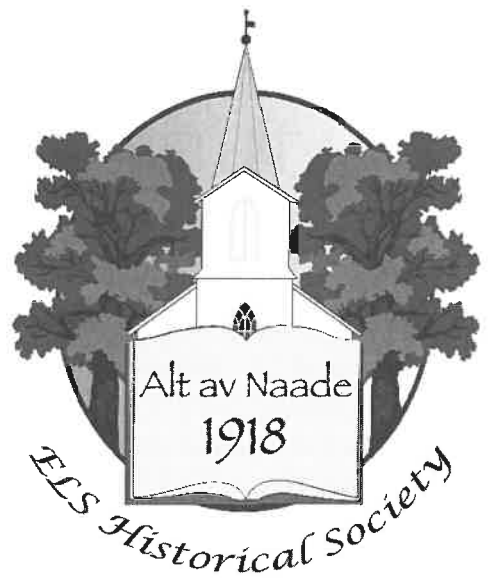


Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society



Volume 26

Spring 2022

Issue 2

CHRISTOPHER URDAHL FAYE

From South Africa to Mankato

In previous issues, Oak Leaves has offered selections on mission work done by the Rev. George Lillegard. He had served in the China Mission of the old Norwegian Synod, and when the Reorganized Synod joined the Synodical Conference, he went to work in the Synodical Conference-Missouri Synod Mission in China.

On January 26 of this year, Mr. Chris Faye, a longtime member of Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mankato was called to his eternal rest at the age of 95. He was a member of the ELS Historical Society. His death called to mind Chris's father Christopher Urdahl Faye—the younger Faye pronounced the name as one syllable, Fay; the elder pronounced it the Norwegian way, two syllables—Fah-ye. His connection to the ELS began one hundred years ago, when he joined the Reorganized Norwegian Synod in 1922. The following is excerpted from the obituary of Prof. C U. Faye in the Lutheran Sentinel, July 1967.

The 1967 convention of the ELS being held at Bethany Lutheran College was recessed on June 23 so that the

delegates could attend the funeral of Professor Christopher Urdahl Faye who died on June 20, 1967 at the age of 81.

C. U. Faye was born June 2, 1886, at Entumeni, a mission station in Zululand, South Africa. After his par-



C. U. Faye

ents had come to Africa from Norway, his ship-captain father left the sea and became a storekeeper in the mission compound. Young Faye got his schooling at St. John's College, Oxford, England. In America he attended Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, and graduated from Luther Seminary, St. Paul, in 1912.

After his years on the mission field, Faye taught for two years at Concordia College of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in St. Paul, and then spent 26 years as a bibliographical consultant at the library of the University of Illinois. For this work he used his knowledge of most of the languages of Europe as well as biblical Hebrew and Greek. Scholars thank him for his listing of ancient manuscripts, a 600-page book published five years ago.

continued on page 4

FROM THE MUSEUM

Come to the Ottesen Museum During Synod Convention

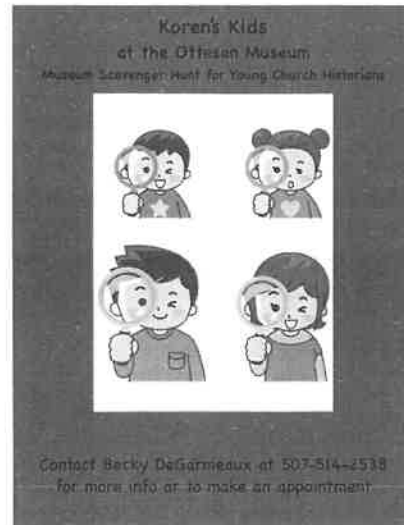
Once again, the ELS Ottesen Museum will be having special hours during Synod Convention. Walk or drive down Browns Court to visit the Museum and see what's new. The displays are often updated as new artifacts are donated, so there's always something new to see. Museum hours will be Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 8:30 - 11:30 am.



ELS Ottesen Museum

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 8:30-11:30 am

We are also excited to invite families with children to come to the Museum for our special activity, Koren's Kids! Koren's Kids is designed especially for grade school aged kids and is a scavenger hunt through the Museum. Reservations are preferred in order to make



sure that we have enough supplies and that you can allow enough time, but we'll welcome walk-ins too. For more information, contact Becky DeGarmeaux at museum@blc.edu.

