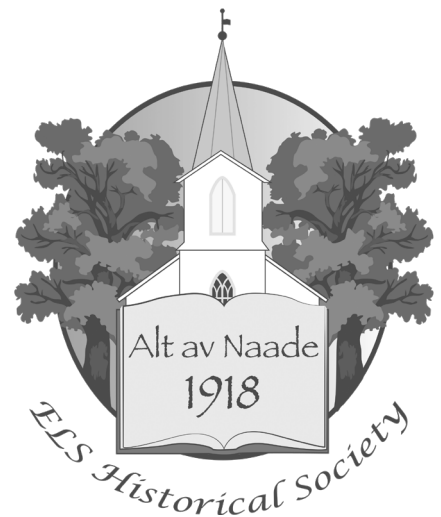


# Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society



Volume 23

Spring 2019

Issue 2

## THE CHORAL UNION TRADITION OF THE 1853 AND 1918 NORWEGIAN SYNOD

*In 1918 and 1919, the fledgling Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church set out to reorganize their former Norwegian Synod which had been subsumed into the 1918 merged Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. With a slightly revised constitution and a strong will to preserve their former church life, they re-established customs and institutions of the old Synod. One of those was the annual Choral Union, a union of the synod's congregational and circuit choirs.*

*The following articles by the venerable Johannes Ylvisaker and Helge M. Tjernagel describe the history of that tradition. In addition, a few selections from the church papers also reveal the enthusiasm of the "synode folk" (the synod people) for that tradition.*

### The Norwegian Synod's Choral Union

Johannes Ylvisaker

This young organization, formed during the Synod's fiftieth Jubilee in Decorah [1903] with the purpose of promoting choral singing in our congregations, gave its first performance at two concerts during the general synod meeting in Minneapolis this past summer. This effort was so well received by those gathered for the synod meeting that the day after the last concert, the convention passed the following resolution: "The synod thanks the synod's choral union and expresses its joy for the beginning of this promising work for the promotion of congregational

singing with the prayer that the work may always be carried out in the right spirit."

In these concerts we heard hymns such as "A Mighty Fortress is our God," "Thy Way and all Thy Sorrows," "Built on the Rock," "Behold a Host" sung with the

understanding and fullness of tone, of a powerful choir, certainly the best ever.

A newspaper reporter wrote, among other things, these appreciative words:



"The Synod's choral festival in Minneapolis can be called a revelation. First it revealed what the Norwegian church people in America can accomplish in the way of

*continued on page 4*

---

# FROM THE EDITOR

Last year, the Synod in convention and the ELS Historical Society in its annual meeting commemorated the one-hundredth anniversary of the re-organization (or re-birth) of the old Norwegian Synod of 1853 into the church body that became the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Celebrating anniversaries is instructive; it gives us an opportunity to revisit our roots and what we owe to those who have gone before us. What happened in 1918 in the founding of our church was important: it took a great deal of spiritual fortitude to participate in the organizing of what at the time was called a “plucked chicken.”

But we dare say that what happened in 1919 was, in some respects, even more important. For one thing, the 1919 convention happened. The 1918 meeting was not a funeral service for a body that had given its last gasp, only to become a decaying corpse, unnoticed a year later. Furthermore, what Bjug Harstad announced in his sermon “Following the Old Paths” in 1918, was made a reality in the adoption of the constitution of the

old synod, slightly revised, but mostly the same old constitution. The intention was made quite clear by Pastor G. A. Gullixson in his opening sermon on the account of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea with the theme from that text “Go Forward.” The underlying theme of the 1919 convention was that they were continuing the old synod. The house was blown down by the merger storm, but it was still their home, and they would go about repairing and rebuilding.

Plan to attend the ELS Historical Society meeting for a taste of the rebuilding work in Albert Lea in 1919. Our point will be that the 1919 Albert Lea convention is as much worth commemorating and revisiting as the was Lime Creek convention, very important in the life of our church.

In 1919 (with forethought in 1918) the little Synod meeting in Albert Lea reinstituted one of its venerable traditions, one which lasted until the 1960s—the annual union of the congregational choirs. Three articles in this issue lay out the continuation of that Choral Union tradition in the 1919 synod convention. Attention will be paid to that subject at the Historical Society annual meeting and at the convention.

