



Oak Leaves

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The Ottesen Museum's 5th annual Christmas Open House was held on Tuesday, December 8, 2015. The theme was "Christmas Across the ELS: Traditions Old and New" and we explored the variety and also the continuity of Christmas traditions in various congregations in the Synod. A record 59 visitors ate, sang, and took in the displays. Twenty-one congregations, representing parishes from coast to coast, shared their pictures, service bulletins, tree ornaments and other decorations, and descriptions of events to give the visitors a flavor of the season. One tradition which probably would never have been envisioned by the founders of the Norwegian Synod would be the use of Mexican style luminaries to light the path into the building—a tradition at Faith, San Antonio, Texas.



No Lutheran Christmas celebration is complete without music. Volunteers from the Bethany Lutheran College Choir led visitors in a hymn-sing which included traditional favorites of "Jeg er så glad" (I Am So Glad When Christmas Comes) and "Stille Nacht" (Silent Night) as well as requests out of the Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary.

Special treats included frosted sugar cookies and treat bags holding peanuts, apples, and a variety of candies—childhood favorites in many congregations.



Of course, the main focus of all the services and activities that congregations observe is the birth of Christ, our Savior. As the representative of Bethany, The Dalles, Oregon, noted when reporting on the congregation's traditions: "No matter the activity, all is done to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!" ■

Acorns from the *ELS* Archives

by Ted Gullixson

(The following is printed from the October 1926, "The Assistant Pastor," a monthly newsletter by the Rev. H. M. Tjernagel, pastor of Jerico and Saude Lutheran Churches. The concerns about the radio can also be applied to other modern media.)

Radio

The radio is becoming common in our homes. It is one of the marvels of our age. One merely turns a dial and the home is flooded—flooded with that which is trivial, sensual, degrading, destructive, or with that which is dignified, refining, ennobling, instructive. A turn of the dial may shut off the appeal to the passions of some orchestra; it may shut off the ranting of some so-called scientist and bring in a Lutheran gospel sermon or a Christian lecture or other useful secular knowledge.

Parents, "Stop, Look, Listen!" The radio can as effectively destroy your home as a train can crush your auto and all in it. Let your receiving set bring the filth and godlessness, now daily broadcasted, into your family circle and sooner or later you will realize that your home is wrecked. One can not without danger play or hob-nob with sin and godlessness, whether it comes to one through the phonograph, radio, by word of mouth or actual contact. Evil contaminates in whatever form it comes or by whatever agent it is brought to you. Guard well, therefore, the dials of your radio. And be, you, yourself, in control of them.

"Well, but," says someone, "I can't always watch the children and what they tune in on." Will you say the same as to a loaded gun in the house? You know very well that the gun must be under perfect control or you will not tolerate it on the premises. When it is a question of danger to your child's life and body then you are wide awake, but where the immortal soul is endangered you easily find excuses for your lack of watchfulness and sincere concern. No wonder Jesus said: "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Luke 16:8. ▶

(The following is printed from the March 1929, "The Assistant Pastor," a monthly newsletter by the Rev. H. M. Tjernagel, pastor of Jerico and Saude Lutheran Churches. This article presents details about the beginning of the congregations and the life of the people living on the plains of Iowa. The italics are in the original.)

Saude and Jerico

The Saude congregation dates from the year 1856. In those days many walked over the prairie patches and through the thickets and timber to the little log church, while others came in ox-drawn vehicles over trails that knew no compass.

In the year 1864 a fleet of prairie schooners that had fled from South Dakota before hostile Indians, anchored on the banks of Crane Creek *far* to the west. Yes, six miles was *far* in those days.

The young pastor, Vilhelm Ulrik Koren, who, in his student days at the University of Christiania, was known as "loven"—the lion—and who now fed God's sheep and lambs at Saude, very soon found his way to the refugees on Crane Creek to offer them the cheer and guidance of the Word of God. They received it gladly and eventually a church was established among them.

By indomitable courage, willingness to work and God's blessing, the settlements prospered and, through immigration from older settlements, especially in Wisconsin, and from Norway, they grew large. The stately horse had succeeded the lowly ox. Proud were our fathers as they pulled up to the church in the horse-drawn lumber wagon, mother and the children and father too, seated on boards laid across the wagon box. Often enough, however, the horses looked all but stately after having waded through three or four miles of mud with their proud master and his flock in tow.