Don't forget to check out the Ottesen Museum's display in the "street" in the

Sports and Fitness Center during Synod Convention. Many new items have been donated in the last year and they will be featured there.

Make plans to join us. We look forward to seeing you!

EDITOR: Erling T. Teigen, eteigen@charter.net

DESIGN & LAYOUT: Katharina Schleef

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Marie Aaberg, Craig Ferkenstad, Theodore Gullixson, Lois Jaeger, (Secretary), Michael Lilienthal (President), Marge Lillo, Andrew Soule, Erling Teigen

Check out the Historical Society website - <http://www.els-history.org/>

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

*Oak Leaves is published quarterly by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Historical Society,
6 Browns Court — Mankato, MN 56001*

FROM THE ELSHS PRESIDENT

Rev. Michael G. Lilienthal 2022

This summer, the ELS Historical Society's program will examine the history of Christians in military service. We recognize in our church that while the church itself is not called to work in the kingdom of the left and her wars, nevertheless our members may be. The calling or vocation of soldier has caused a great deal of discussion for centuries. In one treatise, Luther examined the question of "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved." Countless individuals have struggled with the question of whether the vocation of soldier is in conflict with the Fifth Commandment.

We honor and thank all those who have served our country in this work, and the program will shed light on the lives of many members who have done just that. It's entitled "When the Christian Is Called to Arms," and will be presented on Sunday, June 26, at 7p.m. in the Sigurd K. Lee Theater at Bethany Lutheran College. The program will coincide with the Historical Society's annual meeting. If you have purchased a membership in the Society, please attend both the program and the meeting, for updates on our business and our plans going forward. The program, of course, is open to all.

All are also encouraged to purchase a membership in the Historical Society. Individuals or married couples of ELS membership or in fellowship with the ELS can purchase a voting membership for \$15 per year, or a lifetime membership for \$300. Non-voting memberships can be purchased for \$25 per year for either an individual or an organization. Membership includes a subscription to the Oak Leaves newsletter.

The Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the ELS Historical Society

June 22, 2022, 7:00 p.m.

S. C. Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center

Bethany Lutheran College

Lutheran Sentinel

IT IS WRITTEN



NATIONAL DEFENSE
SERVICE ISSUE



The 25th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Historical Society will be held on Sunday, June 26, 2022 at 7 p.m. "When the Christian is Called to Arms" will include a panel of presenters telling stories from five different eras in which ELS members were in military service. Rather than honoring the military personnel, the program will speak of how the church has supported them in their vocation.

Everyone interested is welcome and encouraged to attend. A brief business meeting will follow the program.

When the Christian Is Called to Arms:

A Brief History of how the ELS Has Prepared and Supported Her Members in Military Service



The ELS Historical Society depends on the membership/subscription fee to fund our projects and produce Oak Leaves. Even without the annual meeting our work still goes on. If you pay your membership annually, you may send your check to

ELS Historical Society
6 Browns Ct.
Mankato, MN 56001.

The Fayes traded the university campus for a small-college campus when they moved to Mankato in 1952. Until 1962 Professor Faye served the Evangelical Lutheran Synod as librarian at Bethany Seminary, Mankato.

For two years C. U. Faye was editor of *Folkekalender*, an ELS Norwegian-language devotional annual no longer produced. He considered his greatest achievement the pamphlet, *Conversation of the Devil With the Dying Christian*.

The Rev. Hans Theiste, Tacoma, Wash., conducted the committal service at Trinity Lutheran Cemetery, Waconia, Minn. Pastor Theiste, born in the Zululand mission, is the grandson of the famous missionary, the Rev. Hans Astrup who baptized the infant Faye in 1886.

§ § §

An article in the Luthersk Tidende by S. C. Ylvisaker contained a portion of the elder Faye's resignation from the five-year-old Norwegian Lutheran Church in America.

