

# The Augustana Heritage Newsletter

Volume 6 Number 1 Fall 2008

## From Lindsborg to Rock Island

### AHA elects new leaders and looks to 2010 Gathering



Following a wonderful Gathering VI in Lindsborg, Kansas, in June, the Augustana Heritage Association is looking forward to Gathering VII in Rock Island, Illinois, from June 10-13, 2010. Gathering VII will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding in 1860 of both the Augustana Lutheran Church and Augustana College. This Gathering will also celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the AHA in 2000.

At the Lindsborg Gathering, the AHA elected new leaders, including the Rev. Donald W. Sjoberg of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, retired National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, as president. He succeeds the Rev. Paul M. Cornell of Lansdale, Pennsylvania. The Rev. David E. Baker of Penn Valley, California, was elected executive director. He succeeds the Rev. Dr. Hartland H. Gifford of Schnecksville, Pennsylvania.

#### Donald W. Sjoberg writes:

Grace and peace.

It was a surprise to be nominated but a great honor to be elected president of the Augustana Heritage Association. With very few AHA members in Canada and having all my pastoral ministry in Canada, I wondered "why me?" The answer from the Board was "why not?" Augustana's heritage in Canada is exemplified by over 200 pastors, interns, summer students, deaconesses and parish workers who served there between 1883 and 1962. My guess is that every AHA member knows at least one of them.

My acceptance was surely made easier knowing that David Baker would be serving as the executive director for AHA. I know he can be relied upon to give the careful attention to organizational and administrative details, and it will be a joy to work with him. After many e-mails back and forth as we dealt with AHA matters, he ended one of his e-mails "are we still having fun?" David helps make the work fun. He and I became acquainted when he served at Christ Lutheran in Edmonton, Alberta, 1960-1965. This began a working relationship and friendship and now, 43 years later, we are teamed together. David is the third Executive Director following in the great leadership tradition of Hartland Gifford and



Donald W. Sjoberg, new AHA president (center), with David E. Baker, new executive director (left) and Hartland H. Gifford, outgoing executive director.

photo by Don Conrad

Donovan Palmquist.

Mention should also be made of dedication and great work of Ruth Ann Deppe, manager of the AHA office at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, who serves as the link in communication for David and me, as well as assisting the secretary, treasurer and editor of the newsletter. Thank you, Ruth Ann.

Elsewhere you may read the names of the officers, members and advisors who serve as the board of directors—a dedicated group of people with a wealth of experiences. Besides meeting once a year, each member serves on a committee which has assigned responsibilities between board meetings. The four committee chairpersons are: Communication and Membership—Loran Bohman, nuclear medicine technologist from Youngwood, Pennsylvania; Administration and Finance—Ann Kohler, associate in ministry from Baldwinsville, New York; Publications and Projects—Arland Hultgren, professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota; and Gatherings, Relationships and Planning—Hal Nilsson, retired pastor from Albuquerque, New Mexico.

There is one other committee composed of those from the area where Gatherings are held to make all the

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*The Augustana Heritage Association defines, promotes, and perpetuates the heritage and legacy of the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church.*

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**At Gathering VI, the AHA thanked four members who have completed terms on the Board of Directors: from left, E. Earl Okerlund of Mt. Jewett, Pennsylvania, La Donna Martin Chalstrom of Cheyenne, Wyoming; Kathryn Segerhammar Swanson of Fort Collins, Colorado; and Elsa Burton Orescan of Wilmington, Delaware.**

local arrangements for the event. Early in September David Baker met with that committee of eleven members to begin the plans for the Gathering to be held at Augustana College, Rock Island, IL, June 10–13, 2010. Building on the experiences from other Gatherings, and especially the evaluations and recommendations from Lindsborg, we have material for a manual to be used for the Gatherings. Special thanks go to the Local Arrangements Committee at Lindsborg who also did a superb job hosting the Gathering.

Twenty years ago Helen O. Danielson asked if there might be a way for those who loved their Augustana heritage to give expression to that love. Bill Leshner, Donovan Palmquist and Reuben Swanson ran with the idea and others joined in a committee to form regional Gatherings. From those people came the idea of the first Gathering at Chautauqua, NY, and the formation of the Augustana Heritage Association in 2000.

The “expression of love” described by Helen Danielson is shown in the endowment of the chair for Global Mission and Evangelism at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, as well as support for the renovation of the Seminary’s chapel. That may not have happened had there been no Gatherings of the “Children of Augustana.” We come together to remember, to renew friendships, to give thanks to God, and to be part

of the church today. So the spirit and love of Augustana lives on.

Your support through membership and gifts is appreciated. Please talk to others and encourage their memberships. May I challenge you to recruit one new member. This would double our membership. Your personal contacts help make it all possible. Please look up the web site— [www.augustanaheritage.org](http://www.augustanaheritage.org) Check with the AHA office (see back page) to order *The Augustana Story* by Maria Erling and Mark Granquist.

Your suggestions and comments are welcome. My e-mail address is [dtsjoberg@shaw.ca](mailto:dtsjoberg@shaw.ca) I join you in the prayers for all God’s people, and for AHA that it will continue to “define, promote and perpetuate the heritage and legacy” of Augustana. Thanks be to God.

### David Baker writes:

When my four grandparents left Sweden as young children or as young adults in the



**Five new members of the Board of Directors, elected at Gathering VI: from left, John E. Norton of Moline, Illinois; Helene Leaf of Moline, Illinois; Dorothy Palmquist of Minneapolis, Minnesota; Lori Nelson of Cheyenne, Wyoming; and Terry O. Denley of St. Peter, Minnesota. Two incumbents were also re-elected to the board. They are J. Roger Anderson of Sun City West, Arizona; and Harold Nilsson of Albuquerque, New Mexico.**

late 1800’s, they came from four different parts of that far northern country to another northern land called Minnesota. They did not know one another. They had never met each other, but the place where they did meet was at the Swedish Lutheran Church in Hallock, Minnesota, in the northwest corner of the state. There they not only met; they shared a common language, common interests and common values and eventually fell in love and married. To those unions were born 15



children, 11 to my paternal grandparents and four to my maternal grandparents. The eldest in each case, who by then had been baptized and confirmed at that same church, were married and became my father and my mother. It's a story that is not unique but rather common. For when our forebears came here from the land of their ancestry to a foreign country and a foreign way of life, the one place they could meet and share not just their language but their values and their interests was in the church of their ancestry.

Years later, when my father, as the oldest son of an itinerant immigrant farmer, was deciding at the age of 30 what to do with his life, it was the pastor of the Swedish Lutheran Church in that same town who counseled him to finish high school, attend the Lutheran Bible Institute in St. Paul, take some college courses and go to the seminary. In the fall of 1930, having only a few months before that gotten married to his sweetheart from that church in Hallock, he arrived in Rock Island, ready to begin his seminary training. No one had told him he could not be married; since he was, however, there was nothing anyone could do about it. Three years later, at the age of 38, he was ordained, in spite of the fact the committee that examined him had questioned whether it was wise to do so. "At your age," they'd said to him, "we are not sure if we will get 20 years out of you." Thirty-five years later, at the age of 73, he finally retired from the ordained ministry, pleased to have lived and served the Augustana Lutheran Church for all those years.

In 1956, at the age of 22, after graduating from both Luther Junior College in Wahoo, Nebraska and Augustana College in Rock Island, I arrived at Augustana Seminary, ready to begin my seminary training. Three of my professors—Carl Anderson, A. D. Mattson and Eric Wahlstrom—had begun their years of teaching at the seminary the same year my father had begun his seminary training. I was now a second generation those men taught. Their influence across a span of 30 years has been immeasurable, and the church today is still indebted to them.

As a member of the Augustana Seminary Class of 1960, I and my classmates were ordained together at the Centennial Synod of the Augustana Lutheran Church in the Fieldhouse at Rock Island High School June 12, 1960. Since then, I've served parishes—all of them former Augustana congregations—in Edmonton, Alberta; Yakima, Washington; Corvallis, Oregon; and San Jose, California. Between my third and fourth parishes, my wife Gloria and I served on the staff at Holden Village, the International Lutheran Retreat Center in the Cascade Mountains of North Central Washington. In 1994, I became Assistant to the Bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod of the ELCA and still fulfill a few of those responsibilities today as a volunteer.

As a "Child of Augustana," it is a joy and a privilege to serve as AHA's new Executive Director. I look forward to the years ahead and to working together to, as AHA's recently elected president has quoted it, "define, promote and perpetuate the heritage and legacy" of Augustana. Thanks be to God!

## Reuben T. Swanson (1922-2008)

### first AHA president

The sad news of the death, on October 3, of the Rev. Dr. Reuben T. Swanson, a founder and the first president of the Augustana Heritage Association, arrived just before this issue of the newsletter was going to press. He passed away at the age of 86 at his home in Fort Collins, Colorado. His wife, Darlene, died earlier this year.

Reuben Swanson served in both the Augustana Lutheran Church and in its successor, the Lutheran Church in America. He was Secretary of the LCA from 1964-78, when he retired. Reuben and Darlene Swanson were active and generous philanthropists.

Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Rev. Mark S. Hanson told the ELCA

Conference of Bishops who were meeting on October 3, "If there was ever a mentor for all of us for what it means to be a person of deep and abiding faith, with an incredible breadth of vision of absolute, resilient hopefulness for the church, a hope borne out of faith, it was Reuben Swanson. Many, many of you, perhaps without even knowing it, are beneficiaries of the generosity of the Swanson family."

The Spring 2009 issue of the *Augustana Heritage Newsletter* will include a tribute to Reuben Swanson, with more about his key role in the founding and leadership in the AHA. We thank God for the life of Reuben Swanson and mourn with his family.

# More than 500 attend 'Children of Augustana'

## Report on Gathering VI at Lindsborg from June 19-22, 2008

by Ronald T. Englund

More than 500 people from the United States, Canada and Sweden took part in the Augustana Heritage Association's Gathering VI in Lindsborg, Kansas, from June 19-22, 2008. "Children of Augustana" was the theme, with sponsors Bethany College, Bethany Lutheran Church and Messiah Lutheran Church providing space for meetings and services as well as wonderful hospitality. Kudos to the hard-working local committee chaired by Judy Burch, the Rev. Dr. Richard Monson and Janet Monson. In spite of scattered tornadoes in the area plus warnings of rain, the weather turned out to be fine.

Lindsborg overflowed with visitors that weekend as the Gathering coincided with the community's annual Midsummer's Festival Weekend. Other visitors came to Lindsborg that weekend for the Volvo Club of America's auto rally and annual meeting. Thus many taking part in the AHA Gathering had to stay in nearby McPherson and Salina.

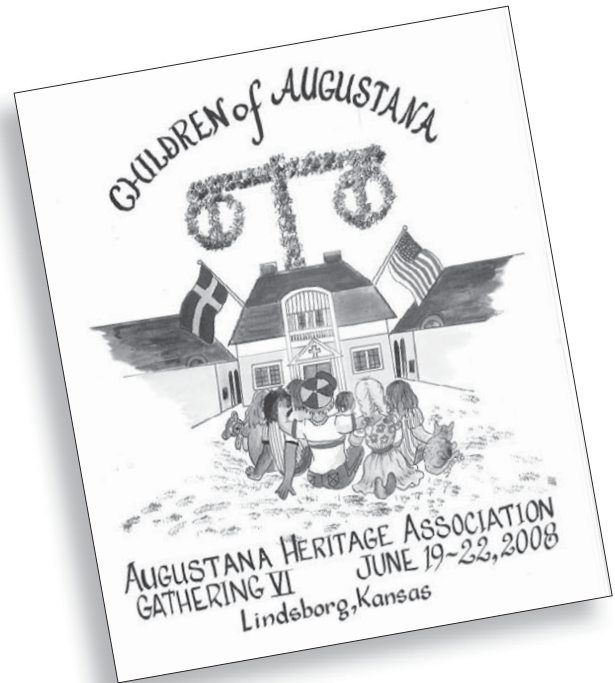
The Gathering got off to a splendid start on Thursday evening with "From the Sacristy to the Performance Hall," a musical history service at Bethany Lutheran Church. Dr. Daniel A. Mahraun, professor of music at Bethany, wrote the commentary and led the singing of classic and contemporary hymns related to the history of Bethany, both church and college. Singers and instrumentalists helped the congregational singing during this memorable evening which also included slides of paintings and stained glass at the church projected on a large screen.

The Rev. Dr. Maria Erling, a professor at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, gave the keynote address on Friday morning on "Putting Youth on the Front Burner: The Role of Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the Augustana Lutheran Church."

Participants attended three sessions for interest groups later that day, choosing from some 28 different groups that met in various places on campus to discuss special topics. There were also lunchtime gatherings for college and seminary reunions, regional gatherings and other group get-togethers.

