



November, 1997
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SPECIAL EMPHASIS

Youth Ministry

with special
tribute to:
**DR. WILTON E.
BERGSTRAND**

Youth Work in the
Augustana Lutheran
Church

Augustana Heritage
Festival

Memories of Luther
League



SPECIAL EVENTS

Sesquicentennial
Heritage Gathering
Jamestown, New York
September 18 - 21,
1998

Augustana Heritage NEWSLETTER

A publication of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

"Let no one despise your youth." 1 Timothy 4:12. No church has taken these words more seriously than the Augustana Lutheran Church. It is a privilege to devote this issue of the Augustana Heritage Newsletter to the youth ministry of the Augustana Lutheran Church. These "eyewitness" accounts are the story of many of us who were a part of the youth ministry and Luther League in the Augustana Church. We express our deep gratitude to the writers of these articles and to the leaders of Augustana who frequently reminded us that "youth are the church of tomorrow at work today."

Reflections on the Youth Program of the Augustana Lutheran Church *Lorraine Leaf Stavig, Nevada City, California*

Anniversary celebrations bring forth memories - reminiscing, analyzing and gaining perspective on the past, how it has affected our present and how it may still affect our future. As we look to 1998 and the sesquicentennial of the Augustana Lutheran Church, we recall its unique gifts while remembering the advice of Dr. Conrad Bergendoff as he approved the idea of an Augustana Heritage Newsletter, "Don't get too nostalgic." It is difficult not to be too nostalgic, reflecting on the youth program of the Augustana Lutheran Church.

In September, 1997, my husband and I will celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary. From the reflection involved in that celebration, plus the remembering which I must do in the "Memoir Writing for Seniors" class of which I am a part, I have come to realize that my outlook on life and preparation for enjoyment of 50 years of happy marriage was in no small part due to the ten years prior when I was an active participant in the youth programs of Augustana. My husband's similar background in Luther League had a hand in bringing us together. We met at a Lutheran Student Association winter weekend camp.

My personal experience in Augustana's youth program was not much different from that of many others of that era, except that I had the added privilege of spending time working in the Luther League office in Minneapolis.

As I consider what we hear and see of troubled teens today, I appreciate more and more the wholesome innocence of my teenage years, which I spent involved in Luther League and the programs of our local church. How much we enjoyed those years!

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Newsletter*

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We were not naive, but we did not have to deal as much with the big issues of drugs, drinking and premarital sex as do today's teens. We came at the tail end of a puritanical era when card playing and dancing were frowned upon as big issues. AIDS had not yet been discovered. While we had to make decisions regarding the teen issues of our day, our involvement in church youth programs helped us to make wise decisions.

I was baptized in the Augustana Lutheran Church, but for my first eleven years we did not live near a church of that Synod. When I was twelve we moved within two blocks of an Augustana Church where I was confirmed and became an eager Luther Leaguer.

Since our church was not large enough for both a Senior and Junior Luther League, we were all together in one Luther League. Those in their 20's, some working and some in college, did not regard us as "kids" but welcomed our participation, watched out for us and accepted us as part of the group. They were good role models for us as we entered our teenage years.

We published the church newsletter (there was no paid church secretary), and we had great fellowship and fun putting out the LEAGONIAN. Our church softball team played in a local church league, and those of us who were not players came to cheer the team on and to help keep score. After the games, we often went to someone's home for refreshments, or to the local White Castle for hamburgers (5 cents apiece/6 for a quarter), bringing them back to church where we ate them and then played ping pong. The church was open to us for spontaneous fellowship and fun. It was our meeting place, our home away from home, and our youth center, as well as the place where our spiritual needs were met and our Christian faith nourished.

We had our regular Luther League meetings and programs. We planned the program and dinner for a once-a-month late Sunday afternoon "fireside meeting" to which the congregation was invited. We had fun rehearsing for plays which we would perform for the congregation. Most of us were in the choir, and many taught or helped in the Sunday School.

