

Dedicated to Young People: The Life and Ministry of the Rev. Dr. L. Dale Lund
Presented at the 2014 Augustana Heritage Gathering in Fremont, Nebraska
Rev. Dr. Philip Dale Lund

[Author's note: This paper was prepared for oral presentation, so it will not be exactly what was presented at the event.]

A couple of thoughts by way of introduction: First, this will not be a well-researched and documented biography. I want to engage you in remembering Dale Lund and his life and ministry. At the end of my presentation, I hope we will have some time to share memories and stories.

Second, some of you may have noticed that the title of this session has been modified from the original publicity. These things happen. Some years ago, when we were visiting Fremont, I had agreed to do pulpit supply at my family's church, Sinai Lutheran. When we had arrived, I was looking through the *Fremont Tribune*, and I saw a news release that said I was to be the guest preacher at Sinai that weekend. And the title of my sermon was something like "The Depth of God's Grace." Since my sermon was still in progress, and I hadn't put a title on it, I asked my dad where that title came from. He said they had asked him for a title, and he gave them one that would probably cover whatever I preached. The original title for this session, I am sure, was provided by some of the planners under a deadline, and tried to be broad enough to cover whatever I might have to present. I appreciate being asked to lead a remembrance of my dad, and I appreciate their effort, but like that time at Sinai I need to make this presentation my own.

Finally, thanks to my sister Chris and some of her friends, who put together a collection of quotes from Dad's papers. I have organized them chronologically (I think) and have some copies here. So let us begin.

Dale Lund grew up on a farm near Wakefield, Nebraska. Family and farm, school, and church (Salem Lutheran in Wakefield) were the primary elements of his young life. His farm years were good. He knew that work was good, and sometimes hard. He knew that everyone needed to do their part. He was a very good student, and active in his church.

After finishing high school, he attended Luther Junior College, and he finished college at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, completing his BA in 1940. This may have formed or strengthened his love for the schools of the church.

He spent a year in Chicago, working at a church on the north side with Carl Lund-Quist. There, in addition to getting a good look at life in the parish, he became friends with one of the most influential Lutherans that Augustana produced. And while he was there, he became a Cubs fan. He also experienced the coldest he had ever been, sitting at a Bears game at Soldier Field in the dead of winter.

He began seminary at Augustana Seminary in Rock Island in 1941. Although it was optional at the time, he completed an internship at Mt. Olivet in Minneapolis. He reported that

the vast majority of his internship consisted of visitation. I believe he said he preached for worship there once. Since many people have described him as a good preacher, it was a skill he apparently developed apart from internship.

Ordained in 1945, he began his ministry at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Attleboro, Massachusetts. When he arrived, he introduced new pastoral vestments, the cassock, surplice and stole, in place of the black gown with preaching tabs. There he met and in 1946 married Ruth Carlson, who happened to be the organist at Immanuel at the time. He enjoyed his first call, and then the church came to him with another plan. He was contacted by the Conference President and asked if he would be interested in student ministry at Upsala College. He began his ministry there as Chaplain and Associate Professor of Religion in 1947. Immanuel survived the loss of both its pastor and its organist at the same time.

The eleven years at Upsala were challenging and exciting. He was pleased to help a number of students who were considering the ministry. He enjoyed the academic life, and he prepared to teach for the rest of his ministry. He earned a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, in 1957. He also began his subscription to the American Edition of *Luther's Works*. (In later years, a recurring question was: "Phil, will you want the Luther books?" I always said yes. On one of their trips to the East to visit family, when they arrived for an overnight stop at our house, he brought me out to their car and opened it to reveal the whole Luther collection, ready for me.)

All four of the Lund children were born in East Orange, delivered and cared for by the same doctor.

Toward the end of his eleven years at Upsala, the church called him in another direction.

In July of 1958 Dale Lund became president of Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas. When he reflected on his ministry, he usually said these were some of the most satisfying years of his life and ministry. The college stabilized and grew in enrollment. Several buildings were added to the campus. The struggle for better faculty pay was engaged. He was challenged and stretched by the new role, and he met the challenges he faced. Some of the members of his team at Bethany became lifelong friends.

Sometimes in "Little Sweden USA" he got a little tired of ubiquitous Swedishness, but that never affected his love for Bethany or Augustana.

During this time, in 1962, the Augustana Synod became a part of the new Lutheran Church in America. With that merger came both gains and losses. Suddenly there were many more church colleges and seminaries than in Augustana days. When he left Bethany in 1965, the college was on a firm footing, ready to move forward.