On account of the roads and the pitch-like consistency of Iowa mud—and there was lots of it in Chickasaw and Howard counties—communications between the settlements as well as the churches was infrequent. There was not much pleasure on a trip through mud, the wheels of the lumber wagon solid disks, the horses at dead pull and moving [at] a snail's pace. Such a journey was not undertaken except by force of duty or sheer necessity. However, the road was not always soft—sometimes it was hard and rough as a stone quarry. Then again, snowdrifts impeded the way. In the summer time,

when the horses worked to their very limit in the fields, was it fair to take them out on a Sunday for a longer drive to the neighboring settlement or church? Our fathers said, "No." Summer or winter, spring or fall, it was, truly, *far* from Saude to Jerico and from Jerico to Saude.

Then came the light wagons, the buggies, the surreys, but the roads remained the same and the horses needed rest on Sundays as before and six miles was *far* still.

Next came that peculiar, large road bug [automobile] that sometimes moved along the road and sometimes stood still. When it moved it made a triphammer noise and when it stood still it emitted ill-smelling fumes and in either case put all horses into frenzied terror. To drive horses six miles on the road now was to gamble with life and limb.

The new road bug proved to be very prolific. Fortunately it could be domesticated and made tractable and useful to the average man. In other words, the automobile came to stay. But the roads showed little sign of change, and through long periods of the year, six miles was farther than ever before.

The next step in changing conditions of our settlements brings us up to our own, the present, day. The auto that was a buggy with a little motor aboard that went pop-pop-pop-pop—sometimes, and that was built more for comfort under it than in it, has given place to the beautiful, swift, noiseless vehicles that we drive today and which are so splendidly adapted to the conveyance of old and halt and feeble as well as the young, the sound, and the strong. And it is not only the expert mechanic that can coax them to move but they go as smoothly and willingly to the bidding of women and children. The old mud roads on the main routes of travel that were churned and re churned by horses' hooves and wagon wheels and that sometimes, in self-defense, hardened over night so that neither man nor beast dared tread on them, are now safely concealed and made harmless by a heavy covering of gravel or concrete. Now a monster passes back and forth over our winter roads and either ruthlessly shoves the snowdrift into the ditch or blows it back to where it came from.

It is *not* far now from Saude to Jerico nor from Jerico to Saude. What formerly was a hard

trip of upwards of 120 minutes is now, during the greater part of the year, a pleasant spin of 10 to 15 minutes.

Things have changed, indeed; it seems that nothing is as it used to be. Yes, one thing is as it was fifty years ago: members of the Jerico congregation at services in the Saude church are about as scarce as hens' teeth, and members of the Saude congregation at services in Jerico are almost as common as peaches on a crab apple tree.

[Pastor Tjernagel continues with an appeal to attend worship services every Sunday, even though each congregation held services twice a month—one English and one Norwegian service.]▶

(The following is printed from the October 1928, "The Assistant Pastor," a monthly newsletter by the Rev. H. M. Tjernagel, pastor of Jerico and Saude Lutheran Churches.)

Bleken Monument

The monument reared in the Calmar cemetery at the graves of Rev. and Mrs. Bleken, in grateful remembrance by the Jerico and Saude congregations, was unveiled Sunday afternoon, September 30th. The ceremonies followed immediately upon the close of the mission festival that day celebrated by the Calmar congregation.

The Rev. G. A. Gullixson of Chicago spoke briefly, especially to the assembled members of the Jerico and Saude churches, with Heb. 13:7 as his text. He eulogized the Rev. Bleken for having, indeed, "spoken unto the Word of God" in all its purity in spite of near-persecution for so doing. It was declared also that Bleken's was a faith worthy to be followed. The speaker paid a kind tribute also to the congregations when he stated that the Bible verse could rightly be translated into a eulogy of the congregations. They showed now by the rearing of a becoming monument that they remembered their former pastor. During the crisis shortly after their pastor's death, they arose "as a mighty forest" and by vote gave expression to their determination to follow his faith.

Rev. Harry Olson of Milwaukee, one of Rev. Bleken's confirmands while in charge of the Madison, Wisc. congregation, spoke of Rev.

Bleken's marked ability and faithfulness as an instructor of the young.

The large assembly then repaired to the graves where the Calmar choir sang Grieg's beautiful "Salig Ro." ["Blessed Peace"] Thereupon the present pastor of the Saude and Jerico churches spoke as follows on behalf of his charge:

"Through the terrible years of a war and years of upheaval as well in the church, Rev. M. K. Bleken was at the rudder of the Jerico and Saude churches. Though reviled and maligned by fanatic patriots and by policy mongers from within his churches and from without, he held his course according to the divine chart.

"We rejoice that God in His love and mercy saw fit to give us such a captain during the stormy voyage of those years and the sincere 'Thank You' inscribed upon the hearts of all, we have caused to be chiseled in granite upon the monument here reared to the memory of Rev. and Mrs. M. K. Bleken and which is herewith unveiled."

