



# Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

Volume 19

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Issue 3

## Also in this issue:

- Paul Madson retires from Synod Archives ....Ted Gulixson consents to serve
- Three new ELSHS board members introduced
- Interviews in 2014 by BLC students with Greg Costello and Steve & Lois Jaeger
- Jeff Hendrix reviews history of ELS summer camps

## Ottesen Museum Update

by Becky DeGarmeaux

As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, how are our Christmas customs the same? How are they different? The congregations of the Synod come from various backgrounds and are situated all across the country. How do those factors affect how Christmas is celebrated?

This year the Ottesen Museum's Christmas Open House explores those questions with the theme, "Christmas Across the ELS: Traditions Old and New." There will be special displays highlighting the various ways congregations across the Synod celebrate Christmas. Pictures, examples of service folders, and ornaments will also be available for viewing. Much will be familiar, but expect to see things you may not have thought of! And of course, there will be Christmas caroling and treats.

The Ottesen Museum Christmas Open House is scheduled for Tuesday, December 8, 2015, from 2:30 to 5:30 pm. If you would like to display a poster for the event, contact Museum Director Becky DeGarmeaux at [museum@blc.edu](mailto:museum@blc.edu) for more information.▪

*Christmas Across the ELS*

*Traditions Old and New*

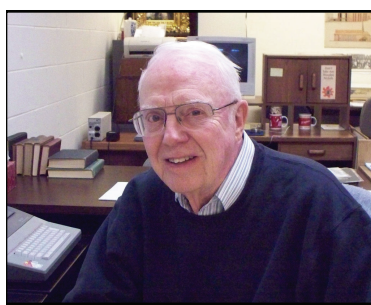
*5th Annual Christmas Open House*  
*Tuesday, December 8, 2015, 2:30 - 5:30*  
*Ottesen Museum, 4 Browns Court, Mankato*

## Thank you! and Welcome!

by Rev. John Petersen,  
Synod Archives Board Member

We want to point out a change in the position of our synod's Archivist. The handbook of the ELS describes the work of the Archivist and the Archives committee as follows:

- A. The preservation of historical material that might otherwise be lost to the synod.
- B. Making such materials available to individuals both within and without the synod.
- C. The active promotion of a program in the synod to stimulate interest in the synod's history and in the historical materials that are available.



Rev. Paul Madson

We extend sincere thanks to the Rev. Paul Madson for faithfully carrying out these and other tasks in his 13 years of service as our ELS Archivist. Paul brought to this task a vast knowledge of our synod's history and a determination to preserve it and make it useful to future generations.



Rev. Ted Gullixson

We also want to take this opportunity to welcome the Rev. Ted Gullixson, who has graciously consented to serve as Paul's replacement. We know that like Paul, Ted has the expertise and dedication to carry out the requirements of this position. We pray God's continued guidance and blessing to both of these loyal servants! ■



Exchanging documents from the synod archives to the Bethany Lutheran College archives. Oct. 2014. Erling Teigen (left) and Paul Madson (right).

## Meet Our New Board Members

### Bergetta Abrahamson (no photo)

Jerry and I both graduated from Echo High School, married in 1965, and moved to his family farm a short time later, where we raised our two boys. We are still on our Century Farm (nearly 110 years in the same family). We are members of Rock Dell Lutheran Church, rural Belview, MN where Jerry's grandfather and great-grandmother became members when they emigrated from Norway. Our son, Joseph, is the pastor at Faith Lutheran (ELS) at Clara City, MN. He and his wife, Mary, are blessed with ten children, and what a joy they are to us! Our younger son, Jeremy, passed away twelve years ago this weekend. We still miss him very much.

We farmed and both worked outside jobs as well — he for nearly 38 years for an electronics firm in Redwood Falls, and I spent 13 years at Redwood County FSA before going to work for Northstar Insurance Company in Cottonwood MN, for 10 years. Jerry and I are both retired, but seem to keep busy.

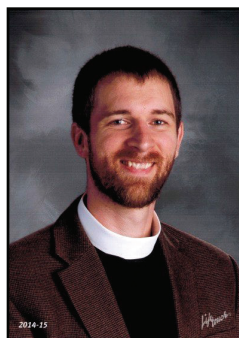
### Marge Lillo

I attended Bethany High School and College. Ernie and I met at Bethany, he enlisted in the Air Force, we married, and he spent 20 years in the missile field. We have 7 children, 16 grandchildren, and 2 great grand princesses. I worked at Bethany for 18 years as the Assistant Registrar while Ernie worked 25 years as the director of maintenance. Since our retirement in 2005 we have enjoyed traveling, especially our year and a half living in an RV and traveling the US and Canada. We now live in Eagle Lake and have a large garden, and travel when we can. I enjoy our family, reading, quilting, and attending events at Bethany.

