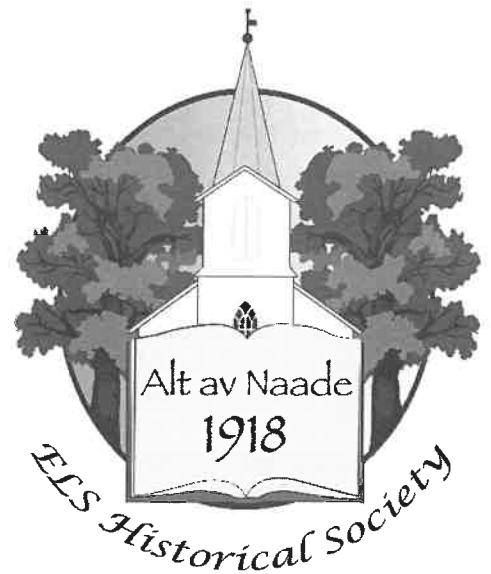


# Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society



Volume 27

Winter 2023

Issue 1

## Thank You to Dr. Erling Teigen

Recently a group of members of ELS churches in northern Iowa and southern Minnesota has been reading *The Hammer of God* by Bo Giertz and discussing it on Zoom. In that book an older pastor and a younger pastor were seated after a long day. They talked about what had gone on before. The older pastor said, "We are all, to be sure, inheritors, and much has happened here before we came." The younger pastor responded, "You are right, sir, much has happened here before us. It is a great thing to be an inheritor."

On behalf of all the readers of *Oak Leaves*, I would like to thank Dr. Teigen for his years of service to the society as a member of the Board and as Editor of *Oak Leaves*. We, and especially I, are inheritors of the work that he has done. We have benefited from his work. Dr. Teigen edited 26 issues of the quarterly *Oak Leaves*. Before *Oak Leaves* he had served as editor of other publications, *Logia* and the *Lutheran Sentinel*. Besides being editor of *Oak Leaves* and other publications, he wrote many articles in theological journals.

My first memories of him were when I was in seminary. The synod report for the year 1977 tells us that an Evangelism and Missions course was taught by Pastors E. T. Teigen, S. P. Quist and J.P. Olsen. I was a student in that course. Part of the course was

to make field trips to the congregations that were served by these pastors, for some "hands on" experience. Pastor Teigen was pastor of Heritage Lutheran Church in Apple Valley, Minnesota, at the time. After teaching that seminary class as a parish pastor, Dr. Teigen was called to serve as a professor at Bethany Lutheran College.

I didn't have much personal contact with him after that seminary class. I was on the foreign mission field, where I worked with his brother, Martin, for ten years. My contact with Dr. Teigen was through articles he wrote and publications that he edited.

Dr Teigen made trips to Latvia and Czechia. In *My Savior's Guest* there is an interesting article by Gundars Bakulis, Superintendent of the Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia, about Dr. Teigen's work in that country.

Thank you again, Dr. Erling Teigen. If you wish to know more about Dr. Teigen a book was published, called a festschrift in honor of Erling Trygve Teigen. It was titled *My Savior's Guest*. Professor Thomas Rank was the editor. Our readers can get a copy of this book from the Bethany Luther College Bookstore/Spirit Store in Mankato (<https://bookstore.blc.edu/>. (507)-344-7777).

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# From the Otteson Museum

## We'd Like to Do More!

Currently the Otteson Museum's Facebook page is the only social media outlet for Evangelical Lutheran Synod history. It has been very exciting to see the number of followers grow in the last several months as posts are shared and as they reach a wider audience. But, we'd like to do more.

One aspect of Synod history that is lacking in our files is congregational history. We know when most of the congregations in the ELS were founded and joined the synod, and we know the names of the pastors who have served our congregations, but we know little beyond that.

We would love to include short posts about each congregation in the synod, especially when congregations celebrate significant anniversaries. Right now, because of lack of information, that is just not possible.

Here's where you can help. Our goal is to have short, two to five paragraph, histories of all of the congregations in the ELS. These would include – if known – the date of organization, when the congregation joined the ELS (not always the same year), a list of pastors and when they served, and any

For questions or more information, please contact Museum Director Becky DeGarmeaux at [museum@blc.edu](mailto:museum@blc.edu)

other interesting information about the congregation. It would also be nice to have pictures of the interior and exterior of each church.