The assembly then sang, "Guds Ord det er vort Arvegods" ["God's Word is Our Great Heritage"] whereupon the Rev. H. A. Preus made a few appropriate remarks on behalf of the Calmar congregation and also paid tribute to Rev. Bleken as professor at Luther College [in Decorah, Iowa].

With a few fitting remarks and expressions of appreciation by Mr. G. Evanson, a brother of Mrs. Bleken, the memorable occasion ended. Of the Bleken children, it was possible for only one—Winnifred—to be present. Her presence added much to the occasion.

(Editor's Note: Read more about Rev. M. K. Bleken in the Spring 1999 issue of *Oak Leaves* on our ELSHS website, www.els-history.org. To see a photo of the monument, go to iowagravestones.org; search Winneshiek County and the surname Bleken. If it doesn't come up under his listing, try one of the other Bleken listings and then it should work after that.)■

How Bethany Became the College of the ELS

by Erling T. Teigen, Professor Emeritus
Bethany Lutheran College Archives



2016 marks the 90th anniversary of the Norwegian Synod's association with Bethany Lutheran College. The school had been founded as Bethany Ladies College in 1911, but by 1924 had failed and was mired in debt.

How did it come about that the reorganized Norwegian Synod, less than ten years old and with very meager resources found itself with a fifteen-acre campus and a substantial, well-constructed building, with much of the equipment needed for an educational institution?

It didn't happen overnight. When the Synod was organized it immediately took steps to provide for the training of pastors and teachers. For training pastors, it arranged with the Missouri Synod's Concordia College, St. Paul, to send young men there to prepare for seminary and then arranged with Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to take the young Norwegian men through their theological, pastoral training. They also provided for the preparation of teachers for Christian Day schools, and they arranged for that with Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, of the Wisconsin Synod. They first placed a professor, jointly funded, on the New Ulm faculty, Oscar Levorson. A year later, when Dr. Sigurd Ylvisaker left Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, he was placed as the Norwegian Synod professor at St. Paul.

Meanwhile, a less than fifteen-year-old college in Mankato, established by Synodical Conference people, mostly from the Missouri and Wisconsin synods was in deep financial difficulty. As they sank deeper into debt, they had difficulty recruiting students and keeping faculty. In the early

1920s, a teacher from the Norwegian Synod, Oscar C. Torgerson, was hired by the college.

In 1922, one of the thirteen founding pastors of the Norwegian Synod, Holden Olsen, pastor of Our Savior's congregation in Madison, Wisconsin, found it necessary to resign his call. He took up work as an insurance agent, and was

succeeded as pastor of Our Savior's, by Sigurd Ylvisaker.

Meanwhile, the fortunes of Bethany Ladies College sank deeper and deeper.

When President A. F. Winter, as a last ditch to help the college survive, resigned, Oscar Torgerson was left in charge.

At that point, the faculty was in charge of the school, and Torgerson and his colleagues cast about looking for a president. They could not get a Wisconsin or Mis-



Pastor A. F. Winter of Immanuel, the driving force behind the Ladies College.

souri clergyman to take the position, and finally, they called Holden Olsen, who did in fact have some academic credentials in addition to his seminary training. Olsen obliged and accepted the call.

The Board of Directors of Bethany College Inc. hoped that they could find one of the Synodical Conference synods to take Bethany. The Wisconsin Synod was interested, but negotiations there had run into difficulties, and the stock holders of the Bethany corporation were becoming more impatient.

On June 1, 1925, J. W. Pieper, Wisconsin Synod pastor in Stillwater, Minnesota and secretary of the BLC Inc. board, wrote to the Norwegian Synod President George Gullixson. Pieper reported that he was contacting Gullixson on the recommendation of Oscar Torgerson and pled with him to get the Norwegian Synod to take over the school.

Less than a week later, June 6, a letter written on Bethany College letterhead but in Norwegian,, was sent out to the pastors of the

Norwegian Synod. It was headed "Storartet Tilbud" — A Splendid Offer. The letter was signed by O. C. Torgerson, but also with the name of C. J. Quill typed at the bottom as a joint writer.

On June 15, Pastor Pieper and Prof. Torgerson met with a committee at the meeting of the Norwegian Synod being held at Norseland, rural St. Peter, Minnesota. No official action is recorded in the Synod's proceedings, but the conclusion was that with the short notice, and lacking sufficient information, the synod could not undertake such a commitment at the present time. In the 1926 Synod report in a report by S. C. Ylvisaker, he states that the committee meeting with Torgerson and Pieper reported adversely and recommended that the synod table the matter.