Friday evening's worship was based on the Lenten Setting for the Augustana liturgy. The Rev. Dr. Donald Sjoberg of Winnipeg, Manitoba preached and the liturgist was the Rev. James Anderson of Bloomington, Minnesota. Before the service, the Smoky Valley Men's Choir, a fine local singing group in the tradition of men's choirs in Sweden, gave a concert.

Saturday's schedule included morning keynote



presentations by three colleges founded by the Augustana Synod—Grady St. Dennis, Director of Church Relations of Gustavus Adolphus; President Edward F. Leonard of Bethany; and President Steven C. Bahls of Augustana. David Swatling, Secretary of the ELCA, addressed the Gathering in the afternoon. The Augustana Heritage Association also held its business meeting in the afternoon.

Participants also enjoyed the Lindsborg Midsummer's Day Festival events at nearby Swensson Park in the afternoon, as well as Maypole-raising and dancing at Old Mill Park in the early evening. More reunions and group get-togethers took place at lunchtime.

The day ended with a "Church Camp Sing" around an improvised "campfire" on South Main Street in downtown Lindsborg. "Remembering and Rekindling the Fires of Faith" was the theme, with the Rev. Tim Leaf of Haysville, Kansas, a long-time church camper, as leader.

Saturday's festive Swedish Smörgåsbord brought the AHA Gathering together with members of the Volvo Club of America and visitors to the annual Midsummer's Day celebrations.

On Sunday morning, John Norton of Moline, Illinois, gave the final keynote presentation on "The Life and Legacy of Lars Paul Esbjörn: Ecclesia Plantanda." This is the 200th anniversary year of the

birth of Esbjörn, who founded the Augustana Lutheran Church in 1860. The Gathering concluded with worship, using the Trinity setting of the Augustana liturgy. The Rev. Shawn Mai of Minneapolis was liturgist and the Rev. Charles Colberg of Longville, Minnesota, was preacher. Veteran pastors of the Augustana Synod, those ordained in 1943 and earlier, were honored at the service.

On Sunday afternoon, after Gathering VI ended, a number of participants attended a Swedish Service at Bethany Church. Bishop Esbjörn Hagberg of the Karlstad Diocese, Church of Sweden, was the preacher and Alf Brorson of Torsby, Sweden, was liturgist. The service, part of the Midsummer's Day Weekend, was sponsored by the American Scandinavian Association of the Great Plains.

Music played a major role in Gathering VI, in keeping with the Augustana tradition. Dr. Karl Nelson, director of choral studies at the University of Central Oklahoma, was director of the Gathering Choir. Dr. John O. (Jack) Swanson of Minneapolis was again the Gathering organist. Sadly, Rebecca Copley Johnson of Lindsborg, who was to be hymn leader for the



**Karl Nelson leading the Gathering Choir**

photo by Jim Turner

Gathering, was unable to take part for health reasons.

Bethany College and benefactors provided receptions for participants during the Gathering. The benefactors included Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, ELCA Foundation, ELCA Mission Investment Fund and Mosaic. Participants gave generously with more than \$12,000 divided among the benefactors (see Page 26).

The Rev. Dr. Hartland Gifford, who completed his



**The Gathering Choir**

photo by Jim Turner



term as AHA executive secretary at Lindsborg, summed it all up when he announced that “Gathering VI is the best I’ve been to,” noting that he has been to all six of them. He added, “I know that at Gathering V at Chautauqua in 2006 I said that it was the best, but I now say that this Gathering in Lindsborg is the best ever.”

**Two veteran Augustana pastors, ordained in 1943 or earlier, were honored at the concluding service at Gathering VI. Martin T. Ringstrom, ordained in 1934, waves to congregation while Carl L. Manfred, ordained in 1943, applauds.**



photo by Jim Turner

## Augustana’s 1939 convention in Lindsborg, a vivid memory for three pastors

The Rev. Clarence A. Leslie of Denver, who is 97 years old and ordained by the Augustana Synod in 1940, has vivid memories of the 1939 annual convention of Augustana, held at Bethany Lutheran Church in Lindsborg. In an appreciative Letter to the Editor last May, Leslie said that he wished he could be in Lindsborg for Gathering VI as he had interned at Bethany Church in 1938-39, when Alfred Bergin was its pastor.

He wrote about the 1939 Synod Convention: “At the time, most of the delegates arrived by train and we had a welcoming committee to meet them. I was assigned the unenviable job as general chair for all the arrangements, a good experience for an intern. Few may remember this convention, but those who do will not forget the disaster of Saturday evening when an estimated 250 delegates suffered from food poisoning eating the evening meal at the cafeteria. All available doctors and nurses had a busy night. And I knew nothing about it until the next morning. It was the one meal I missed all week, because I was in charge of setting up Presser Hall for the Sunday morning worship and afternoon ordination service.”

Leslie added in his e-mail, “Ednamarie and I are blessed with good health. Don’t preach anymore. Quit at 95. Greet any you see who may remember us and have a good Gathering.”

The Rev. Martin Ringstrom of Lindsborg, Augustana’s oldest living pastor who celebrates his 100th birthday on November 9, attended part of the 1939 synod convention. He was a young pastor at the time, serving in Nebraska and drove through Lindsborg on his way to visit his home in Kansas. He attended the opening day’s activities, but escaped getting sick as he left Lindsborg before the evening meal.

The Rev. Ernest A Bergeson of Harwich, Massachusetts, 88, admits that “I was the culprit” at the opening meal at the 1939 Synod. “I was a student at Bethany and worked in the cafeteria. I served the food at that meal.” He also recalled that the night before the synod convention began there was a huge rainstorm in Lindsborg. At the opening session, the local Baptist minister, representing the churches in Lindsborg, thanked Augustana for “bringing the much-needed rain.” P.O. Bersell, Augustana president thanked him and quipped, “Just like the Baptists. Always wanting more water.”

Five Augustana annual conventions were held in Lindsborg—in 1881, 1892, 1904, 1919 and 1939. The 1939 convention was the last one Augustana held in Lindsborg!

# A Child of Augustana?

**Karin Kroon Schaffer reflects on Lindsborg 2008, attending an AHA Gathering for the first time**

A child of Augustana? My plans to attend Gathering VI in Lindsborg this year truly had nothing to do with my childhood ties to the Augustana Synod but rather accompanying my mother who would have a difficult time getting to Lindsborg without me. I did not consider myself a first timer, let alone a child of Augustana, and had no expectations other than to be sure Mom had a good weekend with a group that meant so much to her because of her ties; growing up within the Augustana Synod, married to an Augustana Synod pastor, in addition to her pride of being Swedish!

Plans were being made as to what we would see and do during the Gathering and I could see Mom's excitement about actually being there! There were hymn sings, church services, interest groups, campfire sing-along, in addition to the added benefit of the Midsummer activities being offered by the community at Swensson Park, the Maypole raising and folk dancing; much to see and do; something for everyone!

I watched as Mom ran into people she recognized from Gatherings past, looking eagerly for old family friends and connections to her past. Sitting in Presser Hall, looking around me at everyone apparently as happy as Mom was to reconnect with friends, family and their past, I was amazed at how uplifting it felt hearing everyone singing. The organ began to play another hymn, *Children of the Heavenly Father*, not only one of my dad's favorite hymns, but mine... "Tryggare kan ingen vara". This hymn I know, no words necessary Swedish or English and it hits me! This Gathering, this chance to do something special for my mom wasn't just about Mom; this celebration of a history was not only my parents' history, but mine also.

I may not have walked onto the campus of Bethany College considering myself a "child of Augustana" but I did learn something about myself. Growing up a daughter of

an Augustana Synod Lutheran pastor who attended Upsala College and Augustana Seminary, I was raised with church as an important part of life. Attending Bible camps, Luther League, Sunday School, always being involved, I now realize that keeping the heritage of this Swedish Lutheran church is important! I was amazed at all of the connections between people from all over this country, not only their love of God but their true dedication, love and enthusiasm for their Swedish heritage within the church. I may be wrong but I suspect there is not another synod within the Lutheran church or any other religion that can compare to what the Augustana Synod was and with the determination and efforts of the AHA continues to be!

My Lutheran faith has always been important to me. I have children graduated from Augustana College in Rock Island and currently attending Midland Lutheran College in Fremont. My hope for them is that their strong upbringing within their church families, followed by their Lutheran based education, will enable them to be proud of their Swedish Lutheran heritage too.

A child of Augustana? I answer this question differently now after being a "first timer". Yes, I am a child of Augustana. I look forward to experiencing my "second" Gathering at Augustana College in 2010 and plan on inviting my son to join his grandmother and me as we continue to celebrate our Swedish heritage together!

*Karin Kroon Schaffer of Lynwood, Illinois, the daughter of the late Pastor Paul Kroon and Eunice Kroon, accompanied her mother, Eunice, to Lindsborg. Paul Kroon, who died in 1987, served St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Long Island, New York, Emanuel Lutheran, Bradford, Pennsylvania, St. Luke Lutheran, Willingboro, New Jersey and Messiah Lutheran in Staten Island, New York. Karin, her husband Bert, and their three children are members of Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Lansing, Illinois.*

## A great Christmas gift for all 'Children of Augustana'

Here's an idea for a great Christmas gift for all Children of Augustana and others, too. *Äkta Augustana—Heirloom Recipes*, the new Augustana cookbook, edited by Curtis and MariAn Olson, Luther and Adele Lindberg, is much more than a cookbook. Filled with wonderful color photos, it includes much about the Augustana Swedish tradition as well as providing recipes for traditional foods submitted by Augustana people. Included are six recipes for meatballs (*köttbullar*), four for potato sausage (*potatis korv*), three for brown beans (*bruna böner*), three for pickled herring (*inlagd sill*), plus recipes for breads, cookies, desserts and salads. There are also descriptions of the Swedish Christmas Season with a typical Smörgasbord menu and suggested table prayers.

The book's title means "Authentically Augustana" in English. The authors claim that being "authentically Augustana" is different from being "Swedish American," and give a thoughtful explanation of why this is so.

Do you wonder if a younger generation has any interest in the Augustana Lutheran tradition of their parents and grandparents? Dag Blank may be correct when he quotes Will Herberg and refers to the "third generation hypothesis" according to which, what the son forgets the grandson wishes to remember. *Äkta Augustana* is an ideal gift to help celebrate the gift of Augustana to our lives today.

*See the back cover to order copies for yourself and for gifts to family and friends.*



# Putting Youth on the Front Burner

## Excerpts from keynote address on 'Children of Augustana'

by Maria Erling

One thing I learned from Augustana's history was that every early initiative of the pioneer leaders involved a serious attempt to provide leadership training for young people. Through building congregational schools, training pastors, and finally through the colleges and youth conferences, Augustana's leaders were working constantly with young people. Youth were on the center stage. Augustana's leaders knew that if they did not teach the youth to honor their heritage, to be proud of being Swedish, and Lutheran, and American, the synod would not have a future. And to do this, leaders realized that young people needed to learn something about the history of their church and culture. Without any knowledge of history, the leaders felt, it would be impossible for the young people to feel any pride in their family, their church, or their associations. And, since they were an immigrant people trying to assimilate into American society, they had to compensate for the negative stereotypes. They did not want to lose their young people.

The kind of history that Augustana taught its young people at first is not the kind of history we would tell today. Magnificent glorification of Gustavus Adolphus, Carl the 12th, Martin Luther, George Washington, and other 'greats' filled the pages of *Ungdomsvännan*, the precursor to *Youth's Companion*, which later became *The Lutheran Companion*. (The evolution of the youth magazine into the church magazine is instructive, also, since it shows that the youth culture became the church's culture. Even *Korsbaneret* started out as a youth journal!)

Swedish Americans were influenced by the values and politics of American society. Assimilation can happen on an individual level—a person leaves behind any trace of a heritage and just tries to blend into the broader American society—or it can happen on a collective level, through churches, societies, and private associations. Augustana's heritage was in part a vehicle for Swedish immigrants to fashion a new, Lutheran or Protestant identity in a very new environment. The reason we are here today is that the attempt to fashion a collective identity in America was so successful, that it still serves an important purpose. When we come together in these biennial gatherings, nostalgia is a very important element, but I also detect another impulse even more life giving. We are extending our memories to learn more about the past than to just capture a feeling. We are arguing about the nature of our legacy, and



Maria Erling

continuing to shape a collective response to American society. The Augustana Heritage is still evolving and showing some life and energy to adapt to new challenges.

Augustana's young people had by 1930 indeed become something other than vessels for the continuation of a Swedish American identity. They were fully engaged with the modern student Christian

movement, and had been pioneers in creating a vital, youth oriented ministry: the Luther League.

In the middle of the 1940's the Synod prepared to celebrate the founding of the first Swedish congregation in Iowa in 1848. Even though the Synod had not been founded until 1860, the 1948 "centennial" celebration provided a remarkable opportunity for retelling the founding story. A stewardship emphasis accompanied the centennial to support the home and foreign mission field and the recovery work in post war Europe. The celebration included the various boards of the church, and the youth board was no exception. By invoking the past and celebrating it, leaders knew that they could deepen the commitment of members to ongoing work. Wilton Bergstrand knew this basic pragmatic truth about history, and asked Martin Carlson to write the history of Augustana's youth program. Those consulted about the pioneer years understood how to 'use' the occasion of the anniversary for promotional purposes. Since immigrant pioneer pastors and the settlers had come to America as young people, they emphasized that synod was itself a youth movement.