---

## ***Evangelical Lutheran Synod Historical Society Program***

*June 23, 2019, 7:00 p.m.*

*Bethany Lutheran College, Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center*

## REVISITING THE 1919 CONSTITUTING CONVENTION OF THE ELS

- Welcome: ELSHS President, the Rev. Michael Lilienthal.
- Setting the Stage: the Rev. Andrew Soule.
- The opening sermon in 1919 by the Rev. G. A. Gullixson, presented by great-grandson, Mr. Paul Gullixson.
- Digest of the convention, presented by the Rev. Shawn Stafford.
- The Synod’s Constitutions, 1886 & 1919, presented by Prof. em. Erling T. Teigen.
- History of the Choral Union, presented by The Rev. Theodore Gullixson.
- Discussion.
- Business meeting.
- Social time.

---

*Oak Leaves is published quarterly by the Evangelical*

*Lutheran Synod Historical Society,*

*6 Browns Court — Mankato, MN 56001*

ooo

**Editor:** Erling T. Teigen, [eteigen@charter.net](mailto:eteigen@charter.net)

**Design and layout:** Lyla LaMay

**Board of Directors:** Marie Aaberg, Craig Ferkenstad, Theodore Gullixson, Lois Jaeger, (Secretary), Michael Lilienthal (President), Marge Lillo, John Moldstad, Andrew Soule, Erling Teigen

Oak Leaves welcomes articles of both synodical and local significance for publication. Articles may be edited for style, clarity, or length to allow for publication. Each issue will be deposited in the archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

ooo

**Check out the Historical Society website**

***<http://www.els-history.org/>***

---

---

# IN MEMORIAM

## Amanda Tjernagel Madson

Charter member of The ELS Historical Society and three term member of the Board of Directors, Amanda Madson, passed away on March 20, 2019.

Amanda was a life-long member of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and always showed a deep appreciation for the history of the synod, as well as an interest in her family's genealogy. A most memorable contribution was a three act play she wrote entitled "It's somewhere in the Third Article." The play was presented in 1993 in a commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the ELS, and depicted some scenes from the 1918 founding of the synod. Amanda also contributed a number of historical articles to *Oak Leaves*.



Amanda Olivia (Tjernagel) Madson was born February 25th, 1936 at New Hampton, Iowa to Otto and Amanda (Huso) Tjernagel. She was baptized, and made a member of God's family, at the Jericho Lutheran Church on March 29, 1936, by the Rev. H.M. Tjernagel. She was confirmed in the Lutheran faith on August 27, 1950 at Lake Mills Lutheran Church by Rev. Iver C. Johnson. She received her elementary school education (K-6) at Lime Creek Lutheran School, Lake Mills, Iowa, and grades 7-9 at the Lake Mills Public School. She received her last three years of high school education at Bethany Lutheran High School, Mankato, Minnesota. She attended Bethany Lutheran College for three years, graduating in 1957. She taught for one year at our Savior's Lutheran School, Princeton, Minnesota from September 1957 to May of 1958. On July 5, 1958 she married Norman A. Madson, Jr. at


the Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lake Mills, Iowa. Their marriage was blessed with five children: Rebecca, Daniel, Michael, Elisabeth and Peter. The funeral service was held at Peace Lutheran Church in North Mankato on Saturday, March 23rd, 2019 at 11 a.m.

Blessed be her memory.

## FROM THE MUSEUM

Once again, the ELS Ottesen Museum will have special hours during the week of Synod Convention. The Museum will be open from 8:30 –11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. There have been several new donations in the past year which have led to changes in some of the displays. This may be your last opportunity to make your own souvenir bookmark featuring the original official stamp of the Synod. You're also welcome to make arrangements with Museum Director Becky DeGarmeaux for tours at other times.