I had not been a Luther Leaguer long when I was introduced to the larger organizational level of Luther League, the District Luther League convention. This involved an afternoon session, dinner served by the host church, and an evening session. The League with the best attendance, percentage wise, received an attendance prize, and we made a big effort to get our members out in order to receive this recognition.

The speaker for this particular district meeting (around 1939) in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, was Wilton E. Bergstrand, who not long before had become the new Youth Director for the Augustana Luther League. We were inspired by his message. He was dynamic in his presentation, quoting poetry and speaking with enthusiasm, yet always keeping Christ at the heart of his message. His enthusiasm was so contagious that we met him, talked with him, felt his genuine interest and eagerly became part of the program he represented.

A vital part of his work as director was to publish materials and helps for Luther Leagues. He made us feel so necessary to the larger program that our group went to the office in Minneapolis to help periodically when a mailing was sent out to all the Luther Leagues. We put materials into envelopes and prepared them for mailing. By volunteering, we became keenly aware of the scope of the Augustana Luther League, beyond our local church.

We had fellowship with Luther Leagues from churches near ours, having joint meetings, exchanging programs, or getting together for social events sponsored by one church or the other. It was a great way to make new friends and to get new ideas. At District camp week at Bay Lake, Minnesota, we renewed acquaintance with many friends from other churches, and we had a week of great memories to store up.

We attended Conference Luther League meetings, which were held in the summer at Gustavus Adolphus College. Because we stayed in dorm rooms and had our meetings on campus, we became familiar with the college and felt a part of it. Not only was it a good introduction to a church college, it influenced many in choosing a church college.

My first involvement in Luther League at the national level was attending the convention in Rockford, Illinois, in February, 1941, where the theme was "Built on the Rock". At age 16, I went with a large group from Minnesota via special train, the new Burlington Zephyr. It was a memorable experience to be part of a large and enthusiastic group testifying to their Christian faith. It was a factor in convincing me that I wanted to build my life "Upon the Rock." I had never stayed in a hotel before. Many of us shared rooms or a suite as part of the total experience of meeting Leaguers from many other states. Many of those I met at Rockford became "pen pals" and lifelong friends. We have visited back and forth and still keep in touch.

I attended several other international Luther League conventions and was part of the planning committee for the one held in Minneapolis in 1943 with the theme "All for Christ" In the middle of a cold Minnesota winter in the middle of World War II, with unique logistical problems, not the least of which was the 18 degrees below zero weather with icy streets the day of the closing Sunday afternoon rally, 3,500 youth still made it to the session.

When I was in college, I managed to get away to ride the special train to Los Angeles for the "Christ is Able" convention. It was my first trip farther west than Wyoming, and although I was then out of my teens, I was as excited as a teenager about all the wonderful things I experienced there.

The war years propelled us quickly from the innocence that characterized our teenage years. We had heard our parents discuss "War" from their experiences from World War I, but we really had no concept of what it would mean in our young

lives. As people remember where they were when they heard of the assassination of President Kennedy, so our generation remembers where we were when we heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war on Japan. We Luther Leaguers were at church that afternoon wrapping packages to send to our members who were in the armed forces. A number of our members already had been drafted into the service. Our activity took on a new urgency as we heard the shocking news reports. We could not believe that such a small nation had the audacity to commit such an act against our country.

The war years were as difficult for Augustana Luther League as for colleges and other organizations working with youth. There were few men around, there was rationing, and there were transportation difficulties, among other inconveniences. When I started college in 1944, there were 50 men out of more than 1000 students in our small liberal arts college. But I was also in college during the years just after the war's end when the veterans under the GI bill were coming back to school in droves with an eagerness for learning which they probably did not have as 17 and 18 year olds just out of high school. It was a challenge for us who were already in college to keep up with these eager veterans. The maturity they brought and the wartime experiences they shared enhanced the scope of our education.

During my college years, I was employed part time at the office of Augustana Luther League during the school year and full time during the summer. I worked in the stock room on the second floor, where I filled orders for ALL materials, packaged them up and prepared them for mailing. From my second floor window, I could see companies of University V-5 and V-12 students in their navy uniforms march by on their way to and from classes. Little did I know that I would marry one of those medical students who marched by the office.