If you are able to help with this project, histories and pictures can be sent to the Otteson Museum at [museum@blc.edu](mailto:museum@blc.edu) or mailed to the Otteson Museum at 6 Browns Ct. Mankato, MN 5001. Thank you!



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**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

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## From the Editor

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Timothy Erickson. I was born and raised in historic Winnebago County, Iowa.

Winnebago County is the fifth smallest (out of 99) county in the state of Iowa, but it is the location for six ELS congregations, the most of any county in the United States. The congregations are the well known Lime Creek, Lake Mills, Scarville, Center, Zion in Thompson and Forest in Forest City.

I was born in Forest City and raised on a farm between Thompson and Scarville as a member of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thompson. George Orvick was from the same area a generation before me, and later I was ordained in 1978 by Pastor Orvick during one of the few periods of time that he was not serving as president of the Synod. I served for a short time as assistant pastor at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Cross. I then served as pastor at Saude and Jerico Lutheran churches before spending 36 years on the mission field of Peru and Chile. Pastor Orvick also performed the commissioning when I was called and sent to Peru.

In this issue I include some excerpts from Christmas sermons of our seminary's Deans and Presidents. Portions of these sermons were read at the Christmas Open House of the Otteson Museum of the ELS Historical Society on December 6 in Mankato.

In 1982, I was serving as pastor at Jerico and Saude churches in Northeast Iowa when I received and accepted the call to serve as missionary to Peru. The commissioning service took place at the Synod convention that year. Perhaps I will include more about the mission in Peru and Chile in some future editions of Oak Leaves. While I was in the mission field, I left a file cabinet in the Jerico Lutheran Church storage room. When I returned from the mission field, I recovered that file cabinet. It has been interesting to see what I saved in that file cabinet. It is kind of like a time capsule of my four years as a pastor before going to Peru.

One file I found was of the Synod president's newsletters. These were written by Synod President Wilhelm Petersen. This was before computers were in use, so they were printed on paper and sent out in the mail. In this edition of Oak Leaves, I include some notes from those newsletters that were interesting to me.

I thank the other contributors to the Oak Leaves, Rebecca DeGarmaux of the museum, Erling Teigen for his contribution from 100 years ago, and Theodore Gullixson for contributing the Acorn.

As I write this it is the middle of winter. When nicer weather comes, I hope to spend some time in Mankato to look through the synod archives to learn and find more things of interest.

# The Seminary Presidents Preach Christmas Open House at the Otteson Museum

On December 6, 2022 the Otteson Museum hosted its annual Christmas open house. The topic of the open house was Christmas sermons of presidents of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. There have been five leaders of the seminary. During the first 30 years of the seminary, the president of Bethany Lutheran College also served as president of the seminary. The leaders of the seminary were called deans, who did the administrative work of the seminary, under the oversight of the president of the college, so we have Dean Norman Madson, Dean Milton Otto. In 1976 the presidency of the seminary was separated from that of the college, and we have had three presidents, President Theodore Aaberg, President Wilhelm Petersen, and President Gaylin Schmeling.

Three students presented the sermons: Bethany Lutheran College Student Adam Hoefft and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary students Peter Estrem and Skyler Hepler. All of our seminary leaders were parish pastors before coming to the seminary. The sermons presented at the open house were preached by them while they were still working as pastor of a parish.

Here are some highlights from the sermons.

Dean Madson's [dean from 1946 to 1959] sermon is from 1942. The exordium for this sermon was presented. In this exordium Pastor Madson recognized the greatness of

God in the creation, in "the never-ending marvels of nature," in "the hand which guides the un-numbered heavenly bodies on their destined courses." But greater still is the "wonder of wonders which reveals itself in the lowly manger-bed at Bethlehem. Here God becomes man."



Norman A. Madson

The portion from Dean Otto's [dean from 1968 to 1981] sermon from 1952 was the introduction to a theme that also contains the word wonder, The Wonderful Birth of a Wonderful Child. Christmas comes again, "through the rapid flight of time." There is not much to make us glad if we only look at the outward circumstance. The town was humble, the place was humble, only the modest people, Mary and Joseph, were really waiting for the baby. But He is the one of whom the prophet said, "and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the might God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," "a most unusual person.