In the hands of the business savvy stewardship division of the church, much of Augustana's history threatened to become cliché, but Bergstrand and his staff aimed at something more. They understood that the future of the church depended on cultivating and nurturing leadership that was informed and loyal to the church. Invoking the longer, historical narrative was a crucial step in cultivating loyalty, because honor given to the past created generous and enthusiastic support. When Bergstrand communicated to the church that his youth ministry was for the church, not just for the youth, the flip side of the message

was that the church needed to be “for the youth.” Youth programming was not seen transient, focused only on a life stage, or the work of an auxiliary, or as a movement with a fleeting lifespan. Youth work was to be “on the front burner” of the church. That meant enough staff, enough funding, and public support on all levels of the church’s leadership.

### Youth program was not parochial

Augustana’s youth program and its leaders were not parochial. When they spoke of the work of the church they meant the wider church, not just the local congregation. Youth were trained for leadership with a vision for a future American Lutheranism that would engage the world in mission and service. Augustana’s leaders, trained through this exceptional youth ministry, then in the next decades became builders of the mergers that began to come together in the mid-century. But the fine print of Lutheran merger plans in the late 1950’s really worried Bergstrand and his staff.

As the planning meetings for the mergers that would result in the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) progressed,—at first Augustana was in on the ground floor for both of them—relationships of youth leaders were important links between the merging churches. Wilton Bergstrand had stronger ties with youth leaders going into the ALC, and when the decision was made to turn instead to the LCA he began to be concerned, especially with the basic question that he heard again and again from his cadre of local leaders: “Will there be strong youth work in the emerging LCA?” He wrote to Martin Carlson, now Director of Stewardship and Finance, to seek help in getting beyond the “blueprint” stage to actual budget planning, where crucial things were at stake.

Both men were concerned that the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA) needed to catch up to Augustana’s standards. The ULCA had just started with four League Leadership Schools, but to serve the 6,000 congregations the new Church would need 120, and provision for counselor training. He had compiled the statistics on the status of the Luther League in the ULCA, also, and found that of the 2,500 congregations that had not yet organized a league, 2,300 of them were ULCA. Next he noted that the teenage population was “exploding”: “The new LCA will start out with over a half million youth, going on to a million youth by 1973.”<sup>1</sup>

Bergstrand wrote a five page brief called “What’s the Score re: The Youth Work in the LCA?” sometime in 1961, and it contained a clear expression of frustration felt within Augustana’s Board of Youth Activities as their carefully built programs faced a kind of extinction through absorption in the merger. The opening statement makes clear what negotiators were up against:

“To understand what has happened in the youth work of the LCA you must keep this clearly in mind: Dr. Franklin Clark Fry has had a dictatorial stranglehold on every comma of the negotiations that must be experienced first hand to be believed; and Dr. Fry has a notorious and long-standing blind spot when it comes to youth work.”<sup>2</sup> According to the planning documents, the number of staff would go down, youth leadership schools would be planned by youth in the leagues rather than by professional staff, “Caravaning” would be cut back, and funding sources would be severely cut back. In effect, the new church would not provide the leadership for youth work that Augustana’s people had come to expect.

When I was growing up in Southern Minnesota in the late 1960’s and just as I was finishing confirmation, I found out that the Luther League of the LCA had dissolved in favor of a wider participation of youth in the governance of the congregation. We still had a youth group, but it was no longer connected to a system of youth ministry, led and governed by youth. Instead of a youth run auxiliary, with districts, regional, and national meetings and conferences, we would be able to have a youth representative on the church council. But, who and what did they represent? They didn’t have any representative work to do beyond the local congregation, and their leadership skills did not get developed.

### Strong streak of idealism

The leadership of the national Luther League that voted itself out of existence also had a strong streak of idealism. Their large budget ought to be spent on social justice and to fight poverty, and not on financing conferences for privileged youth. So the Luther League disappeared just as I was looking forward to joining it. One of the more powerful institutions for cultivating youth leadership in the church was dismantled.

Many people have stories like mine—and some tell me that their experience in the Luther League wasn’t all that positive. One woman said, “The Luther League was for all the uncharismatic children of pious mothers.” Still she went. But her story was not a glorification of the thing. It was an interpretation of the Luther League. When that kind of sharing happens, we have moved beyond memory into honest history.

That history tells us that Luther Leaguers were not isolated from the pastors and other important leaders in synods and churches. When youth came to conferences, they met other youth from other congregations who were leaders, and they met many pastors, parish workers, college professors, and camp directors. In short, they became acquainted with the ministries, agencies, and institutions of the church. This familiarity gave them access, interest, and enthusiasm about how their own leadership might some day be tapped.

In short, they were, in the jargon we have outworn today, 'empowered.'

The networks of friendship that youth ministry created were probably the most significant strengthening factor in the American Lutheran church bodies in the 20th century. In multiple ways, through women's church groups, missionary societies, the Luther League, the Lutheran Student Association, the Lutheran Laymen's Movement for Stewardship, and then through more activist networks that bridged the various Lutheran groups like the Lutheran Peace Fellowship, the Lutheran Human Relations Association, crossover places like Holden Village, and outdoor ministry, Lutherans learned to know and trust other Lutherans.

### Connecting with other youth

Youth organizations helped Lutherans connect to young leaders in other church groups, and in the college aged and university-oriented World Student Christian Federation, there was an ecumenical link for Lutheran students to other Protestant and Orthodox student movements, and also an institutional connection with students throughout the world, even in the mission fields. If you speak to leaders of the various denominations who were leaders in ecumenical work, you would discover that an important part of their formation for leadership came from their involvement in student movements. Mainline Protestant and Orthodox young people got to know each other personally, before they became church leaders.

But in the 1970's these formal, structural links for students were broken down, too. What happened to the leadership training structures was a kind of infection that wasted the institutional fabric of the church. The LCA shared the fate of other Protestant denominations that responded to the movements for social change. The protest movements did have a point. There were structures that prevented the kind of change that was needed, but many other beneficial things were dismantled during these years. A nihilistic virus that spread during the protest years affected so many institutions—the worldwide Student Christian Movement, the ecumenical movement, global mission, and, probably most significantly, denominational strength and leadership.

Augustana was already a part of the LCA when this happened, but Augustana as a heritage has been able to withstand much of the breaking down of the institutional ethos that was so prominent during the 1970's and up to this time. Augustana's strong heritage is based on the personal ties that were deliberately created through the many forms of youth leadership training developed in the first half of the 20th century. Today our gatherings reconnect Augustana people shaped by the youth ministry program of the church, and who formed a lasting

sense of purpose and identity through the investment that the church made in them.

Now that I have told you something about the Augustana history we have lived through, through interpreting what has happened to youth, I want to remind you that I am using an old Augustana pattern. Whenever the synod was gearing up for a new initiative—like a transition to English, or a new push for ecumenical relationships—the church told young people about their history. They believed that young people needed to learn who they were, so that they could really belong and become leaders. And so we need to invest the same energy with our youth today. They need to hear stories about their church, about their family heritage, about their own people's story, so that they don't feel like strangers. It is time for our church to recommit itself to training youth for leadership in the church for the world. It is time to give youth responsibility, to treat them as leaders, and to relate to them as people who belong to our communities and not as outsiders.

*The Rev. Dr. Maria Erling is Associate Professor of the History of Christianity in North America and Global Mission at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.*

### Endnotes

1. Bergstrand to Martin Carlson, October 21, 1960. copy to Malvin Lundeen. ELCA Archives, Bergstrand papers.
2. "What's the Score re: Youth Work in the LCA" Bergstrand papers.

### View and order photos from Gathering VI from Turner Photography of Lindsborg

Welcome to the website of Turner Photography in Lindsborg to view 616 beautiful photographs from the AHA Gathering VI held last June. Professional photographer Jim Turner took these photos and has made it easy to order them in various sizes. You'll enjoy seeing these color photos from the Gathering. Click on any photo to view it in larger format. You may order photos. These prints cost \$4.99 for a 4 x 6; \$7.99 for a 5 x 7; and \$14.99 for an 8 x 10. If you have questions, please phone Jim Turner at (785) 227-2112.

Some AHA members, especially those of us who are seniors, may be challenged by computers and the internet. Here's a tip that many have found helpful. Have a grandchild or another family member or a neighbor or friend help you to view these lovely photos.

Go to [www.jimturnerphotography.photostockplus.com](http://www.jimturnerphotography.photostockplus.com) and select Augustana Heritage Association.



# Like the early Augustana Swedish immigrants the Church today faces a 'new land'

## Chuck Colberg challenges Gathering VI at closing worship

Like the Swedish immigrants who founded the Augustana Lutheran Church nearly 150 years ago, the church of today also faces the challenge of a "new land," the Rev. Charles A. Colberg told worshippers at the closing service of Gathering VI in Lindsborg on June 22. He called on the church to be open to rethinking "what it means to be a Christian in this new cultural context" of our day.

Chuck Colberg reminded worshippers about the "story of our ancestors, more than a million and a quarter who came to this new land before it was over." He noted that "the farewell to father, family, friends and a home we were never again to enter was not an easy matter," adding that "here they met unique challenges. Here they found religious freedom, but also confusion. Their only resources were faith in their destiny and trust in divine help. Their story is one of men and women weak in wealth yet strong in faith."

Colberg cited the letter that Dr. Lyle E. Schaller, distinguished congregational consultant, wrote to an Augustana regional gathering in 1992, saying that this summed it up powerfully: "The people of Augustana knew what a church was all about. They balanced doctrine, worship, heritage, celebration, relationships, family, teaching and missions in ideal proportions. I have not yet found one that matches it."

Then Colberg moved to the present and the future: "But there is today and tomorrow. And we never did set out just to build and be a little church somewhere. We set out to be God's appeal to the world. And the world today and tomorrow is another 'new land' for us and Christ's Church!"

"Yet how we love to have everything tied down, to hold to moral answers that never change," Colberg continued. "We have treasured our particular views of ourselves, our surroundings, our race, our religion, our sex and ideas surrounding all of that." He reminded worshippers that Christian growth is not possible without submitting all our ideas to correction. "We are in a new time, a new land, people, issues, responses are different," he said. "The way America looked to those early settlers seems like a picnic ground compared to our world in this and future centuries. And our church today, which has become the new 'Augustana,' faces a parallel task." He called for a "rethinking of what it means to be a Christian in this new cultural context, in this 'new land.'"

Three huge issues are part of this "new land," according to Colberg. "One field to be cleared and plowed is the faith's relationship to the world of Science" with all the

questions of creation, evolution, medical ethics, genetics, astronomy and quantum physics. We need "to admit that, in the infinity of the universe and the boundless of possibilities within it, God may majestically exceed anything that anyone has ever thought or written."

A second challenge is the issue of *Sexuality* with all of the volatility and intense feeling that it causes. Colberg said that "a study is one thing and change is another," and quoted Dr. Herbert Chilstrom who said on this subject, "The good news is that change is happening, much too slowly to be sure, but it is happening."

He said that a third challenge before us today is *Pluralism*, our understanding of our relationship to other religions. Recalling his years serving in world missions, Colberg commented that "for those of us who have labored in other lands and cultures, it was a daily reality."

He quoted Dr. Eric Wahlstrom, a much-loved professor at Augustana Seminary, who said, "God is actively engaged in the restoration of his whole creation, and we need not assume that his redemptive activity is limited to what has been revealed to us in the Biblical tradition ...God's infinite love has ways of manifesting itself... even to those outside the Biblical tradition. Wherever people lift their hearts and hands in supplication to a power above on whom they depend...we have a right to believe that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...the God of grace has called them also and has received them into his fellowship."

Colberg said, "What we need for discovering new pathways of salvation in our time is not retrenchment into the past to avoid the great changes washing over our culture, but the courage to go forward into an often murky unknown, trusting that the God who has shown himself to our forebears in ways they could understand, will now reveal himself to us who possess new tools and methods by which we think and feel."

In conclusion, he quoted words from his classmate, Dr. Lyman Lundeen: "At the heart of Augustana was God's own 'love that will not let us go,' which also embraces 'all the children of the world.'"

*The Rev. Charles A. Colberg of Longville, Minnesota, is a pastor of Augustana background who has served churches in Pontiac, Michigan and Marion, Iowa, developed a new parish in Houston, Texas, served with the Division for Global Mission in East Malaysia and Singapore and as pastor of the International Congregation in Helsinki, Finland. Married to Dorothy, they are parents of four children.*

# Ernest and Lois Ryden video Gathering VI as they have all AHA gatherings since 2000

Highlights of the six Augustana Heritage Association Gatherings, from 1998 to 2008, are recorded on video through the efforts of the Rev. Ernest E. Ryden, Jr., and his wife Lois Beck Ryden of Osterville, Massachusetts. Ryden has long professional experience in TV and video production. For ten years he has provided an important historical video record of the heritage of Augustana. This year, with the able assistance of Lois, he offers the seven videos listed below of various events from the recent Gathering VI at Lindsborg.