I learned much from my work at church headquarters. Sometimes I wondered if I was learning more in college or from my work at Augustana Luther League.

Wilton and Lorraine Bergstrand were wonderful people to work for and with. Their commitment and dedication to the cause of building the Augustana Luther League was total. It was not a job which was confined to regular hours—they both gave their all.

The Augustana Lutheran Church was a relatively small organization in which it was easy to feel you were an important part. Just as this changed with the merger with the United Lutheran Church, so the Augustana Luther League also changed as it became the Youth Department of the Church, with other responsibilities than just Luther League under its direction.

I am convinced that my character, my goals through the years, my sense of responsibility, the happiness of my teenage years, my general outlook on life, and the person I am today are a direct result of the youth programs of Augustana Lutheran Church. My family and the many wonderful friends I made through Luther League and Lutheran Students Association provided me the opportunity to grow in faith and knowledge. For me, this is the significance of the "gifts of the Augustana Lutheran Church" and in particular, its youth ministry, as I lived it, worked in it, and thrived on its heritage.

Tribute to Wilton Bergstrand on his 85th birthday

William E. Berg '37

B You are Born into a wonderful family, and reborn of water and the Spirit

into the family of God. You are reborn to lead a spiritual awakening in the church through youth being called to go all out for Jesus Christ. You are born to be an urgent and eloquent voice, proclaiming the world's only hope, "Repent of your sins," and "Behold the lamb of God." You are a born leader because you are a faithful follower of your Lord and Savior. You are chosen. John 15:16.

E You are Evangelical. You are no ordinary leader just bringing good views

and human perspectives. You are called to be a prophet of God. You are endowed with a magnificent obsession for Jesus and his way of life. As a sinner, saved and cleansed at the cross, you are a "firsthand flaming evangelist", lifting high the cross. In this tragic time of a massive assault against God and his best for us, you raise his standard of righteousness. Matthew 16:18.

R You are Refreshing. With your spiritual discernment, keen intellect, delightful sense of humor and store of knowledge, you are always refreshing in conversation, and stimulating in the exchange of ideas. Your creative method of Bible study led a generation of youth deeper into the word, and into God's will for their lives. You are a master "refresher of memories" as in your book, *Roses in December*. It's a great gift, this "Ministry of Refreshment". It is especially a refreshment of hearts, as in Philemon, verse seven.

G You are Growing older. And more, you are growing in spiritual power and wisdom with the accumulating years. You will never get old by not growing. There is a contagious aliveness about your presence. For over sixty years you have shared a spellbinding message across the church and world, under the spell of the Holy Spirit. Always growing in grace and knowledge, you have helped so many of us, your friends and partners, to grow toward spiritual maturity. You are growing. II Peter 3:1 3.

I It's a big word! Indefatigable. It refers to your untiring service for your family, for your church, for youth, for persons in need of a spiritual lift and challenge. You spent yourself freely as a million-mile (and much more) traveler across the world, always bringing the Good News of new life and hope in Christ. You are never weary in well-doing. You will never retire. You will carry on until he comes. Your "On Eagle's Wings" will continue to inspire us, and help us mount up with wings, as in Isaiah 40:31.

E You are Energetic. Energy for you means more than your physical gifts and strength. It means inherent power. It means inner strength and resources. The accumulating years cannot diminish the excitement and joy of your ministry. You continue to be a witness not impaired, but empowered. Energy for you means being able for anything through the strength of Him who lives within us. Philippians 4: 13.

Augustana Heritage Festival

Remarks by Wilton E. Bergstrand

at Lindsborg, Kansas and St. Paul, Minnesota, Spring of 1996

It is said that the human mind can contain one hundred trillion bits of information; and as I am privileged to share in this Augustana Heritage Festival, I am staggered by an avalanche of radiant memories.