During the rest of 1925 and into 1926, BLC Inc. continued to negotiate with the Wisconsin Synod, but in February 1926, Holden Olsen wrote to Gullixson that "Things are happening at Mankato. The deal between the corporation and the Wisconsin Synod is off" and urged that something had to be done right away.

On March 5, there was a movement toward forming an association of Norwegian Synod people to raise money, buy the college, and administer it until the debts were paid, or the synod was prepared to take it over. The purchase price, which was to be further negotiated, was \$120,000 [\$1.6 million in 2016], with \$35,000 down, and annual installments of \$10,000 at 6.5% interest until the debt was paid. The area pastoral conferences of the synod discussed the matter, and on April 15, 1926, representatives from various conferences from around the synod met in Mankato, at which it was decided to form an organization to take over the property. By this time the purchase price had dropped to \$60,000 [\$787,000, 2016]. S. C. Ylvisaker was elected chairman and Norman A. Madson, secretary.

The 1916 convention of the synod was held at Rock Dell congregation, rural Belview, Minnesota. Ylvisaker reported to the convention what the Association had done. He acknowledged that it was the association's intention that the college should be taken over by the synod, but that the synod was hardly prepared to do so at the present time. Therefore, the Bethany Association would assume responsibility for operating the



Holden Olsen

school; raising money to pay down the debt; and whenever the synod was ready to take ownership, the college would be deeded to it.

One reason for the failure of Bethany Ladies College was that its owners, the Evangelical Lutheran Education Association, was neither responsible to, nor authorized by any church body. Therefore, the Association proposed that they should be held accountable to the Norwegian Synod, even if the synod did not immediately take ownership. The convention answered that appeal with a resolution which concluded: "Without assuming any responsibility itself at this time, the Norwegian Synod nevertheless expresses full confidence in the Bethany Lutheran College association, that it will conduct the school in a true Lutheran, Christian spirit."

That began the synod's formal association with Bethany College. Some, but not too much, heat was generated in the discussion at the 1926 convention. But the 1927 convention would be much more exciting.

Stay tuned! ■

My Journey to Jail Ministry

by Herman Harstad

My sister Mary Moldstad won the contest about which of the ten Harstad siblings spent the most time in jail. Mary was a nurse in the Orange County, California, Women's Jail for many years. I was an adult and children's probation officer in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin. Part of my job was to interview clients when they were in jail for a new offense or for probation violations.



Herman, on his way to a Bible study.

Jails are strange and scary places where heavy steel doors slam behind you when you enter. But some of those fears subside when you realize you are safe and can walk out again when you tell the deputy the interview is over. I learned that incarceration can be a powerful teaching moment for people whose lives are spinning out of control.

Since I worked in a secular setting I couldn't share the one thing needful with prisoners, but the door was open for me to teach Bible studies in the county jail on my own time after work, and I continued after I retired.

Last summer, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mankato had a series of Sunday Bible studies about vocations. I was asked to be one of the speakers. Following are some of the main points I wanted to cover but the talk did digress into other areas not covered here.

Biblical Perspective on Vocations

Dr. Gene Edward Veith wrote a book on the topic of Christian vocation in which he states that Martin Luther restored the biblical principles of the three-legged stool that the church stands on. The Roman Catholic Church had elevated the traditions of men to an equal and sometimes superior position to God's Word. Their fourth, longer, leg knocked the stool out of kilter. Luther cut it off and taught the three unshakeable principles that hold up the church.

1. The Authority of Scripture; 2 Tim. 4:2-4
"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."

2. The Teaching of Justification by Grace through Faith; Eph. 2:8-10
"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

In other words, we are saved by grace alone through faith alone and God has work for us to do to show our love for him and our fellow men because of his love for us.

3. The Lord's Call to All Vocations; 2 Cor. 7:17
"Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches."

The Catholic Church had elevated the calling of the priesthood, monks, and nuns to a higher spiritual level than secular vocations. However, Jesus Christ made no such distinction. When Jesus separates the sheep from the goats on the last day, he will use one criterion—Does the person have a living faith? Living faith is

always accompanied by fruits of faith, some of which seem so insignificant that Christians won't even remember doing them. Here is what Jesus said on the matter in Matthew 25:31-40:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

Finding Your Vocational Calling

All vocations, that are moral and legal, serve people by providing goods and services, showing love to God by serving our fellow men. Luther pointed out that those services might be as mundane as changing a baby's diaper or giving someone a drink of water. Full-time preaching and teaching in the church is a wonderful way to serve the Lord, and secular jobs are also important and have worth and dignity in the eyes of God.