**ELS  
Ottesen Museum**



**SPECIAL SYNOD CONVENTION HOURS**  
**TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY:**  
8:30 - 11:30 AM  
**4 BROWNS COURT, MANKATO, MINNESOTA**  
OR CONTACT MUSEUM DIRECTOR REBECCA DEGARMEAUX

Be sure to check out the Museum's display in the "street" of the Sports and Fitness Center during Convention. Here will be some of the smaller items donated in the last several months as well as information about some of the tours and programs offered by the Museum.





gathering a large church choir separated from each other as far as from Chicago to Minot, North Dakota. Next, it reveals that such a choir with so few rehearsals can learn to sing so well that people who know about such things might be surprised at the results. Those who had the courage to bring to-

gether the skill and power to successfully execute this excellent project deserve the Norwegian-American people's respect and gratitude....The large choir sang more accurately than one could have dared to expect and in this regard the director, Prof. John Dahle, deserves much praise....However, I dare say that these very successful concerts have only to be cited as a sign of what this great choir could do after longer practice under conductor Dahle's baton" [source not given].

Those who were privileged to hear these concerts in the large auditorium, will surely give the reviewer credit for his approval and wish that the choral union may continue as it began. The fruit of the work will not disappear. It is a great and beautiful goal the choral union has set for itself. Choral music has been abandoned in our congregations. Rationalism destroyed it just like so many other good things. We know how avidly Luther worked for congregational singing, and how he could teach congregations to sing his hymns cheerfully, with life and with power, so they began to call the Lutheran Church "the singing church." But this noble congregational singing, became, so to speak, dead on the tongue, heavy, monotonous hymn singing, which became fashionable in the time of rationalism.

In addition to familiarizing our congregations with the church music of our top composers, it is now one of the choral union's tasks to revive the "rhythmic chorales," and it is in this regard that we expect the most of

the choral union's activity. That is what father Luther taught the congregations, and what is heard in a hymn like "Thy Way and All Thy Sorrows," sung both in the rhythmic and in the isometric tempo, he will only have to wish that Luther's hymn singing soon must be introduced in our congregations again. All of our church choirs should work to this end, and I would like to wish them God's blessing in that.

But in order to facilitate this work, and so that there can be true unity in it, it cannot be recommended strongly enough that these choirs, as many as are able, should join the choral union, and diligently use the winter months to prepare for the next great choral gathering, to be held in the summer, so that, if possible, it can be an even greater success than the first. It would also be well if choirs in the different circuits came together for smaller meetings, at mission festivals or other occasions. Such gatherings will strengthen, encourage and inspire energetic work.

To those who feel that they need help, either in a choir that already exists, or to form a new choir and to get started, I would advise writing to the choral union's talented, skilled, capable, warmly interested chief director Prof. John Dahle in St. Paul, who has done so much for congregational singing among us. He teaches singing and chanting at our Luther Seminary and has also demonstrated a rare talent. He works in complete harmony with the choral union's president, Pastor J. W. Preus, and has expressed his willingness to come to the congregations and be of help to choirs that may wish his guidance. It would be best for him to spend one, two, or three days at a place, and as he rehearses the choirs, he could at the same time give a lecture for the congregations about the significance of congregational singing. Those who wish such help from him, ought to contact him soon, so he can make his travel arrangements. We hereby commend this important matter in Jesus' name.

*Evangelisk Luthersk Kirketidende* 1905, (Nov. 15, 1905, Vol 32, part 2, 1265-67). Tr. E. Teigen.



---

# 1935 CHORAL UNION ADDRESS

Synod, Sunday, June, 16, 1935,

Rev. H. M. Tjernagel

*Lutheran Sentinel*, August 28, 1935

It is eminently fitting that the members and guests of the Norwegian Synod Convention worship in song as we do this afternoon. Who should sing if not we? By His grace, the Heavenly Father's greatest gift to man, the eternal Word of Truth, is ours. The Redeemer of the world is still ours today, in all His saving love, unencumbered by all man-made trappings.

And in worshipping thus, we are running true to type; we are following a tradition established by the old Norwegian Synod. More than thirty years ago a Choral Union was organized within said Synod. Will you forgive me if I lapse into retrospect?

Our forbears came from the fjords and mountains of Norway where song and music was as natural to man as to brooks and waterfalls and the tall pines. The school they attended was a Lutheran Christian school; there was no other kind. There they laid up a store of Lutheran hymns and they used them at home as well as in church, and hummed them as they sat at the spinning wheel and loom or in their fishing boats.

Not long ago I was at the deathbed of an old man who seventy years ago was one of the little ones in a family that embarked on an emigrant ship bound for the United States. He said: "It seems to me I can still hear father singing evening hymns as the ship splashed its way into the falling darkness." By the way, one of this singer's great-grandchildren sings in the Bethany Choir today. Thus was Lutheran Church music brought to our shores also from the "land of the lurid northlights."