Milton Otto

President Aaberg [1976 to 1979] preached to his congregation in 1956 that "Christmas is,

above all, a children's festival." But if you are not a child, "The fresh joy of a child has softened many an older heart." He may think back to his childhood and "days with father and mother, "many of whom lie beneath the sod."

Backward, turn backward, O time in your flight,  
Make me a child again, just for tonight.

Jesus says, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." We never become too old or too wise to sing [and we all sang together in the museum]:

Thy little ones dear Lord are we,  
And come Thy lowly bed to see;  
Enlighten every heart and mind,  
That we the way to Thee may find.



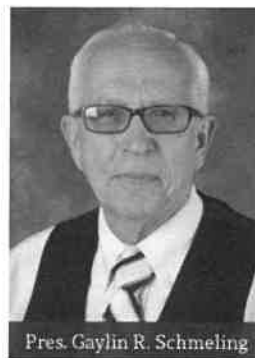
Theodore Aaberg

President Petersen [1980 to 1997] used the shepherds as an example for us. They were common people of the day. God did not send the great leaders of the Jewish nation to Bethlehem, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the world." "It was not likely that the great men of Jerusalem would have received the Angel's message with such humble faith as the humble and unpretentious." But the shepherds "had hearts filled with thanks and lips with praise when they returned from their visit to the village [of Bethlehem].



Wilhelm Petersen

President Schmeling [1997 to 2022] used the same words that Dean Madson had used, calling Christmas a "Wonder of Wonders." It was not "a beautiful fairy tale and no more." We see "the honor and glory heaped upon us creatures made from dust. He became as we are." "The Almighty God became a human child." He did this "so that we might become as Him" ... "we are "the sons and daughters of God." "We are rich, yet He was poor, is not this a wonder?"



Pres. Gaylin R. Schmeling

Thank you to Otteson Museum director, Becky DeGarmeaux for organizing this open house. The history we learned about our seminary leaders and the fellowship we shared were uplifting



# 40-Year-Old File Cabinet

I, the new editor of Oak Leaves, was called to be missionary to South America in 1982. The weeks before our departure to Peru were busy. We had to close down our household in the United States. We had to decide what we could take with us in our suitcases on the airplane. Many other things we had were sold. Some things were put in storage in our parents' homes. We had to make many visits to say goodbye to loved ones. I had a four-drawer file cabinet in my office that had documents that I did not want to throw out. I had been serving as pastor of the Saude and Jerico Lutheran churches. I asked the Jerico congregation if I could store this file cabinet in a room in the church, never realizing that this storage would last 40 years. I have started to look through it and find many interesting memories. I used this file cabinet from 1978 to 1982. Nothing had been added since then.

There is a file called "Synod President Newsletters." Back in those days we did not receive the president's newsletters by e-mail. They were printed on paper and mailed to us.

During the years that this file cabinet was active there were two presidents of the synod, Wilhelm W. Petersen and George M. Orvick.

The first letter in the file contained much news about calls and assignments in 1977. Pastor Erling Teigen had accepted the call to be professor at Bethany Lutheran College. He would teach Religion, Philosophy and English. The candidates

of theology were assigned. Among the highlights were, Steven Petersen to my parents' (and my home) congregation, Zion in Thompson, Iowa, and Forest in Forest City, Charles Keeler to the Oklee-Trail parish, Nile Merseth to Richland, Thornton, Iowa, and Kenneth Schmitt to Christ Lutheran in Sutherlin, Oregon. I was among the vicars to be assigned, being sent to North Hollywood, California.

The next one in the file began with devotional writings inspired by the president's trip to Colorado. "As Bible-believing Christians we believe, teach, and confess that the God who created this world has revealed Himself in the Scriptures as a God of grace and mercy who in Christ has forgiven us our sins and who desires our happiness on earth and blessedness in heaven." Then there is a report about the Synod convention, in which there was to be a groundbreaking for the new seminary building.