You probably did some sifting and winnowing and went in and out of some blind alleys on the way to finding your calling in life. I didn't have an experience like Moses who received a direct call from God at the burning bush to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land. But we do have experiences and role models we observe in growing up and the education process that exposes us to various subjects that we have an interest and aptitude in. I decided I wanted to be a social worker while in college and took the courses at Mankato State that would prepare me for a social work job. Shortly after gradu-

ation I was hired as an adult probation officer in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

Sometimes it was frustrating working with people caught in the legal system because of criminal behavior. Many were involved in the use and sale of illegal drugs. The recidivism rates were high with probationers committing new offenses and going back to sale and use of addicting legal and illegal drugs and alcohol. I later transferred to children's court where many of my clients were rudderless and clueless about the fact that the road to success goes through the schoolhouse door. Many of my clients didn't show up for their mandatory supervision appointments. They didn't want to see me. But when they were locked up because of new offenses or probation violations, my phone rang off the hook when they wanted to see me right away. They knew my recommendation to the judge would be a big influence on whether they would be released. They made all kinds of promises about turning over a new leaf and they felt enough heat to see the light. Regardless of their sincerity, it was obvious that being locked up was a good teaching moment in their lives. Since I was working in a secular setting, I wasn't able to share the word of God with them, but I thought it would be nice to have that opportunity.

Preparation and Opportunity Meet

I wanted to be more comfortable speaking in public so I joined Toastmasters, where members learn how to be better speakers, better listeners, and better thinkers and leaders. During this process I became aware that if I would be giving speeches, I needed to fill my brain with information that was worth sharing. What book or books filled that bill? My “Aha!” moment led me to the conclusion I needed to embark on a daily personal Bible reading and devotion time. Before going to work each morning I read a chapter from the Old Testament, a section from the poetic books, and a New Testament chapter. Over the years I read through the Bible a number of times to the point where I was in at least partial compliance to St. Paul's admonition to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” (Colossians 3:16) Another verse, Micah 6:8, stuck with me. “And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” When we walk humbly with God through faith in Jesus Christ, our relationships with our fellow men fall into place too. Justice tempered with mercy is a good prescription for a stable community and society.

I didn't know it at the time, but looking back, I can see that God was preparing me to lead Bible studies. Sometimes we had guest preachers come to our WELS church from Wisconsin Lutheran Institutional Ministries. They provided literature and suggested that there were

many people in jails, hospitals, and mental institutions who needed to hear God's word. Our pastor's wife, who was a nurse for Milwaukee County and knew I was already familiar with the jail system, encouraged me to look into jail ministry. Ronald Reagan's words came to mind, "If not me, who? If not now, when?" As I mentioned earlier in this article, people who are incarcerated are in a crisis and are ripe for change. It is a teachable moment for good or for ill. So I decided to take the plunge to get training and mentoring from clergy and lay people from the institutional ministries. I attended an orientation for volunteers working in the Milwaukee County Jail and underwent a background check. Then I was ready to go along with an experienced layman who had been leading Bible studies for years. The next time he turned it over to me to do the study with five or six men in orange. We read and discussed a portion of God's word and I was impressed with the receptivity of the majority of the inmates. Of course the men were there voluntarily so that eliminated many who were hostile to God and his Word.

The Father Welcomes the Prodigal Son

At first I did studies such as the parable of the prodigal son that the men could definitely relate to. Many had "wasted their substance on riotous living." Some "came to themselves" while in the pigpen of broken relationships and legal and physical problems. You may recall that the prodigal son worked on his contrition and repentance speech on the way home and was able to get the first part out: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." Before he asked to be readmitted to the house as a servant, his father interrupted him and ordered the servants to put shoes on his feet, a ring on his finger, and started preparations for a welcome home banquet. The father's love and acceptance of the sinful son was almost too good to be true. I saw the relief on the inmates' faces when we talked about how the father in the story represented God's love for each of us.

Work in the Blue Earth County Jail

The Milwaukee County Jail usually had a daily census of about a thousand men. Shortly after we moved to Mankato in 2006 after I had been retired a couple of years, I contacted the volunteer coordinator at the Blue Earth County Jail where there are about 100 people incarcerated on any given day. After completing the background check and orientation, I was authorized to lead a weekly Bible study for the men who wanted to come for an hour session. Pastor Luke Ulrich of Mt. Olive leads Bible study on Saturdays several times a year, and Pastor Roger Knepprath of St. Paul's/WELS in North Mankato leads the Bible study once a month at our usual time of 2 p.m. on Fridays.

In Milwaukee I had a breakfast meeting with a WELS Institutional Minister once a month, so Pastor Ulrich, Pastor Knepprath, and I also meet for breakfast or lunch once a month to review the program, as their schedules allow.