The Augustana Heritage Program of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago has as its laudable purpose to deepen our appreciation of our godly heritage and at the same time to heighten our desire to learn and then to share the best of it for the enrichment of the **church of today and tomorrow**. The richer our heritage, the greater our responsibility to pass on the best of it.

Lyle Schaller, America's foremost authority on church administration, said that Augustana had it all together—youth work, missions, education, social ministry—better than any other church body, and enjoyed outstanding leadership. In a recent letter he wrote: "Yes, Augustana was a GREAT Church!"

Dr. Robert Marshall, outstanding leader of the LCA for a decade, has said: "We need Augustana now more than ever!"

Augustana Luther League—"ALL"—All For Christ, Christ for All, was our insignia on the Luther emblem.

Two strengths of Augustana's full-orbed senior high and post-high youth program of worship, learning, services, and fellowship come quickly to mind:

1. Our youth program was unabashedly Christ-centered, Bible-centered, creative, and called for commitment to the supreme Youth Leader. From the unique vantage point of my over sixty years of careful observation throughout the Church, I can only thunderously emphasize: that's the only kind of youth work that endures. Augustana's was a rugged evangelical piety.
2. Youth work was unmistakably on the "front burner" in Augustana. Our whole church was involved actively and continuously. Our pastors and beautiful pastors' wives were deeply involved in the Luther League at all levels—local, district, conference, church wide. They brought their youth to League rallies. They brought their youth to Bible camps, and were with us all week. They even built Bible camps. It was pure joy to serve such a band of brothers and sisters, and to work with such a dedicated team in the youth office.

The Luther League is where Augustana trained her leaders for our congregational and church wide life. Our gifted Augustana president for sixteen years, Dr. P.O. Bersell (my boss) once said to me: "The Augustana Luther League executive committee is the strongest board in our Church."

Just one instance: I remember well when Bishop Herbert Chilstrom came to us as a young pastor to our Luther League Council. He got his first wider leadership training as president of the Red River Valley Conference Luther League.

Our Luther League topics, which came to be used by two-thirds of our Leagues, were Bible-based, exceedingly relevant, and forward-looking.

Thousands of our Leaguers were members of the Pocket Testament League with its promise to carry a Testament and read a portion daily. We supplied many Bible study helps; and each year a supplementary guide, *The Uniting Word*, to each of our 40,000 Leaguers.

Out of our youth office in Minneapolis came tools and materials containing inspiration and ideas from a whole church. Our order blank grew to 155 items. The AFLC has recently reprinted *Youth's Favorite Songs*, *Luther League Handbook*, and *Good Counsel for Counselors*.

At one time we were sending materials to 400 leaders in 70 countries.

Amazingly, thanks to you veteran pastors, virtually 100% of our churches participated voluntarily in our annual Youth Sunday, sending fellowship offerings for the support of our united program and our far-flung missionary projects across the world.

Inter-Lutheran projects included: Holden Village, Search, *One* magazine, building a Bible camp in Japan 12 miles from where the first atomic bomb fell, dispensaries in Africa, bikes and motorcycles, literature, all kinds of audiovisual equipment, scholarships, travel and all kinds of help for overseas youth leaders, and ecumenical youth conferences.

Missions-Evangelism was on the "front burner" of Augustana and also on the "front burner" of the Luther League. In fact, our Luther League office was so intertwined with missions and evangelism we were like a part of them and they of us. We participated in evangelism rallies; Dee and I spent six months conducting youth leadership schools around the world.

Our sixty Bible Camps reached 10,000 youth each summer. The Bible was the heart of the program, and the youth loved it.

Our whole church shared directly or indirectly in our biennial church wide youth conferences, four of them held in Minnesota: Gustavus '31; Minneapolis '37; Minneapolis '43; Duluth '49. Prayer cells throughout the church were formed sixteen months in advance. The youth memorized a list of great hymns in advance so the hymn sings were unforgettable. I can shut my eyes and see Prof. Pearson directing with his favorite songs "My Jesus, I Love Thee" and "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less." The thrust: "Christ and the Church." Dr. Karl Mattson, president of the Augustana Seminary, told me that most of the fellows coming to the seminary in their biographies mentioned a youth conference as a clincher in their call to the ministry.