(Note: At the ELSHS Board Meeting on Oct. 3, 2015, Marge consented to serve as the ELSHS treasurer.)



### Peter Faugstad



I am a 2005 graduate of Bethany Lutheran College and a 2009 graduate of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. I have served as co-pastor of Parkland Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tacoma, WA, since that time. My wife Kristin (nee Lussy) is also a BLC graduate, and we have four children: Marit, Greta, James, and Nels. ■



# Acorns from the Archives

by Ted Gullixson

## Circuit 7 Congregations Celebrate Four Anniversaries

### Lake Mills Lutheran Church, Lake Mills, Iowa

On Sunday, September 20, 2015, Lake Mills Lutheran Church celebrated its **150<sup>th</sup> anniversary**. The church was full as the members and visitors rejoiced in the Lord's blessings. The Rev. David Emmons served as liturgist and Circuit Visitor Rev. Wayne



Rev. Wayne Halvorson,  
Rev. David Emmons, and  
ELS President John Moldstad.

Halvorson read the lessons. ELS President John Moldstad preached the sermon, thanking the Lord for their faithfulness over the years. Everyone enjoyed the fellowship and food served by the Lake Mills ladies after the service. Lake Mills Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in 1865. In April of that year, the Civil War ended and Pres. Abraham Lincoln was killed. Soon soldiers began

returning to their homes. Rev. T. A. Torgerson began pastoral work in the area, meeting in private homes and schoolhouses. Early settlers traveled many miles to attend church. In 1877, the congregation re-organized under their pastor, I. M. Dahl, with other members forming congregations closer to their homes.

In 1889 Rev. Dahl and a majority of members seceded from the Norwegian Synod because of the "election controversy." The remaining members reorganized and called Rev. Torgerson to help them. That same year, this group built a church and adopted the name "Our Saviour's Lutheran Church."

This reorganized group endured yet another controversy when in 1917 the Norwegian Synod joined with other synods, "agreeing to disagree" on

the doctrine of election. Those who remained faithful to the Word again reorganized and adopted the name "Lake Mills Evangelical Lutheran Church."

Thirteen pastors have served this congregation over the 150 years. The Rev. Henry Ingebritson was their pastor for 33 years (1911–1944) and the Rev. Alf Merseth served from 1966 to 2001—35 years. The current pastor is the Rev. David Emmons.

The congregation still has an active Ladies Aid Society, which is also involved with the circuit Bethany Auxiliary, a Lutheran Youth Society, and a Christian Day School. Due to a decline in membership, the members of Lake Mills worship with the members of Lime Creek Lutheran Church and Somber Lutheran Church, worshipping in each building for four months during the year.

### King of Grace Lutheran Church, Waukon, Iowa

Though the congregations of East and West Paint Creek have a long 150-year history, King of Grace Lutheran Church in Waukon, Iowa, celebrated the **tenth anniversary of its church dedication** on September 27, 2015. The present pastor, Rev. Ron Pederson, served as liturgist and former pastor, Rev. Joshua Skogen, read the Scripture lessons. The Rev. J. Kincaid Smith's sermon was based on Matthew 5:13-16, titled "A Faithful Church is a City Set on a Hill."

In 2003, East and West Paint Creek Synod congregations voted to hold worship services in Waukon, Iowa, in order to bring the Gospel to more people. The first service was held in the Farm Bureau

Building on September 3, 2003. After one year, the West Paint Creek members decided to continue worshipping in Waukon. The new congregation chose the name King of Grace and were incorporated in December of 2004.

The next step was to find a place for worship. In May 2005 a building was purchased at 101 2nd St. N.W. It took a lot of work for the members to renovate the former automobile parts store into a church facility. The building houses the worship area on the first level and the pastor's living quarters on the second floor. On October 2, 2005, the building was dedicated to the



Rev. Joshua Skogen,  
Rev. Ron Pederson,  
and Rev. J. Kincaid Smith.

Lord's service.

The following pastors have served King of Grace during these ten years: Pastors Harvey Abrahamson, J. Kincaid Smith, Vicars Christian Eisenbeis and Joshua Skogen. Vicar Skogen was ordained and installed as a bi-vocational pastor in 2010 and in 2013 Rev. Ron Pederson became their pastor.