In addition to filming all the AHA Gatherings, Ryden for many years has provided videos of the annual assemblies of the New England Synod of the ELCA. He has also produced documentaries of the work of Lutheran Social Services, Lutheran Disaster Relief, plus three promotional videos for Seafarers & International House in New York City. Ryden served for 25 years as Communications Director for the Rhode Island State Council of Churches. During that time he moved from behind the camera to in front of the lens, appearing on television. For a quarter century he annually produced and hosted 25 television programs dealing with moral and religious issues, a total of more than 600 half-hour programs for the NBC affiliate WJAR-TV. He served simultaneously as pastor of St. James Lutheran Church in Barrington, Rhode Island, for 29 years. His church was the only church in the state, and perhaps the only Lutheran church in the United States, that cablecast its Sunday worship service live by direct feed.

Both of the Rydens grew up in Augustana parsonages. Ernest is the son of the late Rev. Dr. E. E. Ryden and Agnes (Johnson) Ryden. Lois is the daughter of the late Dr. Victor E. Beck and Elizabeth (Nelson) Beck.

## Augustana Heritage Association Gathering VI—Lindsborg, June 19-22, 2008

Videos and DVDs available from Ernest E. Ryden

### Video No. 1—Thursday, 7:30 pm

A Musical History Service," Presser Hall (Scripture, Art with Slides, and Hymns). Also: Saturday 9:30 am "Lindsborg Midsummer's Day Festival Activities" 2 pm "Visiting the Sandzen Art Gallery" 7:30 pm "Maypole Dancing" & "Campfire Sing"

### Video No. 2—Friday, 9:15 am

Keynote: "Putting Youth on the Front Burner" Maria Erling. Also included: "Hymn Sing," "Devotions, Naomi Strand," and "Greetings from James Echols"



photo by Jim Turner

Ernest and Lois Ryden at Lindsborg

### Video No. 3—Friday Interest Group

"Oscar Benson" presented by David Lindberg

### Video No. 4—Friday Interest Group

"Conrad Bergendoff" by Byron Swanson Also included: Saturday 11 am: "Leaders from three Augustana Synod Colleges" Pres. Edward F. Leonard, Bethany; Pres. Steven C. Bahls, Augustana, Grady I. St. Dennis, Gustavus Adolphus

### Video No. 5—Friday 7:30 pm

"Worship Service, Augustana Lenten Liturgy" with Dr. Donald Sjöberg, Preaching  
Also: "Smoky Valley Men's Choir Concert"

### Video No. 6—Sunday 9 am

"The Life and Legacy of Lars Paul Esbjorn" presented by John Norton

### Video No. 7—Sunday 10:30 am

"Worship with Communion," Trinity Setting, Augustana Liturgy; Rev. Charles Colberg, preaching, Rev. Shawn Mai, Liturgist

Each video costs \$15. Indicate whether you want DVDs or video tapes. Please add \$5 for postage and handling to each order, (no matter how many videos or DVDs you purchase). Make checks payable to Ernest Ryden. Send orders to Ernest Ryden, 22 Spice Lane, Osterville, MA 02655. Phone: (508) 428-1432. E-mail: capecleric@aol.com

# The Augustana Story: ‘A fact-filled, informative, thought-provoking denominational history’

*The Augustana Story: Shaping Lutheran Identity in North America.*

reviewed by Mark A. Noll

The Augustana Lutheran Synod was established in 1860; it merged with three other Lutheran bodies in 1962 to form the Lutheran Church in America (LCA). That 102-year history is the subject of Maria Erling and Mark Granquist's fact-filled, informative, and thought-provoking denominational history. To write such a history at a time like the present has become a difficult task. In the first place, denominational loyalties have thinned over the entire American landscape (a recent Pew survey found that 44 percent of American church-goers have changed denominations at least once in their lives). Moreover, as denominational salience has faded so also have conventions shifted in history-writing. “Church history” is now oriented more to the spirituality, beliefs, and day-to-day practices of ordinary people (with full attention to women and children) than to institutional decisions, national organizations, and the pronouncements of male leaders. Yet by its nature, a denominational history like this one must devote most of its pages to such decisions, organizations, and pronouncements.

A second difficulty confronts authors where the denominations they record have passed out of existence. To be sure, Erling and Granquist can track what they see as “Augustana Legacies” (339, 342), “the Gift of Augustana” (343), and “the Augustana Ethos” (344) in the later history of the LCA and even into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), which resulted from a merger in 1988 of the LCA and two other bodies. But there is no longer a natural constituency for such a work. The authors also ruefully admit that, once the mergers took place, a distinctively Swedish form of Lutheranism, along with the distinctive elements that the Synod had knit together through the century of its existence, retain only a vestigial presence in amalgamated American Lutheranism. Yet to their credit, Erling and Granquist are successful, as other authors have also been, for example, with good recent books on the Canadian Methodist Church (which merged into the United Church of Canada) or the American German Reformed Church (which, after a series of mergers, became part of the United Church of Christ). The success in these cases comes from writing about a no-longer-existing denomination as if its personnel, projects, and problems really mattered then and still can interest readers now.

*The Augustana Story* contains several interconnected plot lines. Most obvious is the ethnic dimension that saw Scandinavian immigrants to the United States seek spiritual support and find Christian nurture among fellow immigrants with a common religious background and speaking a familiar mother tongue. So it was with Augustana when local congregations of Swedish and Norwegian immigrants, beginning in Iowa in 1848, began to gather and when, in 1860, nineteen Swedish and Norwegian pastors met with twenty laymen in Jefferson Prairie, Wisconsin, to form what they called the Scandinavian Augustana Lutheran Synod. From the perspective of immigration history, the story then moved to rapid growth due to a steady inflow from the Old World after the Civil War, then to an amicable parting of the ways with the Norwegians in 1870. Augustana's development followed the standard American pattern—for example, with the early establishment of colleges (Augustana in Rock Island, Illinois; Gustavus Adolphus in St. Peter, Minnesota; Bethany in Lindsborg, Kansas; Luther in Wahoo, Nebraska) and a seminary (also in Rock Island) that supported the church and the Swedish heritage in roughly equal measure.

## Struggles over using the English language

Also typical was the emergence of the church as the most visible institutional expression for many decades of “Swedish America,” despite gaining the adherence of only twenty to thirty percent of Swedish immigrants and their children. Even more typical was the wrenching struggles over whether, when, and how much to use the English language that went on from before the First World War through the ending of open immigration in the 1920s and into the era of the New Deal. For Augustana, the evolving immigrant story eventually included a new set of fruitful connections with the mother Church of Sweden that were reestablished despite occasional dissonance caused by the Swedish church's belief in the apostolic succession of its bishops, which the American Synod never accepted.

But *The Augustana Story* is more than just the account of only one immigrant church, for the Synod sustained complex relationships with other institutions, movements, and personnel that also originated in Sweden. Lutheran Bible Institutes were closest to the synodical story, with their presence welcomed as an adjunct to the denomination's seminary and colleges, but welcomed with some ambivalence because of the strong pietistic



critique that the institutions sometimes made of synodical practices and decisions. Moving a little further from the official Synod was the World Mission Prayer League, which was established by Augustana personnel in 1940 when the Synod turned down a request to add Nepal as a new mission field; for many in the Synod the missionary efforts of the Prayer League offered what the authors call “an outlet...for members frustrated with a developing business-like professionalism...[and] that softened the hard edges of the emerging business model in denominations.” (281) More clearly separated from the Synod were numerous other Swedish movements that eventually led to separate denominations: Swedish Episcopalians, Swedish Methodists, Swedish Baptists (the Baptist General Conference), and Swedish mission-minded pietists (who established the Evangelical Covenant Church and contributed to the Evangelical Free Church). By showing how these Swedish-origin bodies intersected with the history of Augustana, this book makes a solid contribution to the more general church history of Swedish immigration to America. Erling and Granquist stress often that the Swedes were the one national group not to divide into multiple Lutheran sects. Their own research shows that the Swedish exception was not the absence of fragmentation, but a fragmentation resulting in non-Lutheran churches.

### Theological change

Reference to Swedish groups whose pietism took them out of historical Lutheranism draws attention to another story in the book, this one about theological change over time. By comparison with other Lutheran bodies, Augustana enjoyed stronger rooting in the pietist renewals that touched so much of Scandinavia during the first half of the nineteenth century (Norway’s Hans Nielsen Hauge and Denmark’s Søren Kierkegaard represented very different expressions of that renewal). From this angle, the story that Erling and Granquist tell is of transition from a form of pietism that stressed personal holiness and came close to insisting on conversion as a criterion for church membership—through a period of intense theological debate over the nature of the atonement spurred by the subjectivist views of Paul Peter Waldenström—to a resurgence of the “folk church” model when, by roughly 1900, Augustana came to function as the institutional home for a community defined by its Swedish heritage as well as by its Lutheran piety. Then came a period when merger with other Lutheran bodies was considered, but rejected (1919); discussed with increasing interest (1930’s-1950’s); and finally accomplished (early 1960’s). In this period, the Synod’s theology responded to liberal trends (from leaders like Vergilius Ferm), to a focus on international ecumenism (stimulated by Swedish Bishop Nathan Söderblom), to the styles of liturgy and theological emphases of

Lutheran merger partners, and to the perceived needs of a society that had become wealthier, less ethnic, and more suburban. The complexity of the theological story, however, is that new additions were layered on to what had gone before. So it was that when the Synod ended its formal existence in 1962, it contained strong pietistic influences similar to renewal forces of its earliest days, a strong “folk church” element defining itself as a remnant of Swedish peoplehood, some liberalism, some ecumenism, and some concerns attuned to the shifting spiritual needs of a United States much different from what had existed when the Synod was established in the era of the Civil War.

As a non-Lutheran who has long been intrigued by the question of what Martin Luther’s American ecclesiastical descendants have made of his theology, I felt that this theological story could perhaps have been expanded. The distinctive teachings that Martin Luther insisted upon certainly featured justification by faith, which receives solid treatment here in the discussion of theological controversy in the 1870’s. But they also included the Theology of the Cross, a Two Kingdom view keyed to Law and Gospel that provided norms for church practice and involvement in society, the priesthood of all believers, and a strongly realistic approach to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These distinctively Lutheran teachings were, of course, summarized in the document after which the Synod was named (Augustana is Latin for the Augsburg Confession). While these matters are not exactly absent in the book, it did seem to me that the history of institutions and personalities was much stronger than the history of Lutheran theology and distinctive Lutheran practice. In other words, the “Lutheran identity” of the sub-title remained in the background as the authors focused on the institutional history of the Synod.

### Lively, capable leaders

But maybe that emphasis was inevitable for this kind of history, particularly given the need to do justice to the many lively, dedicated, capable, and occasionally cantankerous leaders that the book describes very well. The most interesting founder was probably Lars Paul Esbjörn, who came to America to promote a more pietistic expression of Lutheranism, yet found things so loose in the New World that he turned increasingly to promote Lutheran confessionalism and eventually returned to Sweden for service in its established church. But other founders, like the indefatigable Erland Carlsson and Tufve Nilsson Hasselquist are also sketched very well. And the book is full of telling word-pictures of similarly distinguished leaders: the energetic educational pioneer Carl Swensson who guided Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas; several generations of influential teachers and editors at Augustana College and Seminary

in Rock Island; especially influential synodical presidents like Eric Norelius, Gustav Brandelle, and Petrus Bersell; pioneers of denominational women's groups like Emmy Carlsson Evald; stabilizing leaders during delicate institutional and denominational negotiations like Conrad Bergendoff; outstanding youth workers like Wilton Bergstrand; and many more. The sensitive portraits of these and many other figures constitute the great strength of the book.

But *The Augustana Story* makes a valuable contribution on many other fronts as well. Its treatments of missionaries, art, denominational periodicals, hospitals, and deaconesses provide a sense of Augustana's widespread activities. Particularly effective are the sections that show how important hymn and worship books were for spiritual stimulation and denominational cohesion. The appendices are full of useful information. And the book excels at situating the story of the denomination against American political and social history, especially the Midwestern heartland.

As matters for critique, despite excellent use of a wide range of sources in Swedish and English, the authors never quite communicated what the ordinary "lived religion" of rural or urban members was like—

how they responded to sermons or the Eucharist, prayed, read the Scriptures, or tried to live out their daily lives as Christian believers. The book is also occasionally repetitious, and it would have helped greatly to have a map that located the denomination's chief geographical centers.