With one out of eight of our Luther League throughout the continent, and one of four pastors in attendance, with films and records and hundreds of reports by delegates, the whole church was there.

And our splendid church magazine, the *Lutheran Companion*, with Dr. Ryden as editor, gave us three pages each week and gave us the entire magazine to tell the story of each youth conference.

Memories of Luther League in the Augustana Lutheran Church

Eleanor Anderson, Rock Island, IL

"Into the Word and out to the world" summarized for me what the Augustana Luther League was all about. Whether it was through a stirring message and robust singing at a youth gathering, a challenging discussion hour, or specific leadership training, Christ was lifted up as my personal Savior, to be shared with the world.

I am only one of thousands whose lives were profoundly touched by God through our Augustana youth program. As I mention some of my memories and reflections, I invite you to join me with yours, giving thanks for the faith foundation we experienced.

I cannot remember when I first participated in Luther League. It might have been at summer camp in the late 40's and early 50's in central Kansas at Camp Wa-shun-ga. It had rustic buildings, a stream just big enough for paddling a rowboat, and a mud-hole for swimming. But it was there that God's Spirit spoke so clearly.

Some years we were blessed to have had Dr. Wilton Bergstrand, leader of the Augustana Luther League from 1938-1963, with us for camp week. I find it impossible to remember Luther League without Dr. Bergstrand. His energy, vision, and commitment were its moving force, humanly speaking.

A dynamic speaker, Dr. B's words came easily, using well turned phrases, poetry, and imagery to present Christ as Lord of our lives. He categorized youthful philosophies using "Three R's - Recreation, Resignation, or Redemption." And who can forget the resounding "Keep the Bells Ringing!"

We enjoyed Dr. Bergstrand's humor, too. Recently a friend recalled hearing him say that as an only son and a bachelor, he did not pray for a wife, but asked every day that God give his dear mother a fine daughter-in-law. In God's time that prayer was answered, as Dolores Youngren became not only Wilton's wife but a gifted and beloved partner in the Augustana youth ministry.

But let's go back to camp and conference days. At the heart of the daily schedule was the Bible. I remember devoted pastors standing before us in the chapel or auditorium, an open Bible in their hands, commenting, explaining, sharing. That was in the time before television, when we could sit on hard benches and listen to words without pictures. But God truly spoke to us through his Word.

Sometimes we used the Vastera's method for Bible study, where we met in small groups, read Bible passages silently and marked them with symbols, and then shared and discussed our questions, new insights, convictions, and favorite verses. Everyone took part, at least in sharing a favorite verse, and I think we felt a deeper bond because of that sharing which unites and strengthens Christians.

We were also challenged by the Pocket Testament League program. Besides carrying a New Testament with us, we signed cards promising to read a chapter a day in the Bible, year 'round. Over 20,000 youth enrolled in the Pocket Testament League! Later the PTL included "The Uniting Word", a daily devotional guide. The PTL was a tool and a discipline through which God drew us closer to himself and to each other.

Following Bible study hour at camp we usually had an hour for discussing practical problems. It seems the biggest issue was whether or not Christians should dance! Dating, drinking, smoking were other major concerns. As I recall, we were challenged to develop healthy living not just because it was good for us or because God lived in us, but to be a role model for a "weaker brother" watching us. We felt it a privilege, a high calling, to follow Christ. No wonder one of our favorite songs was "Living for Jesus".

I can still hear those campfire choruses. The harmony. The words. The commitment. Singing was a big part of Luther League. Our favorites were published in a handy songbook appropriately titled, *Youth's Favorite Songs*. Not only do choruses still ring in my heart, but I remember singing great hymns, as "My God! How Great Thou Art!" and "Thine is the Glory!"