In appreciation of the generous financial assistance that King of Grace has received over the years from other churches, women's groups, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), a special offering was taken at the anniversary service. The offering will be given to a new mission church.

## 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Hartland Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hartland, Minnesota

In 1850, Central Lutheran Church, north of Albert Lea, Minnesota, was formed and became the mother church of settlers in Freeborn County. In about 1867, the West Freeborn congregation members set up their own organization. By 1890, the articles of incorporation were signed. There were about 200 members. Early pastors were the Reverends Ylvisaker, Wulfsberg, Jensen, and Hendrick Strand.



Rev. Shawn Stafford,  
Rev. John Smith, and  
ELS President John Moldstad.

**On Sunday, Oct. 4, 2015, a service and dinner were held at Hartland Evangelical Lutheran Church, and a service and reception were held at Manchester Evangelical**

Rev. John Strand became the first resident pastor in 1893. In 1909, there were 300 members when Rev. Thor Strand replaced his brother. This was also a time of controversy among Lutherans, which led to a split in the church in 1915. When the 1917 merger took place, the East Synod congregation chose to stay out and join the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (now ELS). Three years after a basement was dug under the

church building, a tornado in 1931 demolished the

building. All members donated time to clean up the wreckage and many members worked to rebuild their church. After three months, 300 people attended the dedication service on December 6, 1931.

Pastor Paul Ylvisaker became pastor in 1944 and served for 27 years. It was a time of change. World War II was ending. More automobiles meant that services could be held every Sunday for both Hartland and Manchester. The members started using offering envelopes. In 1974, the church and narthex were remodeled, adding Sunday School rooms and bathrooms to the building. The current pastor is the Rev. Shawn Stafford.

## 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Manchester Evangelical Lutheran Church, Manchester, Minnesota

The First Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Manchester, Freeborn County, Minnesota was formed in 1915. The name later changed to Manchester Evangelical Lutheran Church. The congregation was founded by a group of 16 families, with Pastor Thor J. Strand serving the congregation jointly with the Hartland Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church. The congregation was formed in anticipation of the 1917 merger of Norwegian Lutheran church bodies on the basis of the "Settlement," a compromise on the doctrines of election and conversion. The congregation met in homes until a building was completed in the winter of 1916-1917. The congregation joined the newly reorganized synod (now the ELS) in 1920. An altar painting of Christ's ascension was produced in 1945 by Klagstad. In 1952, a tornado hit the house to the west of the church, lifted it over the church, and dropped it on the other side, as the tornado continued its eastward course. Norwegian services continued into the 1960's to celebrate Syttende Mai, Norwegian Independence Day. An ongoing project is the restoration of the bell tower. The congregation now numbers 52 souls.





Pastors who have served both Manchester Lutheran and Hartland Lutheran are:

Rev. Thor J. Strand 1915-1920

Rev. John Henricks 1920-1923

Rev. Stephen Sande 1923-1943

Rev. Gustav E. Moller (retired) 1927-1940

Rev. Paul Ylvisaker 1943-1970

Rev. Ronald L. Mathison 1970-1978

Rev. John E. Smith 1978-1983

Rev. Martin J. Doepel 1983-1986

Rev. Dennis W. Schmidt 1987-2011

Rev. Shawn D. Stafford 2011- present•

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### **Joshua Arndt**

HIST 460

Dr. MacPherson

May 6, 2014 (Edited by Janet Costello, Oct. 7, 2015)

Editor's Note: Students in Dr. Ryan MacPherson's class wrote oral history reports in the spring of 2014. Joshua Arndt interviewed **Greg Costello**, Controller and Safety Coordinator at Bethany Lutheran College.

### **Oral History Report:** **Interview with Greg Costello**

Greg Costello has been a part of the Bethany family for the last five decades. He is in his 37<sup>th</sup> year of service. He has taken the business office from calculators and manual entry to computerized accounting programs. Bethany's budget, when he started in 1979, was about a million dollars and now it has grown to an estimated \$20 million.

Growing up on a family farm in Iowa taught him the value of hard work and working together. Greg was born in 1955 in New Hampton which is located in northeastern Iowa. He was a member of Jerico Lutheran, a country church just a few miles from his home. He was confirmed by Rev. Milton Tweit and, with Rev. Tweit's encouragement, Greg followed in the footsteps of his two older brothers and came to Mankato to attend Bethany Lutheran College from 1974 to 1976, while it was still a junior college.