The hymn singing at the pioneer gatherings for public worship was led by a *klokker* or *forsanger*, one chosen by the congregation to lead in the singing. The *klokker* of my childhood recollections had a very good tenor voice which certainly inspired the assembly to sing.

All was well with the hymn singing in our churches the first decade or two. But then a foreign influence crept in. The "yankee" schoolmarms, scattered about in the settlements, introduced reformed hymns in the homes where they boarded and to some extent into the schools. Reed organs also found their way into the homes about this time. It became quite the thing for us young folks to gather about the organ and sing Gospel Hymns, so-called. And somewhat later, when the need of an English Hymn Book for use in our churches came, this same reformed influence exerted itself. For proof see the English hymnbooks in use in our Synodical Conference. We hope our present Hymn Book Committee will do a thorough job of purging out what should not be there.

Had it not been for a strong Lutheran counter-influence that set in at this time, we tremble to think what our church music might have been today. The main spring of that influence came to us in response to the following want ad in *Kirketidende*, issue of March 6, 1885:

A cantor and schoolteacher is wanted by the Bergen Congregation. The Cantor's post is paid with \$ 50.00 and three festival offerings. School time is six months, and salary is \$ 25.00 per month — 20 school days — and meals during school hours. The cantor is to direct a choir. Application with attached certificates and information on whether the person can play the organ are to be submitted to the undersigned

Roland, Iowa, Feb. 16, 1885, C. B. Jacobson, Pastor.