**Luthersk Tidende,
June 12, 1922**

One hundred years ago, S. C. Ylvisaker wrote: "Pastor C. U. Faye, who for over ten years has worked in the Schreuder Mission in South Africa, has sent the following letter to our Missions Committee from which the following can be shared":

"I herewith declare that I will end my work for the Norwegian Church's Mission at Schreuder the last day in July, 1922. My resignation is on the grounds that I, with the convictions that I have, am obliged to join the Missouri Synod as soon as possible.

"This letter of resignation has been accepted both by the Schreuder mission's Norwegian Committee and by the director of Heathen-missions of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. I ask to hear from you by the first of August, 1922.

"Before the merger [1917] in which the Norwegian Lu-

theran Church in America came into existence, I came into contact, in my position, with the American Committee, and after the union with Pastor Saeterlie. Of the members of the Norwegian committee, I have corresponded mostly with the mission secretary and treasurer Mr. Christian Dons. Out here on the mission field, I have benefited from the prayers and paternal care of the late Bishop Astrup, and from the teaching of Pastor H. J. S. Astrup—a teaching which had the Missouri position in doctrinal matters, and which has now borne fruit in the fact that I am turning to Missouri. I have mostly in my time had the fortune of working under pastor Johs. Astrup's energetic, patient, selfless guidance. As I now leave the Schreuder Mission, I feel the urge to say thank you to all these who have been kind to me and also to all the others who have treated me well."

Ylvisaker reports that the Synod's mission committee has sent Faye \$500 to come to America

§ § §

In 1922, apparently returning to South Africa, Faye received a call to a temporary position teaching at Concordia, St. Paul. The following speech made its way into Luthersk Tidende (11-29-1922).

**A speech to our Norwegian Students at
Concordia College**

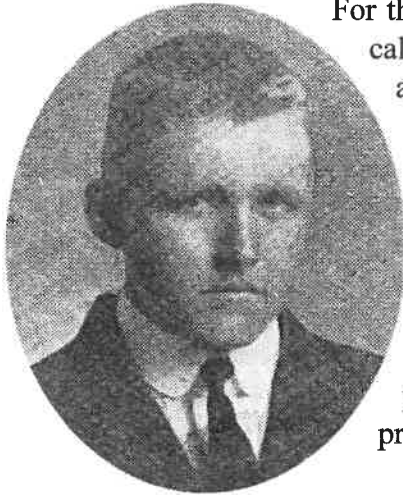
C. U. Faye

When I got to London, I received a letter with a call to temporarily teach Norsk here at Concordia College. This was a surprise to me; I feel unfit for the task. My prayer is that the Lord will strengthen me in my weakness. I hope the church will, when my time comes, get someone better prepared for this work than I am.

Since I received the call, I have often thought about how I ought to go about teaching Norwegian. This problem will go away itself if I am clear about the object of teaching.

You study Norwegian because you are American citizens. I have read that in New York, there are foreign languages, especially Italian, being used to instruct immigrants about their duties and rights in this country.

You will also have to use Norwegian to help Norwegian immigrants to familiarize themselves. Shortly said, you may use Norwegian not to make Americans Norsemen, but to make Norsemen Americans. It is required of you as loyal, American citizens.



Young Faye

For those among you whose calling will be to work as pastors, your chief purpose in learning Norwegian is to use this language in pastoral work. There are many of the Norwegian descent who, although they otherwise prefer to use English, pray to God *paa norsk*.

Norwegian will also help you to understand our Synod's place in the American Lutheran Church history. The present is a child of the past. We must put ourselves in the past that has made us who we are. We believe that we are the rightful heirs of the old Norwegian Synod. How true this assertion is, you will be able to see by reading what the men of the Synod, Preus, Stub, Koren, Ylvisaker, and others have written. Many church members have thoroughly followed the ecclesiastical strife—it is a reasonable requirement to expect from you, who are to be leaders in the church, study these matters, and doing this also is a proper way to use Norwegian

Finally, Norse will help you to study Norway's history and literature and how Europe's culture flow has affected Norway's spiritual life. By studying Norway's history and literature, you will be better able to solve your task as leaders among Americans of Norwegian descent — and from Norwegian books and periodicals you will get an insight into what is going on in the minds, not only in Norway, but in the whole civilized world. The spirit of the times is usually hostile to the church. The church's men ought to understand this hostility, they ought to be able to analyze it and take a position over against it. Norway is a country with a small population

that it pays not to print many and extensive books in Norwegian. That is why you often find in Norwegian books and magazines very compressed in a little space.