There are usually five to ten men at each study. They are of many denominational backgrounds and some have no church affiliation. Occasionally a Muslim joins us out of curiosity about the Christian faith and others come to mock and challenge the doctrine of the Trinity and the veracity of the 66 canonical books of the Bible. Most of the men are in their 20s and 30s and are in for drug-related offenses, traffic matters, or are pending trial on felony charges of battery, burglary, and sexual assaults, etc. Some are well educated but others are illiterate and most are probably high school dropouts. Many had school adjustment problems due to fetal alcohol syndrome or other learning disability issues. Many have parents who were poor role models. I give everyone a chance to read a portion of the scripture and some pass, others read haltingly, and others read fluently.

Some of the men start reading the Bible in their cells to pass the time and they are surprised and incredulous about people living 900 years and wonder how that could be true. I explain that people had healthy bodies with fewer harmful mutations and that the environment was less polluted and perhaps a vapor canopy provided more protection from harmful radiation. I try to hit hard on the law that says each of us are hell-bound sinners left to our own devices since no matter how hard we try we can't love God and love our neighbor perfectly all the time. When the law convinces us that we cannot save ourselves, the sweetness of the gospel brings relief:

"If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (1 John 1:6&7)

In closing, I recently observed a young man move from being a hostile skeptic to a believer in Jesus Christ over a period of several months of weekly Bible studies. It is a privilege to see how God's word is like a hammer that can turn an unbelieving heart of stone into a believing heart of flesh. He went from being a child of the world to a child of God. St. Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Faith comes by hearing the Word of God and it is a privilege to be part of that process. ■

Jail Tales by Mary Moldstad

Submitted by Herman and Cheryl Harstad,
from *Family Times*, a newsletter for the descendants
of Martha and Adolph Harstad, September, 1994



Every once in a while someone asks me, "Anything interesting happening in jail these days?" The fact is, not a day goes by that's

not interesting. When I finish my twenty years with the County of Orange in 1999, it will take a retirement life-time to write about it!



Take last May 12th for example. I filled a staff position in the Women's Jail Infirmary because the regular nurse was sick. This is a unit of 15 single cells which

house psychiatric patients too bizarre for regular housing and medical patients too sick for regular housing. Today we have three medical patients, three empty cells, and nine psyche patients in varying degrees of reality. Let's visit a few of them.

Sylvia has just finished heroin withdrawals. She's an emaciated, white, 22-year-old who, until now, took no interest in her personal grooming. Her legs are covered with abscesses where she had been injecting heroin and cocaine. She had long ago destroyed her veins. On one thigh an area about six inches long and three inches wide is open down to the muscle. I'll pack her wound with wet saline gauze and cover it with dressings. Sylvia tells me, "The ding bats were really flying last night. I didn't get much sleep."

Ana, in the next cell, is a revolving-door inmate. She's been in an out of jail at least five or six times in the fifteen years I've been here. She is about 30 years old and has a hyperthyroid condition which has been neglected so long that her eyes bulge out. She takes medication to suppress the over-active thyroid and to slow down her rapid heart rate. She needs a thyroidectomy but this has to wait until after she delivers her twins in July. Ana tells me this is her second pregnancy with twins. Her first twins are six years old.

Elizabeth is a 35-year-old psyche patient with bi-polar disorder. You may know it as manic-depression. When she's taking her street drugs, she doesn't take her lithium. She came to jail in a manic phase and didn't sleep for days. She is well-controlled on her lithium now and will probably be transferred to regular housing after the psychiatrist makes rounds today.

Margo is paranoid-schizophrenic and totally out of reality. I observe her through the glass window of her cell door. She doesn't move when I call her name. She's standing on one leg, flamingo style, with the other foot in the toilet. Margo holds this position for about five minutes. She's totally in the buff with her safety gown lying on the floor on the opposite side of the cell. "Aren't you cold?" I asked. "I don't need my clothes because the sun is so bright," she answered. Under those circumstances, I thought to myself, it makes sense to cool one's feet in the toilet. If she can enjoy the sun and surf in her jail cell I'd better find out when the tide comes in. I may need to finish my shift in a wet suit.

Maria, a Mexican-American in her early twenties, is of borderline intelligence. She doesn't really belong in the infirmary but a deputy had to move her out of a 36-bed dorm for her personal safety. She sometimes wets herself and doesn't shower unless told to do so. Some of the women would just as soon beat her up to get her out of their dorm. They got tired of her odor and her wandering around the dorm at night trying to steal other people's commissary items like candy bars, soap, and cosmetics.

