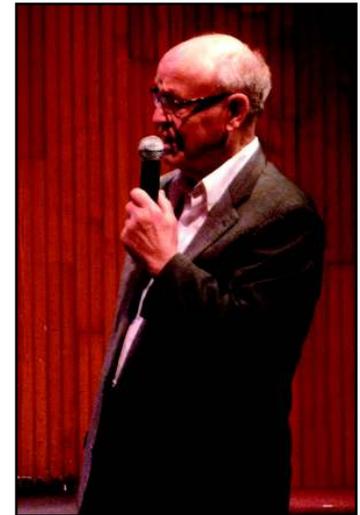
But now we will let Bjug Harstad and company tell the story. ■

## Some Thoughts About the Play, *The Oak Trees Still Stand*

by Sigurd K. Lee

There’s a scene from an early Mickey Rooney comedy where, facing a dilemma, Mickey shouts out, “Let’s put on a play!” The play reviewed here didn’t quite have its origin in that way, but similarities exist. A small group of people garner stage furniture and costumes, learn lines, block movement, work, in some cases, both as cast and crew, double roles, and mount a successful production. It’s a tribute to the playwright, Michael L. Lilienthal, who also directed the show, that the cast and crew—members of the Historical Society and former and present students of Bethany’s College or Seminary—could do it all by “Synod time.”

So it was that in the early evening of June 16, 2013 the play, *The Oak Trees Still Stand*, was presented in the Lee Theater at Bethany Lutheran College for the benefit of Synod Sunday attendees and others. The



Sig Lee commenting at the talk back.

play is based on a transcript found in our Synod Archives of a court trial held in the spring of 1919



Part of the play was set in the Worth County Courthouse, Northwood, Iowa; built in 1893, enlarged in 1938.

at the Worth County Courthouse in Northwood, Iowa. The dispute was between the majority of Norwegian Synod Lutherans who two years earlier merged with other Luther-

ans; and the minority of Norwegian Synod Lutherans who thought it wrong to merge with those churches and had formed their own "Little Synod," our present Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Pastor A. J. Torgerson was a member of this small band of Lutherans. In 1917 most of the members of his two congregations voted for the merger and thought "majority rules," hence, they should have the church property. Torgerson and his followers said, no, the constitution says that the "real and personal property" of the churches shall belong to those who remain faithful to the doctrines of the Old Synod. It is striking that a court judge would allow a full and frank discussion of these Lutheran principles in a courtroom; and it's a tribute to Lilienthal that he could fashion a play from this testimony, and though it deals with polemics, the play both instructs and entertains. It should be added that he uses scenes from the earlier lives of the protagonists and from other Synodical episodes.

The play gives full voice to the opposition characters in the play. Richie Kammer and Nick Lilienthal (the playwright's brother) portray forcefully the merger spokesmen, Prof. F. A. Schmidt and Reverend Hans Stub. Rev. Bjug Harstad emerges as the primary spokesman for the minority. In that demanding lead role, Seminary student Joshua Mayer performed well, showing us

the day-by-day life of a pastor, family man, and friend, and expounding clearly, in his testimony, the truths of the minority position.



In the role of his wife, Guro, Marie MacPherson brought a strong, warm presence to the play. Marie's husband in real life, Bethany history professor Ryan MacPherson, even looked like his character, C.F.W. Walther, resplendent in real mutton chop whiskers, though reddish in hue! Then there are the lesser roles. In Shakespeare's plays they appear as "attendants," or "nobles," perhaps "guards." They may have a few lines but mainly they fill out the stage, listening attentively to the principal actors. They are unsung but necessary, so kudos to Hans Bloedel, Jeff Hendrix, Josiah Willitz, Grace Stromer, Amanda Johnson, and Grace and Rose MacPherson.

A very affecting scene occurred between Hans Stub of the majority (a personal friend of Bjug Harstad) and the aging President of the Norwegian Synod, the revered U. V. Koren. Nick Lilienthal was Stub and Bethany professor Mark Harstad acted the role of Koren. It was a scene of wonderful contrasts: Between the soon-retiring President of the Synod, Koren (he would die a year after the action of this scene, in 1910), and the incoming, new President of the Synod, Stub; between the older man, Koren, and the

younger, Stub; between the strong voice of the old Norwegian Synod, Koren, and the voice of the new merger group, Stub. (Note:



the Koren actor, Mark Harstad, is a grandson of the play's central character, Bjug Harstad.)