Taken as a whole, however, the authors have done a difficult task well. Their record of "the Augustana story" should long be useful to historians of American religion. Much in the volume should also promote the right kind of careful thinking among those who were part of the LCA, who now worship as members of the ELCA, who care about the impact of immigration on religious life, or who value the distinctive theology of Martin Luther and the Augsburg Confession.

*Mark A. Noll is Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History, University of Notre Dame*

*The Augustana Story: Shaping Lutheran Identity in North America* by Maria Erling and Mark Granquist. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008. paper, 390 pages. \$29.00. Available from the Augustana Heritage Association for \$25. See back page for details.

## Pennsylvania church still uses Augustana hymnal

Lebanon Lutheran Church, an ELCA congregation in Kanesholm, Pennsylvania, continues to use the Augustana hymnal every week, fifty years after it was replaced in 1958 by the *Service Book and Hymnal* (SBH).

The Rev. V. Theodore Benson, a retired ELCA pastor with roots in Lebanon church, serves the congregation of 39 baptized members on a part-time basis. This former Augustana congregation was organized in 1870. Benson explains that, when the SBH, the "red book," came out in 1958, the congregation decided not to use it. There was no effort made to even consider using the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW), the "green book," when it was published in 1978.

Lebanon has made some adaptations to the Augustana liturgy but worship is mostly in the tradition of *The Hymnal and Order of Service*, the "black book," published in 1925. Lebanon occasionally uses hymns from the LBW with copies of the "green book" available at the end of each pew. The congregation also uses the weekly Celebrate inserts for worship provided by the ELCA.

One might wonder about the condition of Augustana hymnals used weekly for fifty years after these worship books were replaced by the SBH. Are they falling apart? Do they have a musty odor? Pastor Benson reports that

"we have more than a hundred copies in the church pews at Lebanon and more than a hundred copies stored away." When the SBH replaced the Augustana hymnal, many churches were offering their copies and Lebanon took them.

Pastor "Ted" Benson has served Lebanon for 26 years. He considers himself a ministerial "grandson" of the parish as his great-grandparents, grandparents, mother and her brothers and sisters all belonged to Lebanon. Actually he never served as an Augustana pastor and was ordained in 1955 by the Pittsburgh Synod of the former United Lutheran Church in America. He was baptized, however, at Tabor Lutheran Church, a former Augustana congregation in Kane.

Although the average age of the congregation is 80 plus, there are occasional baptisms at Lebanon Lutheran. For the foreseeable future, this historic congregation will worship with the "black book."

Arlene Norman of Kane, a member of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in nearby Mt. Jewett who sometimes worships at Lebanon, sums up the feelings of this faithful band of worshippers. "I love the rich and beautiful liturgy," she said, "it takes me back to my confirmation days and provides for me a most meaningful worship experience."

# Dan Johnson's fascinating account of the life of an eccentric missionary legend

*Loyalty: A Biography of Richard Gustavovich Reusch*  
reviewed by Dennis J. Johnson

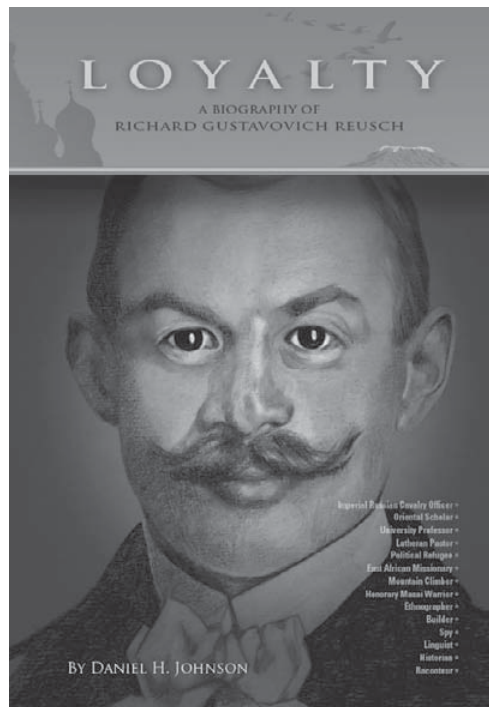
Dan Johnson was seven years old when he first heard the missionary's tale of killing a lion. The story was so dramatic that it was deeply imprinted in his memory and imagination. As he says in his foreword to a book about the storyteller, "It was the best told story I'd ever heard."

Several years later, Dan Johnson sat in a classroom at Gustavus Adolphus College taught by that same story teller. Again, he and his classmates were spell bound by this man and his stories of "ancient Israelites, the Caucasus Mountains, the bloody Russian Revolution and his adventures in East Africa." The man was the Rev. Dr. Richard Gustavovich Reusch.

But, who was he really? He made claims to be an Imperial Russian Calvary Officer, an Oriental Scholar, a university professor, a Lutheran pastor, a political refugee, an East African missionary, a mountain climber, an honorary Masai Warrior, an ethnographer, a builder, a spy, a linguist, and an historian. In addition, he was a "raconteur"—a story-teller par excellence who was held in awe by many, regarded as colorful and eccentric by others and the object of skepticism and even disdain by some.

By the time he retired from the mission field and came to teach Christianity at Gustavus in 1954, Reusch had already established himself as something of a legend. *Time Magazine* wrote about him, newspapers foreign and domestic interviewed him. A crater was named for him in Mount Kilimanjaro. Everyone in East Africa seemed to know of him. The Masai wept when he left them and entreated him to return.

Jim Klobuchar, well known Minnesota columnist and author, wrote, "Richard Reusch was one of those zesty and melodramatic people who flowered in the intrigues of the Central Europe of World War I and later the African bush. In truth, not a whole lot about Richard



Reusch is explainable." One person has attempted to explain Reusch through a study of the historical context and has succeeded admirably.

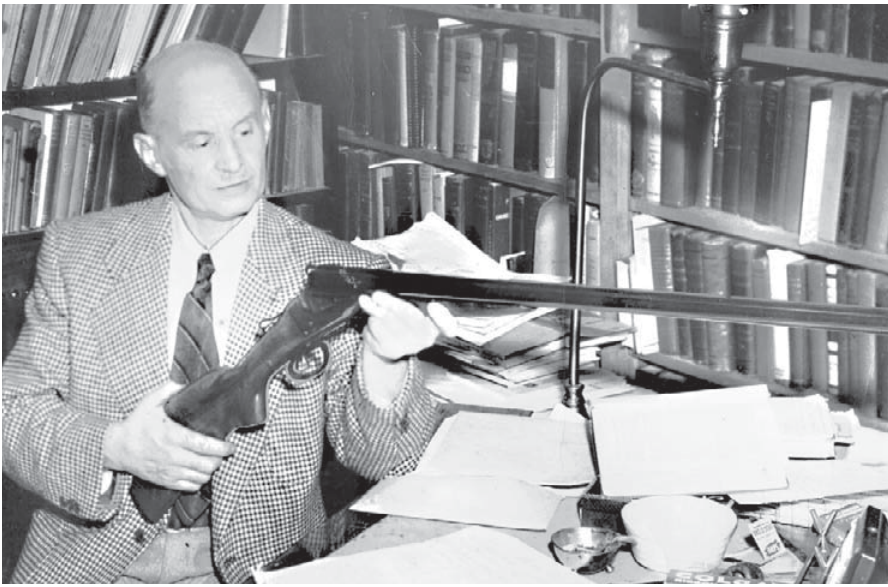
The young boy who first listened wide-eyed to Reusch's tales and the student who sat in rapt attention in a classroom, went on to become an associate professor of Communication Studies at St. Scholastica College in Duluth, Minnesota. His life-long fascination with Reusch led him to undertake a 15 year quest in search of the "historical Reusch." Johnson accomplishes two things in this book. First is the separation of fact from fiction concerning a man he clearly admired. His admiration, however, does not interfere with an honest evaluation of Reusch. The second is, by tracing the life of Reusch, Johnson gives us a lens with which

to view and gain new insight into the Russian Civil War, the cruel fate of the German Russians, the devastation of the Lutheran Church in Russia and Estonia and, finally, a history of mission activity in Tanzania by the Germans and the Augustana Lutheran Americans. The latter is a story that includes the wartime pressures on mission activity filled with restrictions and intrigue, the competitive nature of the various mission agencies and the heroic story of the rise of the indigenous African Lutheran Church.

Johnson's own scholarship and research is an equally exciting adventure as he traveled in the footsteps of Reusch and painstakingly researched every aspect of his life. He traveled to three continents and, in the process, was welcomed into the homes of scores of persons who knew Reusch personally. His work reads like a detective story with the exception that it is a story well documented and has lasting historical value. This work will be of special interest to anyone familiar with the Augustana Lutheran Church and its mission activity in East Africa.

One of Reusch's Gustavus faculty contemporaries, after reading Johnson's book, wrote, "We heard the wondrous and often fantastic stories, knew about his





Reusch loved to hunt

generous grading, saw him coatless in January on Hello Walk, laughed at the idea of \$300 keeping the Masai alive for three years, but never knew the real Reusch. We could and should have done much better." Johnson has brought "zee good doctor," as he was known among Gustavians, to life—warts and all.

The title, *Loyalty*, is perhaps a bit bland for a book filled with such adventures. However, when one reads the book the title expresses so much. Loyalty was a chief characteristic of Reusch. The word is contained in the motto of Reusch's Caucasian regiment, "Loyalty for

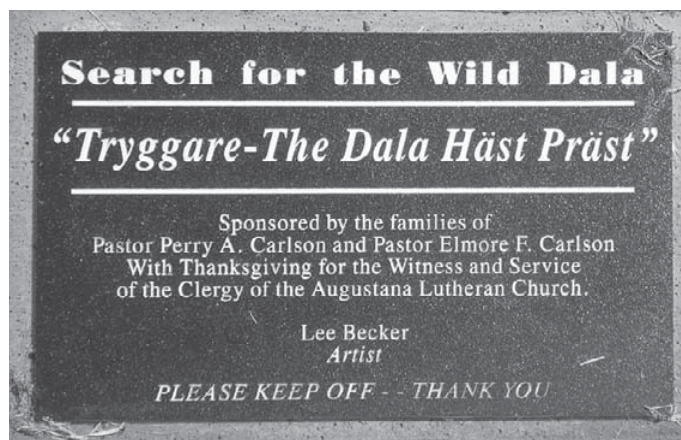
Loyalty, Blood for Blood, Life for Life." For Reusch, loyalty was what counted in life, a concept echoed in the Book of Revelation, "Be you loyal unto death and I will give you a crown of life."

This is a book that demonstrates, once again, that God's servants are flawed. This servant may have engaged in self-aggrandizement and hyperbole, but was faithful and obedient to a cause greater than himself and, therefore, was used in powerful ways to touch thousands of people and to win some for the Kingdom of God. We could use more such colorful eccentrics.

*Dennis J. Johnson of Minneapolis, Minnesota, is a former president of Gustavus Adolphus College.*

*Loyalty: A biography of Richard Gustavovich Reusch* by Daniel H. Johnson. Published in 2008 by SunRay Printing, St. Cloud, Minnesota. Paper, 356 pages. \$25 plus \$6.50 for shipping and handling. Sales tax of 6.5% will be charged for orders shipped to Minnesota. Order from The Book Mark, Gustavus Adolphus College, 800 West College Ave., Saint Peter, MN 26082-1498. Toll-free number (orders only) (800) 847-9307. Customer service (507) 933-7587. E-mail: bookmark@gustavus.edu

## Dala Horse in Lindsborg honors Augustana clergy



Perhaps the most unusual of the ubiquitous Dala Horses that adorn Lindsborg, Kansas, is one that is "ordained" and stands at the corner of North Main Street and East Olsson Street, at the edge of Swensson Park. "Tryggare, The Dala Präst Häst" (Tryggare, the Dala Priest Horse) honors pastors of the Augustana Lutheran Church. His name is a play on words—Roy Rogers' horse, Trigger, and the beginning of that most-loved hymn, "Children of the Heavenly Father," in the original Swedish. Mark Carlson of Sacramento, California, says that the families of Pastors Perry A. Carlson and Elmore F. Carlson dedicated "Tryggare" at the 2002 AHA Gathering in Lindsborg.