So: we study Norwegian to serve the state; to do church work with those whose heart language is Norwegian; to get to know the history of our society and to follow its development; and finally to introduce us to Norwegian history and literature, and through Norwegian books and magazines to gain an insight into the spirit of the times and its impact on Norwegian spiritual life.

Finally, I would like to thank you for the kindness and love with which you received me.

§ § §

B. W. Teigen commented on Faye's work in a 1999 article in Oak Leaves: "He cataloged the Bethany Lutheran Seminary Library according to the Congressional Library system. His work at Bethany Seminary was used by the Library of Congress as the original cataloging of the Synod's magnificent rare book collection."

The following report to the 1954 synod convention describes the work Prof. Faye was doing in the Synod's Memorial Library. At the time the library occupied a room on the ground floor, the southwest corner of Old Main on the Bethany Campus. When the new seminary building was constructed on Division Street, part of the Memorial Library was moved there, and part occupied a room on the lower level of the 1968 library. Today, most of the library is located in the Browns Court Synod-Seminary building, with the rare book collection being housed in the College Library Special Collections.

Norwegian Synod Memorial Library Librarian's Report - 1953-54

Before dealing with the work of the Library, mention will be made of gifts and of a tour of a theological library .

It is an agreeable duty gratefully to acknowledge receipt of the following gifts (if the undersigned has inadvertently omitted any, he asks forgiveness for the

lapse): a set of Hasting's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, from the Rev. George Schweikert, Okabena, Minn.; *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, from the Rev. Dr. Robert Preus, Cambridge, Mass.; several books, including Hoenecke's *Dogmatik*, from the Rev. G. W. Fischer, Mankato, Minn.; a bound set of *Ev. Luth. Tidende and Luth. Sentinel*, 1917-47, from Mr. Oscar Pederson, Minneapolis, Minn.; and several boxes of books from the Rev. Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker. In addition to the already acknowledged money gifts (see p. 58 in last year's the Centennial-Report of our Synod) we have also received: \$2.00 from Mr. A. V. Arneson, Glenwood, Minn.; \$25.00 from the congregation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in Waconia, Minn.; and \$1,000.00 for the purchase of new theological books from the Robert Jorgenson family, of the Luverne, Minn. congregation, in memory of their son and brother, Ensign Jorgenson, who died in the service of his country.

Some members of the Board of Regents, of the Seminary Library Committee, Miss Ella Anderson (librarian of our College Library) and the undersigned visited the Library of the Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minn., on April 24th in order to see how it is conducted. We learned some things from our tour of this well-administered library, which was organized by Prof. Emeritus Jacobson, who also re-organized the Luther College Library. We are grateful to Miss Valborg Bestul, now in charge of the library, for her courtesy in showing us around. Just as that library is designed to meet certain needs of the E.L.C., so, we feel, our Library is potentially capable of eventually satisfying our theological library needs.

The work of the Library will now be dealt with under three heads.

(1) *The acquiring of material.* Care has been exercised to avoid unnecessary expenditure in the ordering of periodicals and other books. We now subscribe to the most necessary religious periodicals issued in this country, and we are investigating whether certain European ones are worth subscribing to. Out of the Jorgenson Memorial Fund we have acquired (among other books) a set of the *International Critical Commentary*.

(2) *The preservation of material.* Thanks to Mr. Nerison, the north wall of the library is now covered with shelves. This together with the extra shelving added since last year's Synod Convention, has relieved the congestion somewhat, so there is now barely shelf room for our present holdings—we do not have to heap up books on the floor. To make the shelving more comfortable and practical, there should be shelf space for 1,000 more volumes. Our piles of unbound periodicals should be bound, before more single issues are lost, and several of our other books need to be bound or re-bound. Borrowers of books are requested to make sure of returning them. We will probably have to use a stricter system for lending our books.