Greg and his three brothers wrestled in high school and continued their careers at Bethany. Greg's academic advisor and friend, Paul Tweit, son of Rev.



Milton Tweit, was both the wrestling coordinator and accounting professor at Bethany. Based on his advisee's affinity for numbers and the range of job opportunities available in accounting, Paul recommended that Greg pursue an accounting degree. Greg took his advice and after graduating from Bethany with an AA degree in 1976, Greg completed his college courses at the University of Iowa, where he received his accounting degree in December 1978.

Following graduation, he took a job in the Twin Cities working as an accounting clerk at a Holiday Inn. Soon after starting work at the hotel, Greg received a job offer from Bethany Lutheran College. Bethany was seeking someone to computerize all of the college's financial records as well as coach wrestling. Bethany representatives had searched the alumni records for someone to fill that position and Greg fit the bill.

In June of 1979, Greg returned to his alma mater as a member of the staff. He worked in the Business Office and also coached wrestling. He was the only person tasked with computerizing all of the financial records. Greg has compared advancing the business office into the 20th century and ultimately the 21st century to "moving from a horse and buggy to a high-powered automobile." During that first year, he worked at Bethany's one and only computer and printer on campus to accomplish this transition. For a few years, the Business Office was the only office on campus that was air conditioned to keep a constant cool temperature for the computer in his office. Greg tended to have a number of visitors on hot summer days.

While working at Bethany, he met his future wife, Janet Nelson. They married and were blessed with a growing family and had three sons by 1986, all of whom attended Bethany in later years. Two of their sons also married Bethany grads.

During the mid-1980s, it became more difficult to recruit wrestlers for junior college programs since many junior colleges phased out their wrestling programs. Greg made the difficult decision to retire from coaching and to focus on his accounting work and spend his extra time with his growing family and their activities.



Since Greg joined the Bethany staff, Bethany has continued to grow and advance campus wide. The business office is no exception. Greg's current job title is Controller and he currently oversees the business office. He is responsible for financial statements, food service, budgeting, tax compliance, property and casualty insurance, property acquisitions and various other special analyses for both the college and the seminary. He also is the Safety Coordinator for the campus. Business office staff report to Greg, and Greg reports to the Vice President of Finance, currently Daniel Mundahl. In addition, Greg also serves on the Investment Committee and on the Doctrine Committee for the Synod.

Greg has had the opportunity to witness firsthand all of the changes that have occurred on the Bethany campus in the last 40 years. In spite of all the physical changes on campus and its growth from a two-year to a four-year institution, Bethany has continued to acknowledge its doctrinal Lutheran legacy and emphasize a Christian education that lasts beyond a lifetime. This Christ-centered atmosphere creates a tight-knit community in which relationships are formed that also last a lifetime. One of the advantages that Greg has appreciated has been the opportunity to hear God's Word every day by attending chapel. Students may not realize what a true gift that is. Greg still enjoys playing noon ball at the Bethany gym and softball with other Bethany alums, staff and students. Greg feels that Bethany Lutheran College is a great place to work where you can worship together and acknowledge your faith by hearing and sharing God's Word. He has been blessed to have been able to work with other staff and faculty toward a common goal — sharing the One Thing Needful with young people. He hopes to continue working and serving his Lord at Bethany until he retires. ■

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## **Jake Gleason**

HIST 460

Dr. MacPherson

May 13, 2014 (Lois Jaeger wrote an ending paragraph to update this interview to Sept. 24, 2015.)

### **Oral History Report:** **Interview with Steve and Lois Jaeger**

Steve Jaeger was born on February 14, 1952 in Watertown, Wisconsin. He was the son of Omar and Georgianne Jaeger. Steve grew up on the family farm in rural Ixonia, Wisconsin and recalled "Some of my fondest memories were growing up on the farm and the hard work that was involved with that." Steve's father went to the local high school for two years but

did not finish due to the many rigors of trying to keep the family farm going. His mother, however, was a high school graduate. Steve's parents were both active members within St. Paul's Lutheran Church (WELS) in Ixonia, Wisconsin, where he was baptized in later February 1952. Steve's most unforgettable memories of his parents were "the many family gatherings where we would play instruments and sing songs for hours, and the many church events and activities that we were involved in. There was not much free time due to the constant work around the farm but I really enjoyed going to church activities, playing and singing music, and participating in athletics — especially baseball and soccer." Steve attended St. Paul's Christian day school and said, "I really enjoyed history classes growing up." After high school graduation, Steve attended Bethany Lutheran College for two years in Mankato, Minnesota.