## An Augustana missionary family's story of service and survival in China

*In War and Famine: Missionaries in China's Honan (Henan) Province in the 1940s*

reviewed by Lois Carlson

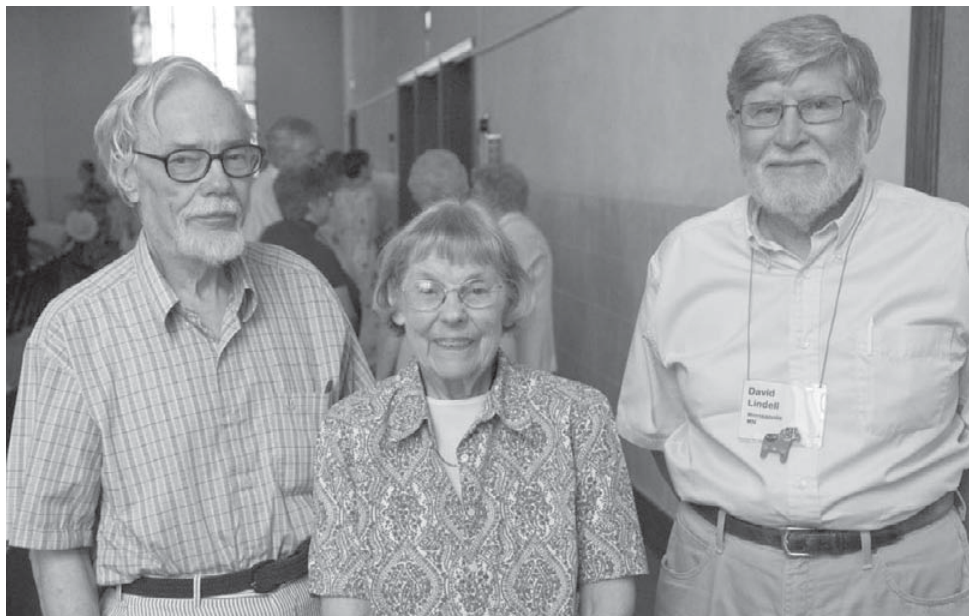
Erleen Christensen was a tow-headed toddler when she traveled to China in 1940 with her Augustana Lutheran missionary parents, Dr. Emery and Elvera Carlson. Sixty-five years later she chronicled that ensuing decade in this meticulously researched and masterfully composed book. In simplest terms it is a story of her family's service and survival. In broader, more accurate terms, it is exactly what the title suggests—a story of missionary faithfulness, ingenuity and courage in the midst of horrendous famine, war and accompanying hardship. Christensen's writing draws back the curtain on a missionary stage largely obscured by the attack on Pearl Harbor and America's entry into World War II, and by the eventual departure of all Westerners from China.

Honan (Henan) Province, in east-central China, is currently the most populous province in the country with nearly 100 million people. It covers 65,000 square miles with flat lands in the east and mountains in the west. It was in the middle of this province that the Augustana Lutherans first established mission work in 1905 and to which the Carlsons were destined.

Christensen's opening paragraph describes the Chinese Nationalist Army's intentional bursting of the levees holding back the Yellow River in an effort to stop the advancing Japanese Army in June 1938. The resultant flood waters inundated 21,000 square miles of land in Honan Province, wiped out 3500 villages and towns, destroyed crops and livelihood, and displaced four million people. Wanting to take the Japanese Army by surprise, the Chinese government gave its own people no warning, allowing up to 900,000 Chinese peasants to perish. Destruction of the levees initiated chronic flooding, creating a "no man's land" dividing the province. When the Carlsons arrived two years later, the breached levees continued to account for wide-spread famine and displacement.

While Christensen's no nonsense book may not be easy-reading, it is an imperative story needing to be told. It is an Augustana missionary story, even though Christensen has carefully included and balanced the contributions of many different missionary groups. Interwoven throughout the book are glimpses of the Augustana missionaries in China at that time: John L. and Lillie Benson, Dr. Arthur Colberg, Ethel Akins, .Sr. Astrid Erling, Alyce Anderson, Alice K. Anderson, Sr. Myrtle Anderson, John W. and Magda Lindbeck, Russell and Eleanor Nelson, Dr. Viola Fischer, Sr. Thyra Lawson, Anna Olson, Mauritz Hanson, Minnie Tack, Dr. Lillian Olson, Margaret Miller, Stella Carlson, Sr. Ingeborg Nystul, Victor and Evodia Swenson, Daniel, Margaret and Nelly Friberg, as well as the Carlson family.

Christensen could have put together a warm, fuzzy memoir featuring her parents—the dashing young doc-



Three participants in Gathering VI in Lindsborg last June were children living with Augustana missionary parents in Honan (Honan) Province, China, before and during the time of *In War and Famine*. From left, George Lindbeck; his sister, Alice Lindbeck Gottneid; and David L. Lindell.

tor and his attractive nurse wife, both raised in Kansas by staunch Swedish Lutheran families. She could have filled her book with family adventure, drama and anecdotes. Or she could have made herself the central figure—an unusually precocious blue-eyed child, fluent in Chinese, immersed in a sea of dark-haired, dark-eyed peers, many of whom were literally starving. But Christensen resists



such sentimentalism and personalization. An occasional lapse in this reserve, however, adds poignancy. For example, after referring to her mother's careful journaling of "each day's discoveries, disasters, and divine guidance," Christensen shares, "I retain only a landscape on which the facts of war arranged themselves in a way both mythic and real. No bogeymen or nightmares disturbed my childhood dreams. Instead, by night, I was stalked by the Japanese lines, a caterpillar-like monster made up of thousands of soldiers. It roared in from the east, bringing the barren no man's land where nothing grew and bandits killed in the night into our city, our compound, our house." She continues, "With my own eyes, I could watch the gleam of a Japanese bomber flying overhead or see the gory separateness of a bandit's head hung on the gate of a city." This was a brutal world with which no young child should be so familiar.

Rather than contenting herself with family lore and personal memories, Christensen scoured letters, journals, reports, articles and books written by a wide variety of missionaries and also government and humanitarian personnel working in Honan Province during those years. And while the book's title may smack of world history lessons and dusty church archives, it tells you exactly what the book is about. It is about a diverse group of some 250 missionaries who, no matter what their national background or denominational affiliation, needed each other. They were friends, colleagues, comrades in mission. They journeyed together on crowded Chinese junks and two-wheeled carts, they dodged bombs and fended off bandits, and sometimes died. They were resilient, resourceful people, seemingly unperturbed by the situation in which they found themselves. They did what they had to do and were forever conscious of the fact that during this time of starvation, warfare, persecution and the lack of the most basic necessities of life, their circumstances were infinitely more bearable than those of the Chinese people among whom they lived.

If there is a hero in this book it is Christensen's father, Dr. Emery W. Carlson. A poor farm boy from Kansas, he had little medical experience prior to arriving in China. Claiming no special medical knowledge and struggling with the Chinese language, he was an unlikely

hero. But armed with a strong sense of call to be a medical missionary in China and with a generous measure of grit and gumption, Emery served with great distinction. He provided medical care to countless persons wounded by warfare, to starving babies left to die on the streets, and to foreigners who contracted dreaded diseases. He kept hospitals open against all odds, helped with relief efforts, and provided care under the direst circumstances. Ultimately he was asked to serve behind enemy lines as an "Advance-base Chief" in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Documents promoting Emery for this position described him as "vigorous, intelligent, capable, and with a pleasing personality." He was hero material indeed.

Christensen vividly remembers an evening in 1948 when her exhausted father, still in his 30s, sat at a table with two even younger missionary men eager for words of wisdom from their leader. She writes, "Emery put his head in his hands and said in a voice quiet and full of longing, 'All I want is peace and tranquility.'" He was speaking for everyone caught up in the conflict and suffering of that time and place. Through her own deep personal interest and scholarly excellence, Christensen has opened a window on this most unusual and heroic time in missionary history.

*Lois Carlson is a former missionary social worker in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and a daughter of pioneer Tanzania missionaries Elmer and Lillian Danielson. She is married to David Carlson, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Russellville, Missouri, and a first-cousin of the author of this book.*

*In War and Famine: Missionaries in China's Honan Province in the 1940s* by Erleen J. Christensen. Published in 2005 by McGill-Queen's University Press., 3430 McTavish Street, Montreal, Quebec H3A 1X9, Canada. Canadian price \$44.95; US price \$37.95. Hardback, 292 pages. Distributed in Canada through Georgetown Terminal Warehouses Ltd (phone (905) 873-2750). Distributed in the United States by Cornell University Press Services (phone (607) 277-2211).

## Augustana Heritage Association—Join or renew your membership

Memberships and renewals are now being received for June 2008 to June 2010

Individuals \$35; Families \$50; Congregations/Institutions \$100

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AHA Office, 1100, E. 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615

(773) 256-0712 or [rdeppe@lstc.edu](mailto:rdeppe@lstc.edu)



# Lively interest in 'Augustana Church in Print' continues nearly two years after publication

## Author Virginia P. Follstad's adventures with the book continue

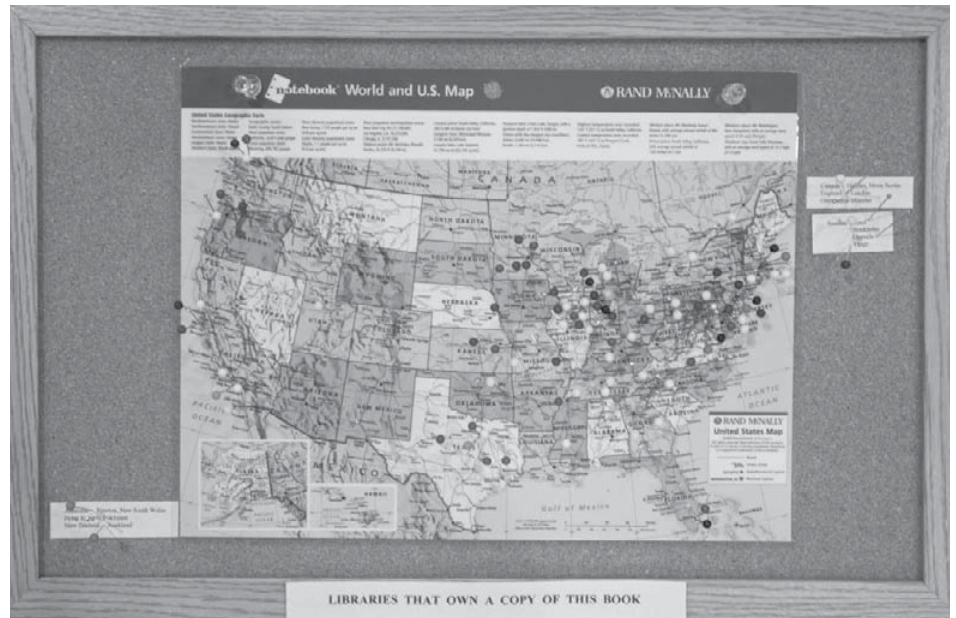
When the book *The Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church in Print* was released in February 2007, author Virginia P. Follstad thought that was the joyous end to a long journey of research and preparation of its contents. The idea and support for this book came from the Augustana Heritage Association Board of Directors as early as 2001 when they asked her to develop the project. Now more than a year and a half later, Follstad finds herself continuing her adventures with the idea and the book. Most recently she enjoyed meeting visitors at the Augustana Heritage Association Gathering in Lindsborg who stopped at the bookstore to chat with her about the book.

Earlier in May 2008, the Swedish American Historical Society of Wisconsin asked Follstad to share a presentation about the book—the why, the process, the content, the relation to Swedish immigration. This Milwaukee program was graciously received by attendees.

To date, at least 156 academic, public and research libraries have added the book to their collections. This number includes five libraries in Sweden, seven in Canada, as well as libraries in Australia, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong, and New Zealand. While many are publicly supported and state institutions, many also are affiliated with a wide spectrum of denominational institutions. A copy of the book is in 34 different states in the United States.

Being selected for the Swedish-American Bibliography project, also known as SWAM, the book joins a prestigious group of books and articles in North American and Swedish publications about subjects related to Sweden and Swedish-America. Items are selected by the National (Royal) Library of Sweden in association with North American institutions that have an interest in Swedish-American studies and Swedish cultural heritage.

The *American Reference Books Annual* 2008 edition included a review of the book indicating that “nothing escapes the notice of the meticulous bibliographer . . .”



US map with pins shows locations of libraries owning the book

photo by Jim Turner

The reviewer continues: “This is the careful work of a librarian whose labor will be welcomed and appreciated by those whose study is Swedish-American culture in general and the heritage of the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church in particular . . . As the work is highly focused, so too would be its expected audience.” Separate mention is made of the numerous annotations and the helpful indexes. Brief reviews have also been published in the *ELCA Archives Network News* and *The Bridge/Bryggan* published by the Swedish Emigrant Registret in Karlstad, Sweden.

The preservation specialist working with the American Theological Library Association consulted with Follstad about the location of several women’s magazines issued by the Augustana Women’s Missionary Society. These files were needed for a microfilm project about world missions supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Invited to exhibit the book at the Edgerton (Wisconsin) Book Festival in October 2007, Follstad enjoyed the opportunity to chat with visitors about the book’s background and content. She was invited to return to this book festival in October 2008.

The book enjoyed a brief standing on the Amazon.com book website as one of the “Hot New Releases”

in the “Lutheran” and “Religion—Bibliographies & Indexes” categories in June 2007.

Follstad extended her stay in Lindsborg after the June 2008 AHA Gathering for a visit to the Bethany College Wallerstedt Library where she checked the catalog for both the Archives and library collections. Special thanks to Lucy Walline, assistant librarian there for her warm hospitality and assistance as Follstad enjoyed the privilege of viewing a number of early and unique Augustana publications listed in her book.