Once again, the church had come with a new call: Dean of the newly-forming Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. He began his work there in August of 1965. We lived in suburban Western Springs, and attended Grace in LaGrange, a large congregation, former Augustana. The first two years his office was in Maywood, at one of the merging schools. Joint

meetings of the faculty were held at the Holiday Inn at the Peru-Mendota exit on interstate 80. During those years, under his leading, three seminary faculties came to agreement on a single curriculum. Can you think of a greater challenge? The Chicago years were satisfying and frustrating. After having gone through the process of building for a college, he was frustrated at having no influence on the LSTC building. He also felt that he was being “micromanaged,” as we now say, and that his years in education were not fully respected or utilized. During the first year on the Hyde Park campus, the church again came calling.

In August of 1968, Dale became President of Midland Lutheran College in Fremont, Nebraska. The work was familiar, the challenges similar, to what he had known at Bethany. He enjoyed the work in another institution of the church, and he enjoyed the team that was assembled for the work there. Midland did well in these years, including the establishment of a nursing program, needed work on the physical facilities, and attention once again to faculty compensation. He kept a file on offers of faculty positions made to minority and female candidates, along with their letters saying that they had better offers (financially, mostly) elsewhere, so that there could be no question about his pursuit of diversity in the faculty.

In 1981 he decided that it was a good time for him to consider retiring, and turning Midland over to new leadership for the next chapter. Again, as it turned out, the church had new plans for Dale Lund.

In September of 1981, he launched Planned Giving Services with the Nebraska Synod. This was an early form of what was later developed by the ELCA Foundation, with an individual representing the various institutions and agencies that related to the Nebraska Synod, and encouraging planned giving for those institutions and agencies. He found it an interesting challenge, similar in many ways to a large part of the work of a college president in seeking to financially undergird the college’s life. Because of his close association with Midland, he also needed to convince some Nebraska folk that he could also work on behalf of other institutions. As it turned out, his work here was not to last long. During that year he began to experience vision problems that led to his full retirement in 1982.

In retirement, he continued to be a supply preacher for many years, and he served a couple of interim ministries in nearby congregations. He also wrote a history of the Nebraska Synod of the Lutheran Church in America, and a history of Kountze Memorial Church in Omaha. He and Ruth continued to enjoy concerts, sports, and other events at Midland.

That’s a sketch of his life and ministry. But I want to get behind the public events and consider what gave Dale Lund his commitment, his motivation, his convictions. These were formed early in his life, and as he shared them with his family, friends, and all those who worked with him; they were gifts he gave to all of us.

Growing up on a farm in the 20s and 30s was a formative experience. At a faculty dinner at Midland in 1979, he reflected on those years in this way: “I grew up on a farm during drought and depression. Years later I learned how tough it had been for my parents, how little money there was, how short we had been on food and clothing. They carried on and did their worrying and counting of pennies in private. When the family was gathered, at the table and at

work, there was love, hope, doing very well with very little and an atmosphere which said, ‘things are ok; we have what we need; everything will turn out all right!”” That basic stance toward life, learned from his parents and family, was a gift he shared with us, and with all who knew him. The love and hope he experienced on the farm became a central posture toward life, family, church, and work. He also wasn’t a fan of chicken, from the depression years on a farm where at least you had that to eat, but that wasn’t an important thing for him to share.

The **community of Salem in Wakefield** had a profound effect. With the family, and in the church, Christian faith was nurtured and encouraged. Salem sent several members into the ministry. Dale Lund was one, and their nurture extended into a gift of pastoral books when he was ordained, and into their prayers over the years. Christian faith was at the root of Dale Lund’s life and ministry. He viewed most things through the lens of faith, from a theological viewpoint. A strictly world-bound view could not persuade him. He saw things from a long view, from a historical view, from, in some ways, God’s view. He was a theologian. And he was convinced of the value of the Christian community by his experience. To the end of his life he carried an appreciation for the “Augustana liturgy” and for the strengths of that church.

Dale Lund valued the **education** he was able to get. He remembered many influential teachers, even from grade school. He made many lifelong friends among his classmates, from the one-room school through his doctoral work. This valuing of education was something he always wanted others to share, and his work in higher education reflected that value. He knew how a liberal arts education could open the world to a young person. He knew how important it is to have the witness of the Christian faith included alongside that liberal arts curriculum.

As he lived out a ministry with and for young people in the realm of education, he never regretted the choice to respond to that calling. He loved the intellectual life, and encouraging others to think deeply. He rejoiced in helping young Christians grow in their abilities, and he loved helping to prepare young people for a life of faith and service.

Even though he responded to the call to ministry with young people in higher education, he always held **parish ministry** in high esteem. He valued the life of congregations, and he respected and cared for the pastors of the congregations where we were members. Some he liked better than others, but he always cared about the work they did. Did he have opinions about worship and about congregational ministries? Absolutely. Would he share those opinions with his pastors? Absolutely. Would he do anything to disrupt the life of the congregation? Absolutely not.

Whether it was the pastor or the theologian in him, or just his bent as a member, he especially valued preaching. Just like many of us, he had his favorites over the years.