At Bethany, Steve met the love of his life, Lois, in 1971. Also in 1971, Steve was a part of the first-ever soccer team to make it to the NJCAA national soccer tournament. Two years later the two would marry. Lois, the daughter of Harry and Signe Olson, was born in Scarville, Iowa.

Her parents, like Steve's, were farmers. Her father was a high school graduate and attended some college at Bethany Lutheran College. Lois grew up attending the local Scarville ELS church and was baptized January 10, 1951. Just like Steve, Lois "loved going to church with her family on Sundays and enjoyed spending numerous hours with her family and also liked doing a little bit of fishing when time permitted." Her fondest memories of her parents were the values of hard work and unity that her parents inspired in her as a young girl. She also attended the local Christian day school and said she very much enjoyed literature, history, and music. It is very easy to see why these two matched so perfectly. Both Lois and Steve were very involved with Mt. Olive Lutheran Church (ELS) in Mankato, serving as a youth group leaders while students at Bethany.

Upon graduation from Bethany, Steve went on to receive his teaching license from Minnesota State University-Mankato and would eventually attend graduate school there and receive an M.A. in



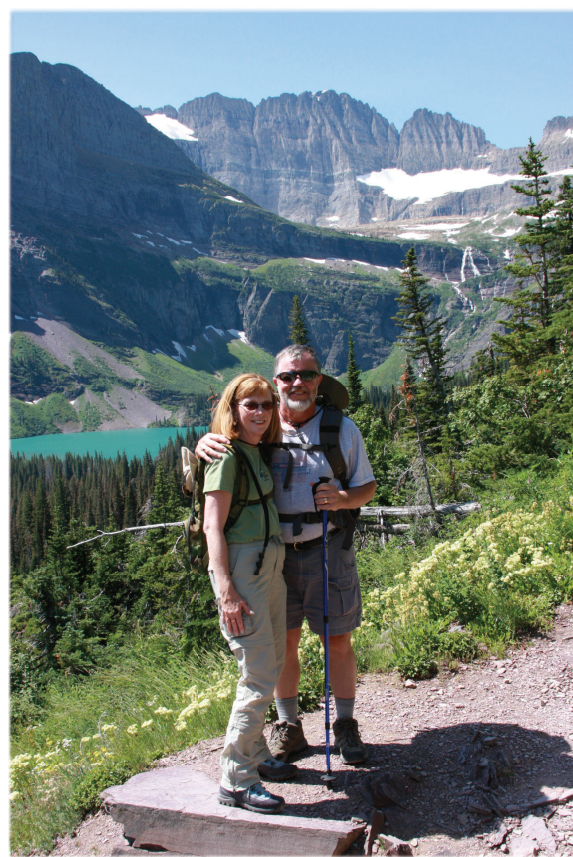
Secondary Education. Lois also graduated from Bethany with intentions of being a school teacher. She taught for four years at Mt. Olive. Steve took a teaching job in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin where he taught Health and Drivers Education classes and also coached both soccer and track and field. On November 14, 1977, the Jaegers were blessed with what Lois said “was a beautiful baby girl named Anika.” They were also blessed with a baby boy, named Jacob, who was born on June 30, 1983. Lois would then set up her own home-operated daycare service which she ran for eleven years (’80-’91). Steve then accepted the admissions counselor/head soccer coaching job at his alma mater, Bethany Junior College on July 1, 1985. He coached soccer for five seasons. Lois worked at the bookstore from 1991-1997. From there she accepted the position to work as the fine arts director at Bethany, which she did for sixteen more years until her retirement in 2013.

Steve had the opportunity to hold many different titles and positions at Bethany. He said he has been blessed to work in such a great Christian environment and he wouldn’t change his career path if he had the choice. Steve has been a part of the Bethany Lutheran family for nearly thirty years. The thirtieth anniversary of his Bethany debut is this July 1<sup>st</sup>. In 1987 he was appointed the Director of Admissions position, and in 1997 he was promoted to the Vice President of Student Affairs which is the position he currently holds today. Collectively, the Jaegers have been a part of the Bethany Family for over fifty-five years, if you count their schooling and their time spent on the faculty and administration.