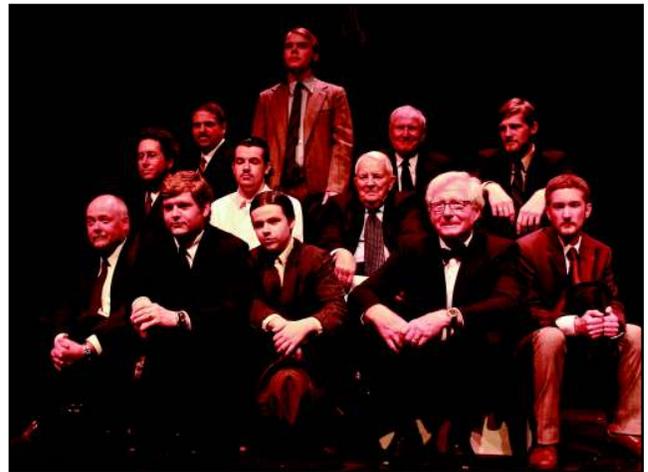
When Amanda Madson's play, *It's*

*Somewhere in the Third Article*, was presented a few years ago, a remark overheard was, "Now I finally understand our Synod!" I'm sure that many people had similar thoughts after attending *The Oak Trees Still Stand*. Certainly the pivotal question of the play was clear: Is man's salvation due alone to God's grace in Jesus Christ?, the minority position, ours; or is man somehow responsible for, or able to accept, God's grace?, the majority position. Since the minority felt so strongly that their position was in keeping with God's Word, they organized our "Little Synod" at Lime Creek Church in 1918 and made a new beginning. The legacy of full and free forgiveness in Christ is ours. To dramatize that new beginning, cast members came on stage and formed a tableau similar to the famous photograph of the thirteen pastors present that day at Lime Creek. It was a fine ending to the play.



Thank you Historical Society of our Synod who had the idea for this play, and to playwright Lilienthal and the cast and crew who used their talents to "put on a play!" In the question-and-answer session following the play, all the

cast and crew were seated onstage. Stage Manager Cassie Wierschke said it well, "It was great to do theater and also praise God!" ■



**100 YEARS SINCE PUBLICATION  
OF**

**THE LUTHERAN HYMNARY**

by Peter Faugstad, associate pastor  
of Parkland Lutheran Church  
in Tacoma, Washington

When the Norwegian Lutherans immigrated to America, they brought their hymnbooks with them. As the Norwegian Synod grew, the need for a common hymnbook became obvious. U. V. Koren was appointed to chair the project, and the *Synodens Salmebog* ("Synod's Hymnal") was published in 1874. This enjoyed widespread acceptance and use in the Synod. But the Norwegians also recognized the need to develop and publish Lutheran materials in English. In 1879, the Norwegian Synod's Lutheran Publishing House in Decorah, Iowa, printed the *Hymnbook for the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Schools and Congregations*. It contained 130 hymns, but only seven were translated from Danish/Norwegian. The Norwegian Synod published another collection in 1898, *Christian Hymns for Church, School and Home*. This contained 309 hymns and twelve doxologies, but few of the translations from that book were adopted without alteration in future books.

In 1908, the Norwegian Synod began to collaborate on a new English hymnbook with the United Norwegian Lutheran Church and the Hauge Synod. This was surprising given their doctrinal differences and contentious history, but they were already moving toward fellowship by this time. The Preface to *The Lutheran Hymnary* states the reasons for this cooperative effort:

The considerations which prompted the creation of the joint committee were, chiefly, the common need of an adequate and satisfactory English hymn

book; the fact of a common faith and confession as well as a common inheritance of Lutheran hymnody; the probability of getting a better hymn book through united endeavor than by separate effort; and finally, the desirability of a common hymnary, especially in the event of a union of the Church bodies concerned.  
(page 3)

This union came to pass in 1917 when these church bodies merged to form the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, four years after the new hymnbook was published.