Now we come to Patricia. She's a 35-year-old alcoholic who came in two and a half days ago. She started symptoms of delirium tremens (DTs) at 3 a.m. today and got moved out of her dorm. She is having frightening visual and auditory hallucinations. She claims she saw three deputies suddenly start shooting people. "They shot a Mexican man and dumped his body in the ditch right by my bed!" She is "seeing people" outside her door who are coming to get her and I should call 911. I call a couple of deputies and tell them I have to go into the cell and take her blood pressure and pulse. In this agitated state, her pressure is apt to go sky high. Fifteen percent of people in DTs die without medical intervention. It's hard on the heart to maintain this pitch of "fight or flight" without sedation. Sure enough, her pressure is up to 186/110 and her pulse is 120. I have medication for her but she is too paranoid to take it. She thinks I'm going to poison her. She tells *me* to take the medicine and if I don't die from it she'll take a dose. I call the doctor to say I'm sending her out to the emergency room of our contract hospital.

Let's skip to 3 p.m. and the end of my shift. I can walk out and go home to peace and tranquility. I pick up the newspaper and read about some of my patients and the

crimes they've committed. I think to myself that I'm safer behind bars with the prisoners than I am at home.

I read about Shirley who was released from custody just yesterday. She committed suicide by walking across the lanes of the Garden Grove freeway. She was a drug addict who cleaned herself up in jail and was happy to be working on the floor-cleaning crew in the medical unit. Shirley functioned well in jail where all the rules and boundaries were spelled out for her and she had all the support services she needed. Out in the real world where she had to make her own behavior choices she failed quickly. Many inmates admit to feeling nervous and even depressed as they approach their release date. The environment that protects people from themselves and others suddenly kicks them out the door. I think to myself how I would feel if I were the one who hit Shirley on the freeway.

On a few occasions I have run into former inmates on the street. Some have come up to me and said, "Remember me when I was in jail? I've turned my life around and you'll never see me in jail again!" We never read about those triumphs in the newspaper. The tragedies of life seem more newsworthy than the triumphs. ■

Norwegian Missionary Nurse Bodil Katharine Biorn (1871-1960)



Editor's Note: Condensed from Wikipedia sites for Bodil Biorn and Armenian Genocide (the section, Scandinavian missionaries and diplomats), and genocide-museum.am. Clips of the docudrama on YouTube will lead to other sites of interest. Search Bodil Biorn for a 2015 interview with her grandson, Jussi Flemming Bioern, who made a documentary, *They Called Her Mother*; retracing his grandmother's

journeys. Some of Bodil Biorn's photos are on the genocide museum website.

Also known as Mother Katharine, Bodil Biorn was born on 27 January 1871 in Kragerø, Norway, in a family of a wealthy ship owner. In 1905, after studying nursing in Germany, she was sent by "Women Missionary Organization" to the Ottoman Empire and worked as a missionary nurse in Mezereh, Kharberd province and later in Mush, Ottoman Empire. In cooperation with the German missionaries she tried to help the widows and orphans. A witness of the Armenian Genocide,

along with her colleagues she saved the lives of many homeless women and children. She also documented the tragic events she witnessed through her testimonial diary and her photography. In the Near East, Biørn took care of Armenian orphans in Syria, Lebanon and Constantinople. In 1922 she founded an orphanage named "Lusaghbyur" in Alexandropol, Soviet Armenia. Then she continued her work by aiding the Armenian refugees in Syria and Lebanon. She adopted an Armenian orphan two-year-old boy and he was her only child. She never married. She died in Oslo in 1960.

By the initiative of the Armenian community of Aleppo, the Norwegian city of Kragerø has erected a statue honoring Bodil Biørn.

Many of Bodil Biorn's photos are now in the National Archives of Norway. In combination with her comments, written in her photo albums or on the back of the prints themselves, these photos bear strong witness of the atrocities that she saw.

Map of Salvation (2015) is a feature-length docudrama film made to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The film tells about five European women, Maria Jacobsen (Denmark), Karen Jeppe (Denmark), Bodil Biørn (Norway), Alma Johansson (Sweden), Anna Hedvig Büll (Estonia), who were witnesses to the Armenian Genocide and subsequently founded shelters for Armenian children and women. Film production was in 29 cities of 9 countries. ■

An Early Dakota Christmas Circuit

by J. B. Unseth

Submitted by Craig Ferkenstad

From a *Lutheran Sentinel* 1957 issue

In preparing an article on the above title a few introductory remarks may not be out of order.