Some of the Jaegers’ favorite pastimes include gardening, golfing, watching sports, hiking through national parks, watching the Packers, reading, family time, and most of all music. Steve and Lois are avid hikers and they can be seen traveling the United States’ finest parks in the summer time, including Glacier National Park, Grand Teton Park, Grand Canyon National Park, and many more. Lois says “I especially love to read and cook.” Lois, although retired, is still an active member at Mt. Olive in Mankato, Minnesota, which she and Steve joined in 1985. She is a former ladies aid president and has directed the girls’ choir. Lois serves on the synod’s historical society board and Steve has served as deacon and on the stewardship board at Mt. Olive. They have both been involved with youth groups within the church.

When asked about his favorite part of being a part of the Bethany Lutheran family Steve said, “I enjoy the student body especially, watching the students come in and graduate and helping them grow in their Christian faith.” When asked about his least

favorite aspect of Bethany, he simply stated “the economy and the competitive market in recruiting is tough.” He also said, “It is hard letting go of students I have had the pleasure of getting to know and watch for four or more years get their diplomas and start their lives.” The Jaegers have played vital roles at Bethany whether it was coaching, teaching, attending school functions, or simply being a helping hand to a student. The Jaegers have been a major part in what makes Bethany great. There really aren’t too many colleges where one can feel at home while getting a great Christian liberal arts education and the Jaegers have been fundamental in helping everyone feel at home!



"Since Steve's retirement in January 2015 the Jaegers continue to enjoy their hobbies, Bible studies at Mt. Olive Church, volunteering there and in the community, and especially more time with their children and grandchildren. Both are quick to say they had the best jobs in the world and wouldn't trade those Bethany years for anything. And now they are tremendously thankful for the blessings of a happy and healthy time of retirement to enjoy together."■

# Christ, Camping, and Continuity: The History of ELS Summer Camps

by Jeff Hendrix

Superintendent, Lor-Ray Kids' Camp,  
Twin Lake, Michigan  
Vicar, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church,  
Indianola, Iowa

The story of the early Norwegian Lutherans gathering to worship the Savior and receive His body and blood under the oak trees in Koshkonong, Wisconsin in 1844 is widely retold in our Synod. The preparatory address text, Psalm 78:19, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" is remembered because God has proved His providence; He has furnished a table for His Church, He has provided for our synod. Today God still continues to provide for even the youngest members of our Synod each summer in a setting very similar to that service under the oaks.

Over the 4th of July weekend earlier this summer, dozens of people gathered under a number of oak trees in Michigan and heard a reading from that same Psalm. The occasion was the 50th anniversary of Camp Lor-Ray. Camp Lor-Ray is now one of six summer camps run by various groups in the ELS, but was one of three official "Synod Camps" at one time. The story of summer camps in the ELS is a story of continuity, a continuity of practices and methods, and more importantly, a continuity in the historic Christian faith.

The summer camp program of the ELS is unique among all Lutheran synods. Camps have strong ties to the Synod, being formed directly by it or as a result of resolutions from the Synod. In the Norwegian Synod, as it was then called, in the years following WWII, there was a desire to create an organized synod-wide youth program, including the establishing of a board to direct such youth work. In 1950, a newly formed youth committee came to the Synod Convention with three main objectives: 1. The encouragement of Christian knowledge and fellowship among the young people of the Norwegian Synod. 2. The

revival of the Choral Union (see endnotes). 3. The furtherance of interest in Bethany Lutheran College. The committee immediately set to work and began to plan a Synod-wide young people's convention to be held in 1951. In addition, the committee proposed three more goals: a) That an annual summer camp for our Synod's young people be established, b) That to this camp all our Synod's young people who have reached the eighth grade be invited, c) That the initial summer camp be conducted in 1951.



Ready to leave for camp at Emmaus Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1956. (Emmaus and Fairview congregations later merged to form King of Grace.)

That 1951 summer camp never happened, because the "committee found that it was a much greater undertaking than they had realized," but it would take place the following year. In 1952, the Synod held its first "Young People's Summer Camp" at Lake Shetek State Park in Tracy, Minnesota. Rev. John A. Moldstad was director and Dean Norman A. Madson delivered a sermon at a special open-air service. A brochure for Lake Shetek described the religious program: "The mornings will be spent in a study of a book of the Bible and the history of the Norwegian Synod. Our Synod will be one hundred years old in 1953, and here's your chance to learn more about it."



That included, no doubt, a retelling of the first Norwegian Lutheran service under the oak trees.