*The Lutheran Hymnary* was a good book for its time. The Bugenhagen Order of Service, long enjoyed by the Danish and Norwegian peoples, was now available in English. Many beloved Scandinavian hymns were also translated into English. "Like the Golden Sun Ascending," "Behold a Host, Arrayed in White," and "Built on the Rock" were some of these. But with this massive transition to English, the hymnbook committee also included many hymns by American and English authors that did not meet the sacramental, Christ-centered character of Lutheran hymnody. A large collection of Lutheran gems remained hidden in German and Norwegian, and many are still hidden today.

It would have been natural for the Scandinavian Lutherans to think of *The Lutheran Hymnary* as the first of many hymnbook efforts that would include more and better translations of its native hymns. But this did not happen. As the Lutherans in America continued merging into larger and larger church bodies, the Scandinavian liturgy and hymns were gradually lost. Not until the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* was published in 1996, were the Bugenhagen Order and Scandinavian hymnody available for use again like in the 1913 book. ■

***The Mother of the Reformation:  
The Amazing Life and Story of  
Katharine Luther***

Author: Ernst Kroker (1859-1927).  
Translator: Mark E. DeGarmeaux.  
Published 2013 by Concordia Publishing House.  
275 pages.

A Book Review by Mark O. Harstad

Bethany's Mark DeGarmeaux has established himself as an able translator into English of material from German and Norwegian. The fruits of his labor include a translation of Norwegian Bishop N. J. Laache's devotional classic *Book of Family Prayer*, and a volume of sermons in the American Edition of *Luther's Works*. His translation of the collected works of Dr. Ulrik Vilhelm Koren is proceeding toward publication under the auspices of the ELS Historical Society.

Concordia Publishing House has now brought out Prof. DeGarmeaux's translation of an account of the life of Katharine Luther, previously unavailable in English. German scholar Ernst Kroker first published the work in 1906. It was reissued in 1925 in connection with the observance of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the marriage of Martin and Katharine Luther, which took place on June 13, 1525.

Historian and librarian Ernst Kroker (1859-1927) began his career with a focus on the archeology and mythology of the ancient eastern Mediterranean world, but later his interest seemed to shift to the history of his homeland, and more specifically the area of Saxony. Quite naturally that came to include an interest in the personalities of the Reformation era.

The author acknowledges that a biography of Katharine Luther in the most restricted, scholarly sense of the word "biography" is really not possible. There is no substantial body of material made up of her correspondence over many years, or published works by her or about her by contemporaries, which would form the basis for a true biography. Kroker likens his work to that of the creator of a mosaic who assembles bits and pieces of evidence collected from a variety of sources having to do primarily with her

illustrious husband and the circle of people associated with him. These bits and pieces can indeed be assembled into a mosaic. The result is a fascinating picture of a remarkable woman who was at the side of the great reformer for over twenty years, from their marriage in June, 1525, to Luther's death in February, 1546.

This translation makes available to the English speaking world a wonderful source which allows us to peer into the Luther household and its workings through some "windows" which are not often used in the formal biographies of Luther. The result is that we get a clear picture of the character of the first lady of the Reformation and her place in the dramatic events of the time.

Katharine von Bora was born into a noble family in 1499 but was bereaved of her mother at a very tender age. Her father determined it would be best for her to enter a convent. Her "escape" from the convent at Nimbschen at the age of eighteen is an aspect of Reformation History familiar to many, dramatized in movies about the life of Luther. Kroker explores the myths and realities behind the possible role that empty her-ring barrels may have played in the escape.

From this entertaining beginning the story of Martin and Katie Luther unfolds: Her first love and disappointment; the circumstances of her marriage to Luther; the births of her children and the untimely deaths of some of them; her business and managerial acumen in operating a complicated household populated by her husband and children, down-and-out relatives, boarding students from many countries, penniless scholars and their families, and illustrious political and theological figures of the time. The account ends with the difficult circumstances of her life after the passing of Luther in 1546, and her death in 1552 at the age of fifty-three.

Here is one detail which may surprise some: When the Renaissance humanist Desiderius Erasmus published his blast against Luther and his theology entitled *The Freedom of the Will*, Luther was initially inclined to ignore it. It was his Katie, in the very first months of their marriage, who was instrumental in convincing Luther that he had to respond. The result was one of Luther's most important works, *The Bondage of the Will*.

Professional scholars and laity alike will be entertained and edified by *The Mother of the Reformation: The Amazing Life and Story of Katharine Luther*. Mark DeGarmeaux has done us all a worthwhile service. ■

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