Dale Lund taught me (and others, I’m sure) that there is no such thing as a “better” call. Whether a pastor is called to ministry in a parish, or to a specialized ministry, ministry is ministry. There are only *different* calls. Every call brings its own joys and burdens, not “better” or “worse,” but different.

When he came home from confirmation one day, and told his father that the pastor had suggested he go into the ministry, his father laughed. My grandfather had never considered this possibility. **The mysteries of vocation** were one of the themes of our family life. I think we absorbed Luther's understanding that we all are called to be Christians, and to live our faith in the work that we do. When I decided to go to seminary, I believe he was pleased, but he had not pushed me in that direction. When Mary wanted to pursue nursing, his blessing extended to her attending an ALC college. When Kent came to talk about whether he should go to seminary or law school, and was leaning toward law school, Dad told him we can't leave the legal profession to the pagans. As Chris went into education, that same support followed her. I suspect he had many such conversations, from Immanuel in Attleboro to Upsala College and on throughout his life.

I believe he found some of his greatest joy as **a teacher**, whether in a classroom or in individual conversation. Long conversations on issues that mattered to him and to us were a staple of our life at home, and in our visits there after we were grown. I suspect his friends would say the same thing. There were more difficult times in this role as well, such as the time when one of the students at Upsala was the preacher for chapel, and Dale began to recognize the sermon. When he went back to his study, he found it in a collection of sermons on his shelf. Then came the difficult conversation with that student about plagiarism.

He also was always ready to learn from others. Bethany College sent him to Harvard one summer for a course aimed at administrators in private, liberal arts colleges. He came home saying it had been hard work. He also said he felt good to have many of his instincts and decisions confirmed by this study.

At his 90th birthday party, Dale Lund confessed that he was **a Democrat**. I suspect many of his friends already knew that, and that others may have guessed. I know that he worked hard not to let political or other choices get in the way of his work and ministry. When representing college or seminary, he wanted a clear path to deal with others.

It's going back a ways, but when we lived in Lindsborg we occasionally had a bottle of wine in the house, but not much more. He didn't feel it would be good for the college president to be seen leaving a liquor store. And there wasn't one in town anyway.

When he went to Midland, he got the use of a college car. It was a Mercury. When it was time to trade, he asked for a Ford LTD, feeling that it made a better impression than the more expensive car.

That didn't stop his readiness to deal with issues, however. When we lived in Illinois, he wrote both of our Senators in opposition to the Vietnam war. He was dismayed to receive two copies of the same letter from one of them.

When a former Upsala student, one of the first black pastors in the Augustana Synod, was refused lodging in motels on the way to his first call in California, Dad was outraged.

He strongly believed in having students exposed to a variety of philosophies and positions, and that was reflected in the choice of speakers who came to the campus. (This is obviously still an issue today.) He knew that when a controversial speaker was scheduled he had to clear a day or two afterward, to deal with those who called to complain to the president. He strongly defended the need for young people to hear a variety of views, and believed that hearing them in the context of a learning community grounded in Christian faith and values was a good thing.

His concern for those who had less, for those in need, for those who had no voice, for those on the outside, was a lifelong concern. It grew out of his faith. And he saw the church as a place to bring those concerns, and to work for the good of all. In addition, he believed that human communities – civic organizations, governments – had an essential place in looking out for the biblical “least of these.”

Dale Lund was one to acknowledge that **life is rarely simple, and often not easy**. One of his favorite lines came from the comedian Fred Allen, who told of seeing a child run into the street and narrowly miss being hit by a car. Allen said, “Hey, kid, don’t you want to grow up and have troubles?” I didn’t know where the line came from until I was going through some of his papers.

He had a deep respect for the complexity of so many problems. He counseled against rushing in with simple or instant solutions to intricate and stubborn problems. He was always suspicious of any who claimed to have an easy answer to the difficulties that have been with us since the beginning of time. He and members of the family and friends would often engage in long conversations about how to engage the difficult problems of life in this world.

But I wouldn’t be painting an accurate picture if I led you to believe that Dale Lund was always serious. We all experienced his sense of **humor**, and he enjoyed laughing with us. Few things were as good as stories about his growing up, or about things his children did and said. We were not always glad to have our foibles exposed in public, but I have to admit that I have also done the same thing to my children as well.

[Author’s note: In the conversation that followed my presentation, several who attended made note of my dad’s kindness. I’m glad they did, because it was indeed a quality of his that so many of us experienced. I believe that this quality also grew out of his faith, and out of his family.]

This has been a more difficult task than I expected. I wanted to describe my dad’s life and ministry authentically, but not in a scholarly way. I hoped to make this a time for all of us who knew him to remember together. I wanted to keep it fairly short, and I hoped we might share memories before we left. Thanks for being here. Please share your memories with me.