*the "yankee"  
schoolmarms,  
scattered about in  
the settlements*

~~~~~

This brought John Dahle into our circles. And who was he? He was a highly gifted young man from Valdres [Norway] who had received some education in music and otherwise. He was richly endowed, far, far beyond the average in music; he was no mean poet, his prose was strong. As a speaker, he was truly overpowering; he was always ready and always hit something squarely on the head. He started his career as an actor in Norway. His outstanding gifts in this line were often in evidence when directing choirs and choruses, in various becoming ways.



*H. M. Tjernagel*

He came to Roland from Chicago. When he arrived at Roland it was truly as if by magic that a large crowd of young men and women who knew not that they could sing, nor knew what the words soprano, alto, tenor and bass meant, yet sang their respective parts in one of the finest church choirs I have to this day heard within our circles, under Dahle's masterly, compelling baton. And it was into the realms of true sacred music he led them and away from the gospel-hymn variety.

The Roland Choir was soon heard in concert in neighboring towns and churches. These were the first tours of a Lutheran mixed choir in this country. So I shall believe until shown that I am mistaken.

In 1902 a Choral Union was organized within the Norwegian Synod. John Dahle, then of St. Paul, was chosen its director. The Choral Union concert on Synod Sunday, not only at the general Conventions but also the District Conventions, was a big event. In his work as director, Dahle exerted a far-reaching influence for the music of Luther and Bach and other sainted Lutherans whose music and hymns reflect the true penitence of a publican, the faith and love of a John, and the courage of a Paul.

Dahle's influence was mightily increased in the fall of 1899 when he became the director of our Seminary Chorus and also teacher of liturgics and hymnology at our Seminary.

The following year, under Dahle's baton, the Seminary Chorus spent a Sunday afternoon in Rev. N. A. Quammen's congregation singing lustily to a large and appreciative audience. This was the seed from which grew the annual tours of the seminary choruses, not only from our Seminary but from other Lutheran seminaries as well.

In this, the 250th anniversary year of the birth of Johan Sebastian Bach, I ask you to hold in grateful memory Prof. John Dahle, who led in preserving to us that music which Bach loved, and in many instances so tastefully garnished, and to which he added so many beautiful melodies that Christians everywhere like to use as the bearers of their messages, their petitions, their praises and thanks to the Lamb of God.

Now a special word in closing, not, however, to our able director of today, nor to the singers, but to you who cannot sing as beautifully as our young friends in the chorus we have heard. It is not the quality of the voice that makes it reach heaven but is the earnest, worshipful heart that gives it momentum sufficient to reach the throne of God. Your broken voice, dear penitent, believing sinner, is sweetest music to your bridegroom, Jesus Christ, because — he loves you!





# THE CHORAL UNION IN THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD OF 1853 AND 1918

*In an article in the May-June 2018 Lutheran Sentinel, Theodore Gullixson sketched the history of the Choral Union tradition in the ELS since 1918. A brief sketch is also found in Craig Ferkenstad, Proclaim His Wonders (p. 383). The Choral Union tradition began in the old Norwegian Synod's fiftieth anniversary in 1903. Prof. Johannes Ylvisaker recorded the history of its beginnings in Evangelisk Luthersk Kirketidende in 1905.*

*After a very successful concert of singers at the 1903 fiftieth anniversary convention of the old Synod, a choral union was organized throughout the synod, with a board of directors, and its first official performance was at the 1905 convention. Likewise, at the 1918 synod meeting at Lime Creek, a concert of sacred music was presented by what was left of the Albert Lea Circuit's pre-merger Choral Union, and by the next year singers from various parts of the Reorganized Synod had organized a new Choral Union and presented a concert in Albert Lea. Following are some selections, translated from the old Synod Beretning (Report), Kirketidende, and the little synod's Evangelisk Luthersk Tidende.*

## Choral Union 1905 *Beretning*, p. 76

In the first session the day after the two great, wonderful concerts of the Choral Union, the following Resolutions were adopted by the Synod:

The Synod thanks the Choral Union and expresses its joy at the beginning of the promising work for choral singing, with the prayer that the work will always be done in a real spirit.

It was also decided that Friday's Synod meeting should end at one o'clock so that the members of the Choral Union may have the opportunity to take part in its annual meeting, which will be held at Lake Minnetonka in the afternoon.

## Kirketidende 1903, p. 703 f.

*The Sunday afternoon service started outdoors, but it started to rain, and it was moved to the auditorium.*

[T]he festival continued in the [Luther College] auditorium, where, of course, there was not space for everyone. As announced on the program, the veterans from 1853, pastors J. A. Ottesen and H. A. Stub spoke, the first on Luke 24: 29, the last one over 1 Kings 8:65-66. The large joint choir then sang under Mr. John Dahle's direction first a festival cantata—the words were written by Pastor Joh. D. Bothne, and the music composed

by Olaf Paul— and then a choral song "Hallelujah," from Handel's "Messiah."

In the evening [Sunday], the choral festival was held in the auditorium, while at the same time two of the synod's pastors preached in English in two of the city's churches. At the festival in the auditorium, hymns were sung in rhythmic form as a test of the new chorale book, which is published in our publishing house and Pastor J. W. Preus gave a talk on hymn singing.