At the time of his graduation from the seminary in 1900 the undersigned was called to assist two pastors, who were serving more than a dozen congregations in the northeastern part of North Dakota. The understanding was that I also should explore new territory so that eventually a new parish could be formed, with a small congregation in northeast Ramsey Co. as a nucleus. This territory, which up to a year or two before I came there had been called "No-Mans-Land," had now been settled by homesteaders; and it stretched from the border of Canada southward about 70 miles. Within a radius of thirty miles there were yet no towns, and the first train arrived in June 1902. In 1901 the Great Northern started to build a branch from Dakota and in anticipation of getting a railroad many outsiders moved in and started to build a town that fall.

This town was built right in the midst of the congregation which was to be the starting point for my missionary activities and was named Edmore. For two years this town remained the end of the railroad branch, which was then extended until it some years later reached the Canadian border, at the town of Sarles, in the northwest corner of Cavalier County.

During my first year in Dakota I lived in a rented room in Lakota, but the influx to the new town and a nearer approach to the "fields already white to harvest" made it advisable for me to move.

Because there was no parsonage nor vacant house in town, the congregation had obtained permission temporarily to make use of a vacated farmhouse a mile from town. This house consisted of two rooms with outside walls, but lacked the inside ones. Having been married in June, my wife and I moved into this our first parsonage in December, 1901. For four years we lived outside of town, moving from one vacant house to another until in 1905 when we could move into our own house.

As the town grew, the membership also increased, so in 1902 the Concordia Congregation had the joy of worshipping in its newly erected and commodious church.

These introductory remarks will serve for a better understanding of what one of my Christmas circuits implied. The year **1906** has been selected for this. By that time I had ten congregations and mission stations to serve and during Christmas week one likes to reach all or at least as many as possible with the "Good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

While it was customary during the winter months not only to make use of Sunday, but also of Monday for regular services in order that it should not become altogether too long between each service; during Christmas, something vital seemed to be missing if the congregations did not have the opportunity to come together to hear the glad tidings: "Unto you is born this day a Savior" and to unite in singing their Christmas hymns. For that reason it was the aim of the pastor to reach all, even if it took the whole Christmas week to do so.

Where the thermometer would at times drop to 50 below zero and storms arose without previous warning, it was not without some feeling of anxiety that one started out on such a circuit. Besides, there was the wife and three small daughters at home with whom there were no means of communication during his absence. But, with trust in the sure promises of God, one could commend himself and his loved ones to His care and protection.

The week's Festival took their start at the home church on Sunday evening, two days before Christmas, with a children's program followed by the regular services on Christmas day at 11:00 A.M., and

at 3:00 P.M. eight miles west from Edmore. Early next morning, with two suits of underwear, overcoat, fur coat, muskrat cap, and sheepskin mittens on, I was ready to get into my open jumper sleigh and start northward into Cavalier County, where most of the congregations were located. My first stop there was Zion's church, at Loma, located 20 miles from home. There services were held at 11:00 A.M. This congregation was organized in 1902 and the services were held in the farm homes. But when the Soo Line in the fall of 1905 built a road through the territory and the town of Loma was platted, the congregation decided that this was the suitable location for a church. Consequently by November 1906 the building was up and the cornerstone laid, so this Christmas the congregation could worship in the house, set apart for that purpose.

In the afternoon, services were conducted in Trefoldighed congregation. Also organized in 1902, and located 12 miles west from Loma.

The next morning, after a drive of 18 miles to the northeast, services were conducted in Our Savior's Church, located in Moscow Township and organized the previous year.

In the evening, baptismal services were conducted for a child at the home of one of the members. Afterwards, a part of the evening was spent with some of us singing Christmas songs into a cylinder phonograph with morning glory shaped horn and then listening to the recording.

By eleven o'clock the next morning services were to be held at Sarles, a mission station two miles from the Canadian Border. On reaching Calvin after a twenty mile drive, a man offered to take me the remaining ten miles to Sarles, thus allowing my horses some rest. Due to the deep snow on the ground, a part of this distance was made by driving on the railroad track. In the afternoon, services were held at Calvin where three children were baptized.

The following day was spent on a fifty mile drive southeastward to Nekoma, a town platted on the newly built Soo Line. Here two of my congregations had merged and adopted the name: "Nekoma Evangeliske Lutherske Menighed," intending in the near future to build a church in town. Here services were conducted the next morning, Sunday, December 20. Due to a snowstorm the services in Silvesta Congregation, located twenty miles farther southeast and in Walsh County, had to be postponed one day and were held on New Year's Day 1907.

Having now reached the end of the Holiday Services, it was with thanks to God for the privilege of bringing His Glad Tidings to many blood-bought souls, that I in the afternoon finished the last lap of the circuit, the twenty miles to my home. There I found all was well, and with a "**Happy New Year!**," our hearts joined in thanks to Him from whom all blessings flow. ■



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