(3) *Making available the resources of the Library.* As far as the undersigned knows, all information asked for by users of the Library has been found, if contained in our books. The classification, (i.e. the shelving in systematic order) of our holdings (about 10,000 volumes), though hampered by lack of shelf space, has now progressed so far that the cataloging (i.e. the describing on catalog cards) of the books—a task that will take several years to bring up to date—can be started this summer.

Finally, some decision should be reached as to what our policy should be with regard to archive materials, such as parish bulletins, minutes of pastoral conferences, papers read at pastoral conferences, etc., etc. Does the Norwegian Synod Memorial Library have any responsibility with regard to materials of this kind? Does the Norwegian Synod Memorial Library have any responsibility with regard to materials of this kind?

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Church News
Lutheran Sentinel
April 12, 1922

Rev. G. Guldberg writes that 47 of the 65 voting members of the First Lutheran Congregation of Suttons Bay, Michigan, have voted to sever all connections with the

Norwegian Luth. Church and have resolved to apply for acceptance into the Norwegian Synod. This congregation has called Rev. Guldberg as its pastor. Rev. Guldberg has accepted the call and will remain there.

We thank God who has given these brethren courage to set aside all thought of outward convenience and ease for the sake of remaining true to the standards of truth and faith. We know what it means to come to a full and clear conception of duty in this matter and congratulate them in the joy which is theirs in coming back to the old moorings, the truths of God's holy Word.

—

The midweek Lenten services in our Chicago churches have been remarkably well attended this year and our churches are looking forward to an exceptional participation in the Communion services in Holy Week.

—

Missionary Lillegard writes March 9: We are both well and enjoying our work. Next week we start out for Shihnan, the inland station of our Mission. That means an eight to nine days' journey, partly in a Chinese junk up through the Gorges, since the foreign steamers are not running at this low water period, partly overland by sedan-chair for my wife and mule-back for me. If we do not have too much bad weather, I rather expect that we shall enjoy the trip.

Is Unity In Christian Doctrine Impossible?

M. F. Wiese

Luthersk Tidende, January 25, 1922

As Pastor Wiese notes at the end, much of this essay is taken from the 1888 paper at the Synodical Conference by Franz Pieper. However, the fact that Wiese translates it into Norwegian for use in the Tidende and instruction of the synod members, demonstrates the synod's articulation of its position in not joining the merger of 1918. It is also a fine demonstration of the Christian Apologia ("Apologetic" = defense) of the Synod's motto, Der Staar Skrevet, It is Written. (ed)

In the union efforts which are pursued with great zeal today within the Lutheran Church, one finds the principles of the Christian faith and doctrine being praised and asserted, but then proceed to insult and scuttle the well-known simple catechism truths that are of the utmost importance for the existence and true edification of the church (see for example Luther's explanation of the first petition). "True doctrine"—that "God's word is to be taught purely and correctly" and that we as Christians are to diligently seek unity—this is something many who would like to be considered Christians, can hardly bear to hear, even as they abhor it when they imagine that "the pure doctrine" is detrimental to life and hinders Christian edification. Yet, according to God's word, the exact opposite is the case, so that a Christian community must be able to observe and develop a God-pleasing maturity.

Yet, strange as it may be, today we have to hear denials of the very possibility of actual unanimity in all the articles of Christian doctrine is; it is asserted that the word of God is not debased by holding that unanimity and church union on the basis of full agreement in doctrine is impossible. It is held that so far as doctrine is concerned, one should not demand more than conformity in some main doctrines; in other respects one must be content with a so-called organic (external) agreement, an agreement on the church polity, in the liturgical order, etc.; it is sufficient to set up on paper a general agreement on the Holy Scriptures, while in practice one has freedom according to the circumstances, to interpret it in a Calvinistic, rationalist way, that is, in his judgment, the best meaning and belief, as long as one maintains what is called "the main thing," but whose scope and meaning one decides at will.