## Kirketidende 1905

The Choral Union concert in the auditorium in Minneapolis on June 21 and 23, was in all respects, successful. The choirs participating were from Chicago, Ill.; Orfordville, Beloit, Stoughton, Frenchville, La-Crosse, Wis.; Decorah, Washington Prairie, Glenwood, Northwood, and Bode Iowa; Minot, N.D.; Red Wing, Glenwood, Starbuck, Stillwater, St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minn. Music critics in the newspapers reported the concerts with much praise, and observed that they could sing so well together. The concerts will undoubtedly raise the interest in church singing and rhythmic hymn singing significantly.

The Choral Union had an excursion to Lake Minnetonka on June 23, where they held a business meeting with election of officers, with the following outcome: President, J. W. Preus; Vice president, H. G. Magelsen; Secretary, Nils Fossen; Treasurer, G. B. Wollan;

chief director, John Dahle; assistant conductors, Carlo A. Sperati and J. L. Hjort. The chairmen of the districts, were: N. Førde, H. G. Magelssen and O. P. Vangness.

should sing them in their worship. And the large choir was composed of singers and smaller choirs from all over the Northwest, from Chicago to Minot, N. D.



John Dahle and the Luther Seminary Glee Club, about 1905.

Not to mention what the participants in the festival have learned by being under the direction of an instructor who, in a few days, managed to bring so many diverse and hitherto unacquainted groups together in a beautiful harmony — an impression they certainly will bring back to their homes from everything they heard and experienced in those festive days! Can we imagine the possibility that they should not, each in their circle, work for the improvement of church singing in the congregations and also for hymn singing to become more usual in the homes, in the fam-

ilies, where unfortunately there is all too little of it? And outside the places that sent singers to the festival, the effect will be known. The thousands who were present at the concerts will be the spokes-

men for the good cause. The rumors and storytelling from the convention will fall like sparks around our people and awaken interest in a matter that so far has been too much dead in the water.

By these remarks we have, as one can see, mostly hymn singing in view; like the church organ, it lies closest to our heart. But we are not blind to the influence of the choral festival and the Choral Union's chief work will probably have to awaken the sense of good music and decent Norwegian music among our people. It is also of great importance and will benefit the church in more than one way.

*it lies  
closest to  
our heart*

Seated left to right: *Thaddaeus F Gullixson (brother of G. A. Gullixson), Johan Carl Keyser Preus (son of C. K. Preus), Nils M. Ylvisaker (brother of SCY), Henry Ingebritsen (Lime Creek pastor and director of first two ELS Choral Unions), Axel Bergh.*

Standing, left to right: *Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker (President of Bethany College), Nils S. Magelssen, Professor John Dahle (Director of Norwegian Synod Choral Union), H. C. Smeby, S. B. Hustvedt.*

## Kirketidende

1905

*This short article follows upon a three part article summarizing the Synod Meeting in Minneapolis.*

Some things about the synod meeting were not quite the way one would have preferred, but this was not so with the Choral Union's two large concerts, which the Norwegian Synod's Choral Union presented the first two evenings during the synod meeting. These concerts were completely successful and they fulfilled their purpose as well. The intention of those who organized the Choral Union was to give the church music among us a boost, and then a push in the right direction. First and foremost, they wanted to help improve hymn singing in our congregations, whether it would be achieved by showing how wonderfully beautiful our hymn melodies are when they are sung in the right way. Therefore, the large chorus sang our hymns rhythmically, and not polyphonically, but in unison, just as a congregation



---

# Continuing the Choral Union in the Reorganized Synod

*We have not seen any reports of when it was decided to reorganize also the Choral Union, or who made the decision—it may have been at the 1918 convention, since those who provided the music on that occasion were a remnant of the Albert Lea circuit of the old Synod. But by 1919, the Choral Union had officers and had selected music to be sung.*



The chorale Union was made up of choirs from synod congregations like this one from Fairview Lutheran Church in Minneapolis with its pastor-director, Christian Anderson

## *Evangelisk Luthersk* *Tidende* April 1, 1919

“Songs Chosen for Choral Union”

A meeting of the officers of the choral union of our synod was held at Albert Lea the first week in March. Songs were chosen to be rendered at the concert given next summer at the meeting of the Synod. It was decided to commemorate the outstanding events of the church year in song. Beginning with Advent there will be a suitable song for each part of the church calendar, including Christmas, Palm Sunday, Passion, Easter, Communion, Pentecost, Reformation, and the joy of the Christians.

The songs in which the four parts will be sung are Jubilate pages 178, 181, 50, 194, 65, 152, 172. 80. Two

songs will be sung in unison, No. 47 in Norwegian Hymns, and “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” from the English *Hymnary*. The concert will close with “Den store hvide Flok”, followed by “Synger for Herren en ny Sang,” both of which will be sung in the four parts

All our singers are urged to practice these songs in order to be prepared for our summer meeting.

A. V. Overn, Secretary, Choral Union.

## *Tidende* June 10, 1919

At 3 pm when a last “rehearsal” was held for the evening’s “concert” the large auditorium was filled with an attentive crowd. The soloists were Miss Elma Winden, from Minneapolis, Pastor Chr. Anderson and Pastor Geo. O. Lillegard. This “rehearsal” was very successful, the singing excelled and the selection of the songs excellent. While the singers got a little respite, Pastor J. A. Moldstad gave a brief, interesting lecture on “Wittenberg, the cradle of Reformation.”