The newsletters from synod presidents were interrupted by the next letter. The president of the seminary, Theodore Aaberg wrote a letter to the upcoming (1978) graduates of the seminary. He was asking if any of the candidates would be interested in an assignment to the foreign mission field. I was in that class and neither I nor any of my classmates expressed an interest in foreign mission work at that time. Little did I know that four years later I would receive the call and accept it to fill that position.

The next letter in the file (from May 1978) announced the dedication of the seminary building to take place at the 1978 synod convention. "This will be a very special day in our synodical life." Assignment of candidates of theology and vicars was also

announced, including my assignment to Holy Cross in Madison, Wisconsin. There was a short letter from president Petersen to welcome me as a member of the synod

In spring 1979 the letter again contained news of assignments of candidates, vicars and teachers. Synod convention news reported that B.W. Teigen would be the essayist with the theme "Take Fast Hold of Instruction." Singers were invited to join a choral union for the convention.

The fall newsletter reported that Theodore Aaberg had resigned as president of the seminary due to health problems. Members of the synod were asked to send personal friendly letters to the foreign missionaries, who "at times feel lonely." There was also a report by Erling Teigen on the 1979 Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Convention. Serious discussions on terminating fellowship with the ALC took place. (Fellowship between the two church bodies was finally terminated in 1981, and then in 1988 The ALC participated in the merger into the ELCA).

Next, there was a transition of presidents as Wilhelm Petersen accepted the call to be seminary president (being installed on November 11, 1980. And George Orvick again became president of the synod.

In the fall 1980 newsletter the announcement of a new position was announced, that of Stewardship-Missions Counselor. Pastor Paul Petersen accepted the call to fill that position. During this time there was lots of news concerning financial matters in the synod, encouraging the members in their offerings and announcing some cut-backs in the work.

The last document in the file is a personal letter to me from Synod President George

Orvick. I was to be commissioned to go to Peru at the Synod Convention in June of 1982.

President Orvick writes:  
Rev. Timothy E. Erickson  
Rt. 2, Box 89  
Lawler, Iowa 52154  
Dear Tim:

Thank you for your letter of May 6<sup>th</sup> regarding your commissioning service. I talked with G. Guldberg [the pastor who had baptized me] today and he consented to be the preacher. This is fine. He used to be my pastor also. The commissioning service will take place on Tuesday morning at 10:00 a.m., June 22<sup>nd</sup>. Steve [Quist] will be the liturgist and I [President Orvick had ordained me four years previously] will perform the rite of the commissioning.

Yes, I think it best that you resign from the Board for Education and Youth. Their budget will really not allow your traveling that far four times a year.

Thanks for your letter. Greetings and the Lord's blessing upon you in the wonderful new chapter in your life.

Sincerely in Christ, George M. Orvick  
[just signed "George"]

After this letter no more documents were added to this file for forty years in the 40-year-old file cabinet. Many interesting things happened in the four years of the history of this file-cabinet. It brought back many memories for me. Perhaps I will find other documents in other files that are of historical interest. As I do, I may share some more with you readers.

.....

# One Hundred Years Ago

## Church News

*Luthersk Tidende and The Lutheran Sentinel, 1923.*



The Synodical Conference congregations these days are building a "Lutheran Memorial Hospital" at a cost of more than \$300,000 dollars [2022: \$5.3 million]. On Sunday a festival was held in the partially-finished building so people could see the large project. Speeches for the occasion were given by pastors, G. Theiss, A. W. Bartling, J. A. Moldstad, E. T. Haertel, and A.H. Raub There were songs by a large choir and music by St. Paulus congregation's band. Many thousands of people were present. (*Luthersk Tidende*, October 18, 1922)

—Evanger congregation in Fertile, Minnesota is building a beautiful church which they hope can be used at Christmas time. On Sunday October 29, pastor O. M. Gullerud preached for their mission festival, and the offering gathered was for home missions. After the worship service the congregational meeting was held. It was resolved to form a parish of Evanger (Fertile), Ada, Twin Valley, and Rindahl congregations. A call committee was

elected to meet with similar committees of the other congregations. A noon meal was served by the women of the congregation. At the afternoon service, Pastor John Hendricks gave an interesting lecture about his work as a traveling missionary.