Continuing her adventures related to the book, Follstad regularly checks library online catalogs, lists and websites. To date, at least 255 websites have listed the book, 136 of these in foreign countries such as Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, France, Norway, Sweden and others. She also continues to research additional print resources. Updates and revisions are in process as new information becomes available from these sources.

Anyone with questions, comments or additional information is welcome to contact Follstad at [vpfollst@idcnet.com](mailto:vpfollst@idcnet.com)

“It is truly heartening to realize the reception this book has experienced as it has traveled in manuscript from my dining table to find a new home in published form in locations worldwide. What an adventurous journey this project idea has taken, beginning with the Augustana Heritage Association Board discussions,” Follstad said.

*The Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church in Print: A Selective Union List with Annotations of Serial Publications Issued by the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church and its Agencies and Associates, 1855-1962, with Selected Serial Publications after 1962.* Virginia P. Follstad. Lanham, MD, Scarecrow Press, 2007. 351 + xxv p. (ATLA Bibliography Series, no. 53). \$45. ISBN 0-8108-5831-2.

*This book may be purchased from [abe-books.com](http://abe-books.com) [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) [bn.com](http://bn.com) [scarecrowpress.com](http://scarecrowpress.com) Autographed copies from the author are available from Virginia Follstad, W3546 Vannoy Drive, Whitewater, WI 53190*

## Seafarers & International House makes ‘room in the inn’ for asylum seekers

by Marsh Luther Drege

Seafarers & International House (SIH), a Lutheran hospitality ministry to seafarers and sojourners in New York City that was founded by Augustana in 1873, is continuing to reach to the least, last, and lost. Each year SIH ministers to 700 ships and over 14,000 seafarers from all over the world through on-vessel visitation by chaplains in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. SIH also welcomes thousands of sojourners each year (seafarers, church groups, international visitors, women in transition) at the guesthouse near Union Square in Manhattan. Now SIH is partnering with asylum seekers who are seeking safe, immediate, and acute housing after they have been released from detention centers, especially a center in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Several detention centers have been set up across the United States where people seeking asylum or refuge or who have entered the United States without documentation are being held while the government decides whether or not to deport them.

“Immigrants being detained in public jails is a sign of a broken system, which is why we as a church must strengthen our voices to call on our country for a just immigration policy,” said the Rev. John D. Schleicher, bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod of the

ELCA. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) recently organized visits by ELCA bishops to some of these detention centers.

“You’re reminded on a tour like this how many immigrants are tucked into hundreds of odd corners of the vast prison system in the United States, small pockets of confused, isolated people, most of whom can’t communicate with people who have the keys, and who have little idea of what is happening to them,” said Annie P. Wilson, LIRS executive vice president.

When asylees are finally released from one of these detention centers they are often left temporarily homeless because any family they might have had in the area have left or any lease they previously had on a housing option has expired. For calendar year 2008, Seafarers & International House has allocated approximately \$5,000 for lodging for individuals granted asylum and needing temporary housing.

SIH continues to honor the longtime commitment of the Augustana Lutheran Church to housing sojourners who continue to come to our shores.

*The Rev. Marsh Luther Drege is pastor and executive director of Seafarers & International House.*

# Talking with George Lindbeck

Maria Erling profiles a theologian born in China to Augustana missionaries, who was a professor at Yale for 42 years

I have been asked to provide readers of the *Augustana Heritage Newsletter* with a profile of Dr. George Lindbeck, a man who does not need an introduction in Augustana circles. Still, he may be not so well known even if his name is familiar, since his work has been so concentrated in the academic world. I felt therefore that I could provide a service for the Augustana Heritage Association readers by writing especially about Lindbeck's theological contributions in the ecumenical and scholarly world and how these contributions relate to the situation of the church in the world today, concerns that I am sure Augustana readers share.

This assignment gave me the welcome opportunity to spend some time in an extended conversation with Lindbeck while he was attending his first Augustana Heritage Association Gathering. In Lindsborg he could also enjoy a visit with his sister, Alice Gottneid, a former missionary in Africa, now retired there. Reflecting on the Gathering, Lindbeck observed the remarkable strength of social bonds formed through the Augustana church, and especially through its common seminary. "It seems obvious once you recognize it," he said, "but the fact that there was only one seminary—while other Lutheran churches were more splintered—this unity made for deep bonds and created a capital that is still being drawn on." Lindbeck notices things like this, but doesn't stop there—he goes beneath the surface—he knows why things are the way they are.

Lindbeck's work as a theologian, and a teacher, was not self-consciously undertaken as a specific extension of Augustana Lutheranism, however. When I asked what he thought may have been an influence from the Augustana church on his own development as a scholar, Lindbeck asserted several times that he was simply a Lutheran theologian. This may be another way of saying that an Augustana perspective is not sectarian in any way; it is just Lutheran.

Our talk about his development as a Lutheran theologian who was interested in ecumenism began with some memories of his childhood in rural, north central China, in Louyang, where Lindbeck was born in 1923. Though Louyang was a city on the famous Silk Route, there were no modern amenities—for instance, no plumbing nor electricity. At the mission station where his father served from 1912-1949, with only a short interruption during the war, the Lindbeck family lived much as people had lived in pre-modern times. Other aspects of the missionary experience were less isolating.



photo by Jim Turner

Maria Erling chats with George Lindbeck at Lindsborg Gathering

For missionary children during these decades, boarding schools provided brought them into contact with a wide variety of other expatriate missionary families. Students at the well-known Jigongshan School provided Lindbeck with his first ecumenical encounters. He argued about a baptismal theology with his Southern Baptist roommate. He learned a more fervent sacramental piety from a Norwegian Lutheran teacher. And he began to understand the complexities of American patriotism when arguing about the civil war with a Southerner.

Home base for the Lindbeck family on furlough was in Minnesota, where a different ecumenical encounter with cousins who were Roman Catholic surprised the young Lindbeck because their piety and Bible reading contradicted what any typical Protestant child would know, that Roman Catholics did not read the Bible. The mystery of their counterexample was one of the factors that pushed him into further study of Catholicism. He wanted to know why his cousins were different and defied the stereotype. This question, like other challenges posed by his theologically argumentative peers at his school in China, shaped his career.

The international Lutheran and Roman Catholic ecumenical dialogue that Lindbeck participated in has been the chief way that Lutheran church people in America have known about Lindbeck. How did Lindbeck become such a noted ecumenist? Augustana Seminary



certainly did not specialize in ecumenical theology during the 1940's when Lindbeck studied there, but the biblical training he did receive was well regarded by the Yale faculty when he began his doctoral work. Lindbeck mentioned especially that Eric Wahlstrom, who attended the scholarly conferences in his field, was well enough known by them so that he could enter fully into his theological studies at Yale without delay.

At the time Yale had a very highly regarded theological faculty, with leading voices articulating a 'neo-orthodox' theology. This was also a theological movement that informed the faculty at Augustana Seminary, but neo-orthodoxy at Augustana served a different purpose. Yale's faculty was concerned about liberalism and were becoming neo-orthodox from a disillusionment with liberal theology. Augustana's faculty were also attracted to neo-orthodoxy out of a worry over fundamentalism. They came to neo-orthodoxy because it helped them break away from narrow pietism, or biblicism. So Yale and Augustana Seminary were similar in some ways, even though they were moving in different directions. The tone was different at Yale, more sober, as theologians there worked to retrieve "orthodoxy." At Augustana, there was a kind of theological freedom made possible by neo-orthodoxy.

At Yale, because of his interest in Roman Catholicism, Lindbeck worked with Robert Calhoun, a legendary teacher of philosophy and theology, who was especially noted for his comprehensive rigor and a remarkable ability to describe doctrinal positions of Unitarians and Eastern Orthodoxy in ways satisfactory to their adherents. Calhoun also had expertise in the early history of the church, and study with him filled in gaps that the traditional Lutheran and Protestant curriculum of Augustana Seminary did not cover, like Lindbeck's specialty, medieval theology.

From his work with Calhoun, Lindbeck developed his careful, descriptive manner of explicating the essential issues in any theological dispute. He demonstrated to students and clergy who came to hear him explain the state of ecumenical dialogue that there were fundamental theological and philosophical issues at stake, but he was able to help us understand where the exact differences lay in language that was not polemical, but instead so balanced, and fair, that it is hard to imagine Lindbeck ever making a crusading speech.

Still, Lindbeck's ecumenical career was hardly quiet, or retiring. Instead he was on the front lines of the most significant ecumenical experience in the 20th century, when he served as a Protestant "observer" at Vatican II. Because Lindbeck was well versed in Roman Catholic theology, and had also studied in France, and had the blessing of Yale to be away from his teaching for two years, he had the privilege of representing Lutherans at the council. Observers also had very special access to the proceedings. They sat near the cardinals, had interpret-

ers provided for them, and were frequently consulted. It is hard today to imagine the enthusiasm that characterized the ecumenical movement at that time. After Kennedy's election at the first Roman Catholic president, even wary Protestants became interested in a church that might possibly be changing. The breakdown of many institutions, the push beyond colonialism, and the tension between communism and the "free" West, gave a heightened sense even to ordinary people in the pews that dramatic possibilities were opening up. And from Lindbeck's reports you can sense the spirit that pervaded the council in his writing. It is youthful, expectant, even while critical and candid.

A constitutively anti-polemical Lutheran theologian would naturally stand out at any time, since disputation is the normal, default mode for most Lutheran theologians. The ecumenical movement, however, demanded that Lutheran dialogue partners think about and articulate their tradition within a larger theological and ecclesial context in such a way that others could remain other and find within their own tradition the path to unity. It was not enough to build a fortress and defend a position, or demand that others see the light and come over. Lutheran theologians needed to talk about differences without combatively drawing lines. Not all Lutherans were or are up to this task. Lindbeck modeled and taught Lutherans how to understand and articulate a new ecumenical openness from their tradition. He fostered an understanding and vision of Lutheranism as a reforming evangelical movement within a wider catholic church.

Lindbeck's ongoing efforts to help students see how theological work could function in service to the church happened alongside his work as an ecumenical leader. Changes in the university, in seminaries, and particularly in the expanding field of religious studies would make theological work, and even theological advances, of a fleeting nature if students did not understand what a theological tradition was and how it could develop.

Among theologians, and in the wider scholarly community, Lindbeck is best known for *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. This book came out in 1984, and described a method of understanding doctrine, not as a compilation of absolute truth statements or propositions, nor as timely expres-



**George Lindbeck, 14, on his Confirmation Day in 1937 in Jigongshan, Henan, China**

photo courtesy of Lindbeck family

sions of Christian experience, but instead as a kind of 'rule' for Christian thought, belief, and practice. Doctrine was like a grammar for a Christian language. The intended audience was ecumenically engaged theologians who were also interested in doctrine, but the subtitle of the book promised to be of help on another level. It provided a program for religiously interested and intellectually engaged believers who saw no future for a church stuck in polarization between conservative and liberal positions. Postliberal theology has been associated with Lindbeck and his colleagues at Yale—where doctoral students and divinity students as well have learned to think about the future of the church in a pluralistic time in promising, if more modest, ways. Lindbeck told students at Yale that they would be serving and teaching in a time when Christendom is over. He proposed that the church would be more true to itself by finding newer, more sustaining images for its corporate life. Models for this kind of ecclesiology can perhaps be retrieved, Lindbeck writes, in biblical concepts such as the "people of Israel" into which Christians have been grafted, or invited, through Christ. Were Christians to understand themselves as a "people" rather than program builders, or moralizing agents, there could be the possibility again for creating "deep bonds" among believers, and even between Christians and Jews, as long as Christians did not presume that they alone held on to God's promises. Such a church would need to rely on the intrinsic strength of its own transmission of the faith—through practice, devotion, worship, and service—and not rest within the external support it once received from the culture.

Lutheranism in the past two decades has in some ways moved in the opposite direction from Lindbeck's proposals. We have engineered and accepted merger designs that created a more visible and more corporately prominent style of denominational life and left behind older ethnically based forms of Lutheranism as a "peoplehood." The social bonds that would now be so valuable for Christian life were once cultivated effectively in smaller networks, but now the feeling of familiarity and belonging is created according to politically oriented agendas. A more healthy future for Lutheranism would involve active retrieval of these older practices and cultivation of a new, more broadly realized sense of being Christian "people." These proposals are not abstractions, or based on a programmatic ideology. Instead they rely on the very basic practices of story telling, friendship, faithful listening to scripture, common worship, caring, and communal sharing in meals, work, and prayer. Lindbeck's proposals came out of the experience and conviction that Lutherans can do this basic Christian work.