In the evening at 8:15 pm, the “concert” began. The crowd was hardly as big as in the afternoon, but the performance of singers and soloists was masterful. Pastor H. Ingebritsen, who had practiced and led the great choir, demonstrated his skill in filling such a difficult position. During a break, while the singers were resting, Pastor Holden M. Olson delivered a well-prepared lecture on the church’s pericopes, after which the individual songs, duets of solos were arranged on the program as well. Tr. E. Teigen



*Henry Ingebritsen*



# ACORNS

## FROM THE ELS ARCHIVES



Theodore G. Gullixson Archivist

*The following is printed from the files of the Rev. A. M. Harstad.*

### *Concerning Hymns and Hymn-Singing*

A visitor attending one of our Lutheran services was much impressed by the singing of our hymns. She asked whether we regularly sang hymns at our services. Being assured of this, she remarked how wonderful that was.

The children of God have, from of old, sung hymns unto the Lord. The Book of Psalms was the hymn book of the people of Israel. Jesus and His disciples sang hymns (Matthew 26:30). Paul and Silas sang praises when they were in prison at Philippi (Acts 16:25). The New Testament urges Christian to sing and make melody in their hearts to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19). The early Christians sang when they met for worship.

When the pope came into power, congregational singing was all but abolished. However, at the time of the Reformation of the Church through Martin Luther, congregational singing was re-established. Dr Martin Luther himself led the way in this, publishing the first Lutheran hymnal in 1524. This hymn-book contained eight hymns, four of them written or trans-

lated by Luther.

Luther wrote or translated thirty-seven hymns in all. Someone has said that Luther did more for the spread

of his doctrine by his hymns than by his writings and sermons. This is likely an over-statement, but it shows how important hymn-singing was in the Reformation of the Church.

Our Lutheran Church has become known as "The Singing Church." Our distinctively Lutheran hymn tunes are known as chorales. "The chorale is tremendously powerful and majestic; for dignity and grandeur it surpasses all other types of hymn tunes." Our Lutheran hymns and chorales are stately and well-suited to congregational singing. We want to learn to love and appreciate them over and above the lighter melodies that do not have the lasting appeal of our Lutheran chorales.



Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) gave special prominence to the Lutheran chorale in his musical compositions. As the Reformed theologian Philip Schaff said: "The Lutheran Church has produced a

body of hymns and chorales which in richness, power, and unction surpass the hymnology of all other churches in the world.”

The best known hymn by Luther is “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” known as the Battle Hymn of the Reformation. How “mighty” is not this hymn both in its words and its melody! “What can be more impressive than to hear a throng of worshipers sing our beautiful hymns to the accompaniment of good churchly music.”

It is a requirement of a hymn that is to be used in our Lutheran service that it must be biblical in its teaching, dignified in its wording, and suited to be the joint prayer of the entire congregation. We do not want to import “cheap” hymns and melodies into our services.

In general, let it be said that we want to cultivate a liking for that which is good and uplifting in music and wording of songs. As we sit before our radio or television sets or listen to music elsewhere, we do well to ask ourselves how much of that which we hear is in keeping with the ideals which befit a Christian.

*from  
infancy  
to old age*

During the hundred years of our Synod’s history, our hymns and their singing have had a great deal of influence upon our people from infancy to old age. How much our hymns have come to mean to many of our people is evident as we sit at the sick-bed of many a pious elderly person and hear them recite stanza after stanza of hymns memorized in youth. These hymns are a source of great comfort to them, giving expression to the fervent prayer of their sanctified hearts. Christ and His salvation are the center of our hymns, even as of our theology. We do well to store our memory with hymns and keep them alive in our memory by frequent use.



When a Christian mother once wrote a birthday greeting to her son who was a student at the university, she did it thus:

My sincerest wish and prayer for you is this:

Thou holy Light, and Guide divine!  
O cause the word of life to shine;  
Teach us to know our God aright,  
And call Him Father with delight!  
From error, Lord, our souls defend,  
That they on Christ alone attend;  
In Him with living faith confide,  
And in unfaltering trust abide.  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

My dear son, may the Lord fulfill upon you this prayer.

If we sing our hymns without thinking of the meaning of that which we are singing we do not benefit from their use as we ought. Therefore, let us earnestly follow the meaning as we read or sing our hymns. And may God continue to bless their use unto us and to our children’s children after us.





## ELS Historical Society Subscription–Membership Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Type: ☐ Voting ☐ Associate Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Send to ELS Historical Society, 6 Browns Ct., Mankato, Mn 56001

### **Voting Membership:**

\$15 - individual or married couple

\$300 - lifetime

### **Associate (non-voting):**

\$25 - individual or organization

*Voting Members must belong to an ELS congregation or a congregation in fellowship with the ELS. Associate Members are any others interested in the work of the ELS Historical Society.*