We maintain the opposite. Certainly, if it was a matter of agreement in simple human opinions or difficult philosophical problems, then unity would be impossible. But the issue here is about the doctrinal articles or beliefs revealed by God himself in the Holy Scriptures. And how is this doctrine now revealed? Certainly not obscurely and incomprehensibly. You do not need a great human expert to recognize and comprehend it. Only simple belief in the word of God is necessary here. Whoever believes the words of Scripture has the truth. It is not as if in the word of God there are only

obscure hints, only sprouts of the truths of faith, and that men, with their wisdom and expertise, have to construct the true doctrines of faith themselves. It is not the case that God the Lord in his revelation merely says A and then leaves it to the wisdom of man to say B and C and thus to invent the alphabet of Christian doctrine themselves.

No, all the articles of Christian teaching are revealed in the Scriptures in clear words. One need only acquire what is revealed, to proclaim what God has proclaimed, that is, the simple faith. And the Holy Scriptures are clear and distinct to all Christians, not just to the pastors. All the articles of doctrine are revealed in such places in the Scripture to which access is equally open that for all Christians—it is a light (2 Peter 1:19), a faithful testimony, which makes the simple wise, (Psalm 19: 8), and which already a child could understand (2 Timothy 3:15). and so shown that all Christians, according to the words of this Scripture, should prove [test] all the doctrine which is declared and preached to them. It is not God’s intention with Scripture to present riddles to men, but to reveal the salvation for all mankind. Whoever denies the possibility of the unity in faith, is also denying that the holy Scripture is clear and distinct. Surely, therefore, since the whole Christian faith is clearly revealed in the Holy Scriptures, so unity in the faith is possible.

But the unity in the faith is not only possible but is real. That is why God has provided his clear and powerful word. An example of this is the Lutheran Church. We Lutherans, we know with certainty, have the doctrine of salvation revealed throughout the Holy Scriptures and are thus united in faith. Not only the pastors, but also the so-called lay people stand in that unity of faith which is also shown their knowledge and belief of the catechism.

Such talk in our time is no doubt very offensive to some. Regarding Christian doctrine, they will only permit opinion and life-application—no Christian body should say that it certainly has the complete, full truth. The Christian truth is spread out among the various church bodies: one has more, the other less of it; but no one can boast of possessing the complete truth.

Indeed, doubt concerning truth, the pagan search for truth, has become the fashion, and even wants to appear to be a Christian virtue. It even happens that in churches bearing the Lutheran name, the term “pure doctrine” is mocked. We are accused of holding the papist doctrine of infallibility when we claim that in all the articles of Christian doctrine, we have the truth and thus stand in the unity of the faith. Only great ignorance or malice can lie behind this accusation. The pope asserts that he is inerrant in his person—even apart from or contrary to the word of God. We confess that in ourselves we are lost—indeed that we are simply lost in spiritual matters. But in doctrine we do not go astray but are infallible inasmuch as we stand by the word of God as it is. In our doctrine, we speak as the word of God speaks. In all the doctrines we need only speak according to what the word of God clearly tells us, it is that plain. The Lutheran Church claims to be in possession of the whole, certain truth only for that reason—because it accepts entirely the certain Word of God as it speaks.

The truth that sinful flesh still clings to us, does not make a case against God’s truth. Despite believing that we are still sinners our teaching is right and divine truth. Our teaching consists precisely in the fact that we speak according to what God tells us. What is revealed in Scripture does not go through us in such a way that we must add something to it of our own, so that now what we teach or preach is partly divine and partly human, soon true or soon false, but the preachers, if by God’s grace they stand in God’s word, are only the mouth of God. They do not present their thoughts, but the thoughts of God revealed in the Scriptures. They do not publish their thoughts, but the thoughts of God revealed in the Scriptures. A preacher must be able to say, “What I have told you is divine truth.” The statement of Luther comes to mind—that whoever cannot say this must refrain from preaching. We must therefore not confuse fallibility in life with fallibility in doctrine. The last does not follow from the first, because the doctrine of the sacred Scripture is not in our hands. All uncertainty and all deviation in the matters of Christian doctrine comes only from the fact that the clear word of God is pushed aside and one does not want to say what God’s word proclaims. They

follow the traditions of the church or human reason or its presupposed meaning. It is a great self-deception to say, "One cannot take with certainty all Scripture's articles of Christian doctrine." This is not because of the word of God, but because they set themselves against the word of God; the heretics simply will not believe what the word of God says—their position is set forth in this statement: "I certainly hear the message, but I lack the faith."