That same summer, congregations in the Eau Claire, Wisconsin area also established their own camp in Drummond, Wisconsin under the direction of Rev. Raymond Branstad. This camp was named Indian-head Lutheran Camp, a reference to the shape of the Wisconsin-Minnesota border, which was commonly thought to resemble the head of a Native American with headdress. Over the



Camp Indianhead  
Canoeing Award, 1958.

next decade these two camps switched locations and oversight multiple times. Both camps eventually came under the control of local circuits, and eventually two more camps sprung up. In 1959 Camp Indianhead was forced to switch locations to St. Croix State Park in Minnesota. This move prompted the Synod's Youth Board to begin considering purchasing a campsite for use by the Synod. They would continue to study such an option year by year for the next six years but would eventually decide simply to encourage circuits to establish summer camps on their own. The next year, Camp Indianhead came under the youth board's direct control and was made the official "Synod Camp." A few years later the youth board split the camp into a "north" camp and a "south" camp held in two different locations in Minnesota. One later moved to Wisconsin and the two would eventually become known as Camp Indianhead-Minnesota and Camp Indianhead-Wisconsin.

In the meantime, Rev. Robert Moldstad began a circuit camp at Herrick Lake in Lombard, Illinois for youth of the Lake Michigan Circuit. Rev. Ted Kuster was assistant director. In its first year, excited to escape the city life of Chicago,

166 campers and counselors attended. They anticipated up to 250 attendees the next year. In 1964, with Robert Moldstad on the Synod's Youth Board and the success of his circuit camp, the Board reported that it once again was investigating the possibilities of buying campsites. The possibility of land came at an unexpected location. Rev. James Olsen, pastor of Holton Lutheran Church, had heard of state-owned land for sale near his congregation. Olsen visited and immediately envisioned the possibilities on how the land could serve the youth of the synod. He invited Rev. Moldstad to visit the property, and in the spring of 1965 the two formed an association of ELS pastors and laymen to buy the land. The land was 23 acres surrounding a private 16-acre lake. Eventually more land was bought and the association could point with pride to 165 acres. The association was named the "Lor-Ray Camp Association" in memory of Lorie and Raymond Reiser, members of St. Timothy in Lombard and youth leaders of the Herrick Lake Camp, who were tragically killed in a car accident in 1963.

Camp Lor-Ray became the Synod's answer to years of discussions of buying a camp



The early chapel area at Camp Lor-Ray, built by youth from First Lutheran Church, Suttons Bay, Michigan.  
Circa 1971

property for Synod youth. The youth from Holton Lutheran Church camped on the property in the summer of 1965 even before the land was owned, making it the first “Kids’ Camp” at Camp Lor-Ray. An outdoor chapel, with an altar surrounded by oak trees, was constructed by youth of First Lutheran, Suttons Bay. The ELS Youth Board counted Camp Lor-Ray as one of three official Synod youth camps (along with Camp Indianhead North and Camp Indianhead South) until 1970, when control of Kids’ Camp was given to the association, which now also included many WELS members.

The three camps shared staff, resources — including a camp hymnbook published by the youth board in 1967 — schedules, rules, and traditions. The synod-wide Young People’s Association, which had also been reorganized by the Synod in 1951 (see endnotes), also contributed to each camp. Through a journal called the YPA Quarterly, students (typically older middle school and high school students) would write articles promoting the camps to younger YPA members.



Gathering for a hymn sing in the yet unfinished mess hall at Camp Lor-Ray, later to be named "Moldstad Hall." Circa 1971

One young boy who attended Camp Indianhead in Drummond in 1954 wrote of a “Typical Day at Camp.” Every morning began at 7:00 am by the sound of a bugle or siren. Then it was off to breakfast. After breakfast everyone would assemble in the chapel for a Matins service, which

was followed by two Bible studies. He commented, “While this sounds like school, it doesn’t seem like it at all. We really get a lot out of these classes.” There was also a period of music, “in which we learn something about music in our church.” It seems that with this music period, the camp program attempted to mirror normal church life. There was another specific time that was designated for songs with “catchy” tunes and “clever words,” but this one was dedicated for sacred music and for learning about the church’s music. Every evening came to a close with a Vespers service which usually took place in the chapel. The boy added however, that on one night of the camp, “We have a lakeshore Vesper that is truly impressive. You have to take part in it to truly appreciate it.”

“On Sunday morning we have a service just as we do at home, with choir and all. Yet, somehow, out there in the woods on the shore of a beautiful lake, the service seems even more impressive and you can tell that the sermon has been written just for us.”