It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to talk to George Lindbeck at the conclusion of the Bethany Gathering and to be reminded so strongly of the effectiveness of his observation and teaching. He set me



photo courtesy of Lindbeck family

**Lindbeck family in Shanghai in 1927. Back row, J. Walter Lindbeck, Magda G. Lindbeck, John. Front row: Louise, Alice, George**

thinking again, as he always did, and I hope the same happens to readers of this little article. T.N. Hasselquist started his newspaper with the comment that, since his readers lived so far away from each other, yet shared so much in common, the paper would form a way for them to do what Christian people needed to do: learn to know each other better so that they could support each other and be encouraged.

*The Rev. Dr. Maria Erling is Associate Professor of the History of Christianity in North America and Global Mission at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.*

*Ronald Englund comments: In a conversation with George Lindbeck at the Lindsborg Gathering, he told me of a moving experience from his childhood in China that has remained with him throughout his life. He said: "One of my most vivid experiences of utter serenity took place in my early childhood when I remember waking up in the middle of the night as my father was carrying me in his arms to a sandbagged room in the basement of our home. My father had prepared the room for times of war and bombings. Bands of robbers were roaming and firing at the fortifications behind our house. Yet I had a sense of utter and complete security, even though I knew bullets were hitting the house."*

*He added that he had never before put a theological interpretation on this event but believes it is like our understanding of God as Father.*

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## NEWS AND EVENTS

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### **More than \$12,000 in offerings at Gathering VI at Lindsborg**

Offerings topped \$12,000 for four designated beneficiaries at the AHA Gathering VI in Lindsborg, Kansas, in June. David E. Baker, AHA executive director, reports that over \$7,000 was received at worship service offerings to be divided equally between Bethany College in Lindsborg, the Jenny Lind Chapel in Andover, Illinois, and Seafarers & International House in New York City. In addition, checks made out to each beneficiary were sent directly to them: \$875 for Bethany; \$35 for the Jenny Lind Chapel; and \$100 for Seafarers & International House. More than \$4,000 was given in the special offering at the door for Lutheran Disaster Relief. "Thank you to all who gave. Your generosity can be contagious," Baker said.

### **Plans underway for Gathering VII in 2010 in Rock Island, Illinois**

Plans are underway for AHA Gathering VII to be held in Rock Island, Illinois, from June 10-13, 2010 as AHA Executive Director the Rev. David E. Baker met with the Local Arrangements Committee on September 2. All the committee members are from Illinois. The co-chairs are the Rev. Michel Clark of Knoxville and Helene Leaf of Moline. The vice-chair is the Rev. Dan Witkowski of Moline. The secretary is John Norton, and the assistant secretary is Dennis Norling. The treasurer is Loryann Eis. All three are from Moline.

Other committee members include Nancy Gustafson of Geneseo; Ruth Anne Hartman of Taylor Ridge; the Rev. Richard Priggie of Rock Island; Lozetta Sandin of East Moline; and Kai Swanson of Rock Island.

### **Augustana Scholarship in Canada awarded for the first time**

The Rev. Jeff Decelle, ordained by

the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) in June, was first recipient of the new Augustana Scholarship, given to a graduating student at the Lutheran Theological Seminary Saskatoon. He graduated last May and is serving congregations in Edberg and New Norway, Alberta. The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Peterson of Saskatoon, an AHA member, who initiated this scholarship, reports that there are now more than \$16,000 (Canadian dollars) in the fund and that "we hope to soon increase it to \$20,000." Plans to establish this Augustana Scholarship were announced at the 2006 Gathering at Chautauqua.

### **Mosaic installs Linda Timmons as president and CEO**

Mosaic, an international Lutheran ministry dedicated to the needs of people with disabilities, installed Linda Timmons as president and chief executive officer at Rejoice! Lutheran Church in Omaha on September 18. The Rev. Mark Hanson, ELCA presiding bishop, officiated. She succeeds Dr. David Jacox, who is president and CEO of The Mosaic Foundation.

Mosaic was formed in 2003 by the consolidation of two Nebraska-born Lutheran ministries. Bethphage was founded in 1913 by the Augustana Lutheran Church. Martin Luther Homes began in 1925.

### **Honorary degree for Hjelm at Uppsala University**

The Rev. Norman A. Hjelm of Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, will be awarded an honorary Doctor of Theology degree by Uppsala University in Sweden on January 23, 2009. An AHA member who has spoken at Gatherings and written for the Newsletter, he has served as Director and Senior Editor of Fortress Press; Director of the Department of Communication of the Lutheran

World Federation; and Director of the Commission on Faith and Order of the National Council of Churches.

### **Former Swedish Lutheran Home now Lutheran Healthcare Center**

The Lutheran Home in Worcester, Massachusetts, which Augustana Lutherans in New England remember as the Swedish Lutheran Old People's Home, was rechristened the Lutheran Healthcare Center early this year. Founded by Augustana in 1920, it now cares for older adults of all faiths "in an atmosphere of compassionate attention to the physical and spiritual needs of all residents." The Jeppson wing offers private and semi-private residential support for elders, while the Olander wing is for those who require 24-hour care and supervision. The Lutheran Healthcare Center is part of Lutheran Social Services of New England.

### **Halmarson, another Lutheran bishop of Augustana heritage**

The Rev. Cynthia Halmarson, bishop of the Saskatchewan Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, is another current Lutheran bishop with Augustana roots. She was baptized at the Augustana congregation in Bristol, Connecticut prior to the 1962 merger that formed the Lutheran Church in America. The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Peterson of Saskatoon reports that she also served her internship with him at Augustana, Saskatoon, and was later the assistant pastor at this church. He also preached at her ordination in Bristol.

### **Special showings on television for landmark civil rights film**

Special showings of "A Time for Burning," the 1965 landmark civil rights film featuring the struggles of Augustana Lutheran Church in Omaha, Nebraska and its pastor, the Rev. L. William Youngdahl, were



planned nationally during October 2008. The Documentary Channel showed the film three times and in theaters in Nebraska and New York. In the 58-minute film, produced by Lutheran Film Associates, Youngdahl tries to get his all-white congregation to reach out to African American Lutherans. In 2006, "A Time for Burning" was added to the Film Registry of the Library of Congress as one of more than 400 preserved for their cultural, historic and artistic significance.

### **Aina Abrahamson, librarian and missionary, dies at 93**

Aina Abrahamson, one of the oldest AHA members to attend Gathering VI last June, died in Thousand Oaks, California, on October 16 at the age of 93. She served as a librarian at California Lutheran University for 20 years before retiring in 1982. Earlier she was a teacher, serving at Ashira Girls' School and Marangu Teachers' Training College in the former Tanganyika, now Tanzania, East Africa. She was also a leader in preserving and promoting Scandinavian culture.

### **'Forgotten Ellis Island' on PBS in January**

"Forgotten Ellis Island," the film and book project by Lorie Conway, which includes the story of the Hallgren family, Augustana Lutherans who settled in Massachusetts, will be tele-

vised nationally on PBS at 10 pm Eastern Standard Time on Monday, January 26, 2009. The Spring 2008 issue (Vol.5, No.4) of *The Augustana Heritage Newsletter* told the sad story of Hildegard Hallgren on page 17.

### **Jenny Lind Chapel needs urgent preservation work**

The Jenny Lind Chapel in Andover, Illinois, the first church of the Augustana Synod, needs urgent preservation work. The Rev. Robert L. (Bob) Pearson of East Moline, Illinois, reports the need for \$25,000 for repairs to the doors, window sills, interior plaster and other parts of the fabric of this historic building built in 1850. Pearson, who chairs the Jenny Lind Chapel Endowment, says that the Trust is unable to produce sufficient funds to meet its operating budget of about \$15,000 for this year. The Northern Illinois Synod of the ELCA, which now owns the building, is encouraging a capital funds appeal to insure the survival of the chapel and its ministry. Contributions are much appreciated. Send gifts to the Jenny Lind Endowment Trust, Jenny Lind Chapel Committee, Northern Illinois Synod ELCA, 3400 Seventh Avenue, Rock Island, IL 61201.

### **Esbjörn Bicentennial concludes with October 16 celebration**

Celebrations marking the 200th

anniversary of the birth of Lars Paul Esbjörn (1808-1870) concluded on October 16 in Delsbo, Hälsingland, Sweden, the town where he was born. The birthday celebration included a summary of the Esbjörn Jubilee Year, a discussion of "How shall the Church be planted for the future?" as well as discussions of globalization, migration and the Church of Sweden abroad. Esbjörn founded the Augustana Lutheran Church in 1860. *The Augustana Heritage Newsletter* will carry more information about the Esbjörn Bicentennial in the Spring 2009 issue.

### **Newlywed at Gathering VI dies at the age of 93**

We sadly report that the Rev. Arnold H. Nelson, a retired pastor who, with his new bride, attended the AHA Gathering VI in Lindsborg in June, died on August 30, 2008 at the age of 93. Nelson, a widower, and Yvonne Dorn, 80, a widow, married on May 30, 2008 at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Lansing, Michigan. They lived at the Great Lakes Christian Home in Holt, Michigan. A memorial service for Pastor Nelson was held on September 13. The Nelsons honeymooned at the Lindsborg Gathering where many participants had the opportunity to congratulate them over their marriage.

### **Word from the editor**

Apologies for the late appearance of this Fall 2008 issue of *The Augustana Heritage Newsletter*. Our plan was to publish during October, but a number of editing problems arose that made this impossible. As one who has "failed retirement" by taking on too many assignments, I hope to be more organized in the new year. There was too much worthwhile material to publish in this issue and I have held over several articles for publication in the two issues during 2009.

Besides our focus on the Gathering VI in Lindsborg and the new AHA leaders, we have three book reviews in this issue. We are especially grateful to Mark Noll of Notre Dame University, a leading church historian, for writing his

thoughtful review of *The Augustana Story* by Maria Erling and Mark Granquist.

Again, I thank Ruth Ann Deppe in the AHA office in Chicago and Ann Rezny, our graphic designer, for their invaluable help. I am grateful for their patience with me during my struggles with many deadlines during the past two months.

I continue to welcome your comments and suggestions for articles in future issues. There will not be room for everything, but I will make every effort to include as much as possible.

—Ronald T. Englund

## Books, CDs and DVDs on sale

The books, CDs and DVDs listed may be ordered from the AHA office (see details below).

### Books

#### ***Äkta Augustana: Heirloom Recipes***

Edited by Curtis and MariAn Olson and Luther and Adele Lindberg. A collection of recipes and Swedish traditions gathered by AHA members. \$20 plus \$5 postage and handling.

#### ***The Augustana Story: Shaping Lutheran Identity in North America***

By Maria Erling and Mark Granquist (Augsburg Fortress, 2008). \$25 plus \$5 postage and handling.

#### ***The Augustana Heritage: Recollections, Perspectives, and Prospects***

Edited by Arland J. Hultgren and Vance L. Eckstrom. Essays from presentations at the 1998 AHA Gathering at Chautauqua, NY. (Chicago: Augustana Heritage Association, 1998) \$10 including postage and handling.

#### ***The Heritage of Augustana: Essays on the Life and Legacy of the Augustana Lutheran Church***

Edited by Hartland H. Gifford and Arland J. Hultgren. Essays from the 2000 AHA Gathering in Rock Island and the 2002 AHA Gathering in Lindsborg. (Kirk House Publishers, Minneapolis, 2004). \$20 including postage and handling.

#### ***Songs of Two Homelands—Hymns and Liturgy of the Augustana Lutheran Tradition, 2nd edition***

Edited by Ronald T. Englund, Glenn C. Stone and John O. Swanson. (Chicago: Augustana Heritage Association, 2002). \$10 including postage and handling.

Available from the publisher, Scarecrow Press—

#### ***The Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church in Print***

By Virginia P. Follstad. An annotated list of serial publications issued by the Augustana Lutheran Church 1855-1962 with selected serial publications after 1962. (Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Maryland, 2007) \$45. [www.scarecrowpress.com](http://www.scarecrowpress.com)

### CDs and DVDs

#### **Nearer, Still Nearer (CD)**

Hymns, Songs, and Liturgy from the 2004 AHA Gathering, St. Peter, Minnesota. (Chicago: Augustana Heritage Association, 2004) \$15 including postage and handling, two or more copies to the same address: \$12.50 each.

#### **Augustana: Five Pastors Share Their Memories (DVD)**

Recollections of Augustana by five pastors: Arvid E. Anderson, Herbert W. Chilstrom, Paul M. Cornell, Donald W. Sjöberg and Reuben T. Swanson. Recorded at an AHA board meeting in 2005. (Chicago: Augustana Heritage Association, 2007) \$5 plus \$3 postage and handling.

#### **Join in the Dancing: Swedish Folk Dance Mass (DVD)**

Par Harling's Swedish Folk Dance Mass. Filmed at the 2006 AHA Gathering at Chautauqua, NY. (Chicago: Augustana Heritage Association, 2007) \$15 plus \$3 postage and handling. (Available after June 22)

Send orders to: Augustana Heritage Association, 1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, IL 60615-5299. Make checks payable to "Augustana Heritage Association." If you have questions, phone Ruth Ann Deppe at (800) 635-1116 ext. 712.