(What has been stated above is, with the exception of a few remarks in the introduction, taken from Prof. Dr. F. Pieper's essay "On Unity in the Faith" in the report of the Synodical Conference, 1888, p. 15 ff.)



THE PROBLEMS OF RURAL CHURCH ACTIVITY

M. K. Bleken

Even though the author and occasion are not given on the copy we have, geographical references, mention of the census of 1910 and the census of "this year," i.e. 1920, and references to the "Little Turkey" area indicate the writer to be the pastor of what we now know as the Saude-Jerico parish. Martinus Kristiansen Blekn served there from 1910 until his death in 1922. He was active in the group which opposed the union of three Norwegian church bodies and was a member of the synod from 1918 until his death. He was a frequent contributor to Luthersk Tidende and the Lutheran Sentinel, and also was an essayist for synod conventions in 1919 and 1921. This article deals with a theme which is still with us, as many of our rural congregations decrease in membership—nothing new under the sun (See more on pastor Bleken in Oak Leaves, Vol. 3, Issue 1, Spring 1999.

It is not so satisfactory to translate this title into Norwegian since we have probably received it from the Reformed. However, it is possible to use it since what it expresses is or will be relevant among our people. It

may well be that *Symra*, which is otherwise concerned with more theoretical things, can publish a few words on this theme by a rustic, country pastor.

If we live in the city and have our work there, then we know that the condition of the countryside is not at all irrelevant to us—we who live in the country and you who live in the city are dependent on each other, not just materially, but in a wider sense. Cities are recruited from the country, but not vice versa

The church has hitherto been the strongest influence among our people in the country, not only from a purely religious point of view, but also from a cultural point. It is true that there have also been other factors which have influenced our people culturally, but nothing has exercised that influence as much as the church. This applies especially to the rural areas. The church has been a focal point and in the eyes of the Norwegian people and has occupied a prominent position as it was with the Norwegian peasant in the old days. There you will still find, in many places at least, that the mothers find time to teach the children at home and thereby support the school. All youth are confirmed, at least in an external sense. Thus it can not be denied that the church has had its influence to a greater or lesser degree on almost all the people in a Norwegian community. That's how it has been, but how deep this influence goes for many is another matter. It is probably also incontrovertible that many exceedingly capable men who hold important and influential positions in our country have come from the rural parishes and it would be foolish to regret it. If you look at the state of the church among us, you would think that there was no such thing as a Rural Church Problem for us; but if we do not have it now, we will certainly have it soon; the countryside is not untouched by time. Even the big cities' slang somehow finds its way to the farthest corners. "You tell them you got the education" [in English in the original]. The connection with the cities is now so lively through the post office and otherwise the currents of the time force their way to the farthest corners of the country. During the world war [WW I], people who had not been more than ten miles from home discussed world politics with great enthusiasm.

What has given rise to discussion about The Rural Church Problem lately is probably that the Reformed churches have this problem and so they naturally think that others must have it too. The international ecumenical movement became very concerned about it and optimistically thought they had solved the problem. In the eastern states there are many abandoned farms and there are thousands of abandoned churches in the countryside. The problem has arisen as a result of people moving from the farms to the towns or elsewhere so that few are left to keep their churches going. You do not have to go far to find examples of it. Over in Chickasaw County [NE Iowa], there are two such places. In Little Turkey, a few years ago, there was a settlement of Yankees, who had a Methodist church. Now all of these have disappeared with the exception of one family. The Bømers [?] have displaced them and now they have the church. In Jacksonville township stands an abandoned Baptist church. There are several English-speaking people around; but the minister lives in the city and for some reason he does not come out to the country. This question is addressed by a farm magazine: "Very few country churches are served full time by a pastor... Of the 17,000 country churches of one denomination, 12,000 are without services on any given Sunday. Another denomination has nine tenths of its thousands of churches served by absentee pastors; and three fourths of its churches have but one service per month, while one fourth have no Sunday school. In Ohio only 13% of rural ministers live close to their churches" Country pastors have abandoned the idea of living near their people. Under these circumstances it is not difficult to understand that the rural congregations deteriorate, so there must be a Rural Church Problem. Where there is so little supervision, as mentioned above, where children's education is so neglected, things inevitably go wrong. These churches will have to solve their own problems; but perhaps we can learn something from their problems.