Another young camper would expound on the special lakeshore Vesper in the YPA Quarterly in 1961. “Some things have become a tradition at Indianhead. One of the most beautiful of these is the moonlight vespers. Candles are set out on paper plates in a semi-circle on the lake and the minister preaches from either a rowboat or a canoe. It is really very impressive sitting out under the stars looking over a peaceful lake. I am reminded of the time when Jesus went out in a boat on the Sea of Galilee to preach to the people.”

These experiences would not be limited to Camp Indianhead alone. Robert Moldstad, who had been a leader at Camp Indianhead, would bring this unique service with him to Camp Lor-Ray. The lakeside vespers service is a tradition that may not still survive today, but there are others that do. There are even traditions that carry over from inside our normal churches to our camps. It is not uncommon to hear “Abide with Me” sung in four-part harmony or “On My Heart” in eight-part harmony around the campfire, nor is it uncommon to see the orders of Prime, Compline, or



Vespers used for devotion. This is part of the continuity at ELS camps, a continuity of what was done under the oaks at Koshkonong, to what is done in our churches, to what is done outside at camp again under the oak trees. The central focus of ELS summer camps is the redemptive work of Jesus and on how God brings His forgiveness to His children in Word and Sacrament.

#### Notes:

The Choral Union of the Synod had been in operation since the reorganization of the Synod in 1918. The Choral Union, made up of Young People's Organization (later YPA and then LYA) members from across the Synod, would join together in a sacred concert each year for Synod Convention. The event is known today as the ELS Honor Choir.

A previous association, Young People's Organization (YPO), had existed informally since 1933 and officially since 1936. This was a circuit-level organization, rather than a synod-wide organization. YPO was reorganized into the Young People's Association in 1951, with their first YPA Convention at Norseland Lutheran Church. YPA would later become known as Lutheran Youth Association (LYA).▪

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## Our Only Reason for Carrying On as a Synod

Submitted by Craig Ferkenstad

Sigurd C. Ylvisaker joined the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (at that time known as the Norwegian Synod) only five years after its reorganization in 1918. He served as a parish pastor, college professor, and, for twenty years, as the president of Bethany Lutheran College. He died in April 1959.

At some period, during his lifetime, he corresponded with an elderly man who was perplexed and troubled about the Scripture doctrine of divine election or predestination. During Dr. Ylvisaker's funeral sermon, the Rev. Torald N. Teigen quoted a portion of a letter which Dr. Ylvisaker had written to that elderly man.

"I wish I could bring to you, Mr. \_\_\_\_, the comfort of the doctrine of election as we teach of life. As you look back upon your long life, I know that you will agree that there would have been no hope for you un-

less your divine Shepherd had sought you out, found you, and carried you safely along the difficult path of life. How hopeless it would have been unless He had known you as His from all eternity, had made you His own in holy baptism, had followed you mercifully through life, raised you up when you stumbled, supported you when you were weak, quickened you when you were in despair, fed and nourished you spiritually when you were hungry and thirsty, instructed you when you were ignorant and foolish, comforted you in time of trouble, forgiven you every day when you sinned and rebelled against Him, and now remains your mainstay and hope and strength when the days become fewer and the end of the journey is not far away.

"Is there a single hour or minute in your long life when His grace has not shined on you, and is there any song you would rather sing now than this: '*Alt af Naade*,' 'all by grace'? Can you imagine that the saints in heaven would make this a part of their song of praise and thanksgiving: 'I am glad that I at such and such a time had sense enough to believe in Christ, to show such and such a *godt for-hold* (good conduct) that God would favor me above others, and that He saw in me something which determined Him to grant me the final favor of predestination'? Do you not see how any such idea or teaching would rob God of the glory due Him, as if it were not quite true when Christ cried out: '*It is finished*'? Are you not comforted now to know that your salvation is dependent, not on anything (mark you, *anything*!) in you, but on His grace alone Who has loved you with an eternal love and has prepared His grace for me, you, personally before the world was, and before there was any chance for us to show a 'good conduct'?

"I want to assure you of this that our only reason for carrying on as a synod apart from the 1917 Merger is our love of the Gospel of pure and free grace, a Gospel which we want all men to keep and to enjoy in all its divine glory and brightness, and by which we want to be comforted ourselves and are eager to comfort others against sin and every ill. There is no doctrine of Scripture which is more comforting than the very doctrine of election when you learn to know it aright. For nothing can be more comforting than this, that our salvation is altogether in the merciful hands of God. There it is safe, and there alone.

"Now may God keep you in this true and living faith, trusting with full confidence in the promise of Him Who has said that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Selected from the *Lutheran Sentinel*, 42 (May 28, 1959) 10, pages 153-54.▪



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