—At the congregation meeting at Albert Lea's Our Savior on October 6, it was resolved that Albert Lea and Hartland should be two separate parishes. —The fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the

Synodical Conference was held on Sunday afternoon

November 5 by the Twin Cities congregations in St. Paul. The celebration was held in St. Johannes congregation in St. Paul. Pastor G. A. Gullixson was the preacher for the occasion. (*Tidende*, November 15, 1922)

Rev. and Mrs. J. A. Moldstad attended the golden wedding of Mrs. Moldstad's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hans Halvorson, at Durand, Ill., November 10....

Mrs. and Mrs. Halvorson were married in Christiania [Oslo] by Bishop J. C. Heuch. [Heuch was a conservative theologian and Bishop in Norway in the second half of the 19th century. A student of the popular conservative theologian Gisle Johnson, he was well known to the leaders of the Norwegian synod, and authored sermon books often found in the homes of the Norwegian immigrants.] (*Sentinel* November 22, 1922)

The editor of the *Sentinel* [G. A. Gullixson] was invited to preach the festival sermon at a joint service held in St. Paul, Minnesota in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Evangelical Synodical. The service was held in St. John's Lutheran Church [Wisconsin Synod], Dayton's Bluff, St. Paul. The spacious church which seats 1800 people was nearly filled... All three synods were represented. (*Sentinel* November 22, 1922)



# Acorns



## From The ELS Archives

Theodore G. Gullixson - Archivist

### From The Home

#### Front

**Pastor Torald N. Teigen.**

#### YOUR PASTOR SAYS:

By the time this paper reaches you Easter Sunday, 1944, may have come and gone. But whether Easter Sunday lies in the past or in the future, its message will be as meaningful for you each day as if it came to you on the appointed Sunday.

I hardly need remind you that it is the resurrection of Christ, and nothing else, that makes Easter a Christian Festival and worthy to be observed. It is not impossible that you may have heard Easter speeches wherein the resurrection was completely forgotten or only indifferently referred to. You may even have heard man frankly deny that Jesus of Nazareth really died and came again living out of the grave. But facts are facts and must not be ignored. If you look at the record, you will know certainly that Jesus died and rose again.

What does it mean to us? What benefit do we have from that fact?

The foremost benefit is this: The resurrection of Christ assures us that Jesus is the Son of God, that His Word is true, and that the Father was satisfied

with the sacrifice Jesus made in giving His life as a payment for our sins.

We confidently now believe that for His sake we have full forgiveness. That gives us plenty to think and rejoice about all the days of our life. Another timely thought: Most of you are doing work in close connection with the dangerous and unpleasant business of war. You may be inclined sometimes to think that in the scheme of things you are just one more number and that you will fill the ranks til your "number is up", and then like a light you will go out and that is the end of it. Make no mistake about it. That idea is prevalent. We are seeing it in articles on the printed page every day. Neither is the idea new. An old Roman poet said it this way: "The sun can set, and the sun can rise again; but when our brief day of life is spent, there comes to us a night without a star, without a morning, a sleep that knows no waking." The idea is dreary and comfortless, for the only hope it leave a man is that maybe his number "is not up" for a while longer. The idea is grossly false. The Apostle Paul says: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept" (1Cor. 15:20ff.). Jesus says: "I am the resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

A little additional item concerning baptism

*B. Harstad*

*From the 1922 Synod Convention Essay*

*How shall our church work be done in order effectually to show that it is not enough to be a member of a local church, but that we must also be living branches on the true vine Jesus Christ.*

This calls our attention to the work of the Holy Spirit, who by baptism performs just as great a wonder as creating the world and redeeming mankind from perdition. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Gal. 3,27. The seemingly insignificant act of baptizing performs wonders, as foretold by the prophet Ezechiel 36,25–27: “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” Here the Lord tells us about the effects of baptism called sprinkling, or as he calls it by St. Paul, Tit. 3, “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which be shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Important information for the annual meeting in June 2023

**Proposed Amendment  
to the Constitution of the ELS Historical Society**

After discussion and revision a motion was made, seconded and passed to bring the following amendment to the annual meeting in June 2023:

“The board recommends that Article II #4 of the constitution be amended to read, ‘to publish a newsletter, the purpose of which is to educate the members of the society by keeping them aware of the Synod’s history through articles and research and to promote the society.’”

**ELS Historical Society Subscription-Membership Form**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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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.*