It is a fact that the rural population is declining and the urban population is still increasing at the expense of the rural population. That is regrettable—it is not healthy for a nation. According to the U.S. census of 1910, 53.7% of the country's population lived in the rural areas and 46.3% in the cities. It is said that the census for this year will show that now 65% live in the

cities and 35% in the countryside. Certainly, our people account for a share of these 65%—there has been a large migration of people from our rural congregations to the big and small towns. There are various reasons for this relocation. There are older people who are no longer able to do the farm work. If they have no children, it is natural enough that they sell and move to the nearest small town; even if they have children, not all of them are willing to take over the farm and it will then be put up for auction. There are also many who get the crazy idea that they want to sell and travel elsewhere. It sometimes becomes an epidemic in a community. It is also disturbing that some people can never settle down. There are various reasons why the younger people travel to the city. Some parents make themselves slaves to their children; others enslave their children. In both cases, the result is about the same—the children leave. It is also becoming more and more difficult to get help on the farm. Working hours are too long; not many want to do chores, etc. Hired girls are almost impossible to find—the girls want to go to town and they will stay there.

So the farmers struggle on with little help and when they have enough money, they think: I do not have to stay here and toil; I will sell and move to town. These things may not be noticeable for a while in a large community, but it will soon become noticeable. If the relocation becomes noticeable, it may become contagious. People become discouraged. The large wages at the factories in later times have also done their part to attract labor aid from the country. And then it is the general unrest which has infected all classes of society after the war. It has also seized the people of the country. Pleasure and extravagance are as common in the countryside as in the city. And then we must not forget the automobile. If it is raining then you cannot go to church, since it is too troublesome to harness the horses and if it is nice weather then you travel elsewhere.

All this together has its influence on the church. It does not establish a calm and stable atmosphere as it once did. In addition, there is also the language issue, which is now becoming relevant in rural areas as well. So we have the problem of how, under these conditions, we should arrange our ecclesiastical work in the country and keep the communities together.



ACORNS

FROM THE ELS ARCHIVES



Theodore G. Gullixson - Archivist

Acorns from the Archives

Before the Evangelical Lutheran Synod purchased Bethany Lutheran College, it operated as Bethany Ladies' College. Financial difficulties did not allow the school to open for the 1918–19 school year. For about two months during that year, the building was leased to the city of Mankato during the "Spanish Flu" pandemic. The following report was published in a local Mankato newspaper (The Review) on October 29, 1918:



Ladies College Dorm Room

60 Patients In Bethany Hospital

Present Epidemic Was Discussed at Meeting of City Council This Morning

At the city council meeting this morning Mayor Champlin called attention to the fact that the Bethany emergency hospital, which now has 60 Spanish influenza patients being cared for by a corps of 17 nurses is becoming quite an item of expense to the city. Mayor Champlin further said that there had been some criticism as to the rate charged. So far the charges for the care of patients have been \$3 per day. This charge will not nearly pay the running expenses of the hospital, for the help alone costs the city a large amount in addition to the heat and lighting of the building. In addition to the heating and lighting, there is a charge of 50 cents per day per patient which is to be paid over to the creditors association having the building in charge.

Worst Epidemic City Has Had.

The present epidemic is the worst the city has ever experienced and must be met in a big way. The Mayor stated that in adjusting claims it may be possible that some people cannot meet the \$3 a day charge. It had been suggested that a hospital board consisting of say three business men [sic] be appointed to act in conjunction with the health board in adjusting claims, which will all be based on a rate of \$3 per day. This board would be expected to act without pay.



ELS Historical Society Subscription-Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Membership Type: Voting Associate Amount \$ _____

Special Gift for _____ 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.

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