Camp afforded the setting and spirit for moving, dramatic moments. One night before a sunrise service, we had confessed our sins, written on paper and burned in the campfire. Silently and prayerfully we had gone to bed, not even whispering. Before the break of day, still in silence we wended our way to the hilltop. Then, as we watched the sun rise, we broke the silence with praise to God, thanking him not only for the beginning of a new day but also for his gift of new life in Christ. Sometimes we celebrated holy communion at such a moment. Those were "mountain-top" experiences, holy moments in my spiritual journey, reminding me of God's extraordinary gifts of grace even in my ordinary, routine days.

Another significant memory comes from a "Galilean" lakeside service. Sometimes there was antiphonal singing by a group out on the water or a cross was illuminated on a boat. This time the climax was the sending out of lighted candles, gently floating on little discs. We launched the candles without a problem. But then a sudden wind came, extinguishing some candles, tipping over others. But a few remained upright, still burning, sending light across the water. Imagine the effect of Pastor Carl Manfred's devotion, challenging us to keep our lights strong for Christ in the midst of life's storms and temptations.

These memories illustrate the emphases of the Augustana Luther League, as Dr. Bergstrand has written in his memoirs, "We had two foci in our youth work: the Cross and the World; a finished salvation and an unfinished world task".

Perhaps that goal was most powerfully presented at the biannual youth conferences, begun in the late 20's, gathering together thousands of youth and young adults with themes such as "Lift Up Your Eyes" (Colorado Springs, 1951), "Christ Makes Men Free" (Boston, 1953) and "Christ the Lord of Life" (Calgary, Canada, in 1955). Drama, displays, Bible study, music, messages, devotions, reflection, and personal testimonies filled the schedule.

We will never know how many lives were strengthened and turned around at these conferences. On the last night of the Calgary conference, the leader spontaneously asked if some would like to give witness to what Christ had said to them at the conference, expecting only a few to step forward. Instead, scores lined up, with eighty still waiting to speak when the service closed at 11:00 p.m. "Our prayer was that God would write the great Victory 'V' letter in the heart of the Calgary gathering, making the great memory "CALVARY," wrote Dr. Bergstrand.

Much prayer and effort went into these large gatherings. But the Luther League staff also focused on youth ministry in local congregations and districts. Practical helps were published by the staff in Minneapolis. I have read that a million pieces of literature were mailed

out each year! There were basic guides, *Handbook for Better Luther Leagues* and *Youth's Favorite Programs*, more specialized publications like *Youth's Favorite Games*, *Banquet Lore*, and *Good Counsel for Counselors*, and a magazine, titled *All Yours*. Booklets of favorite poems, chuckles, camp check lists, Bible study helps, mission studies are still on my bookshelf!

While I have written about Luther League on the conference or national level, what happened on the congregations? What I remember most are the weekly meetings, with games, devotions, and discussions with our pastor, Bob Hurty. He was always there with us and for us. We had good times with service projects, too, such as singing in the homes of shut-ins or earning money to send youth to conferences.

We liked being organized, so the national office recommended specific plans - with elected officers, teams, business meetings, calendars for advance planning, suggested programs, Youth Sunday. The officers and other selected youth were given training at Leadership Labs, where both the "how to" and the inspiration came together.

But how could more folks locally become trained in the Luther League program? Bring it to them with the Caravan movement from 1954 - 1962. After training by Dr. Bergstrand and his staff through correspondence, the young adults gathered in Minneapolis in June for ten days of intensive training. Grouped in teams of four, the Caravaners were dispersed throughout the country. A team worked in a congregation for four days, conducting workshops with youth, congregational leaders, and parents, always concluding with a Christ-centered "consecration" service.

In 1995 about sixty former Caravaners gathered for a reunion, with spouses and seven former staff members. It was evident that the Caravan movement had been helpful, not only to local congregations, but had prepared leaders for the church, both clergy and lay. That was true of any part of the Luther League program; it helped train leaders for the Church. In fact, there was intentional effort to lift up God's call to full-time church service in this country and overseas. Remember the booklet *Who Will Go?*

Vocational guidance was not limited to church-related careers. I remember Lorraine Bergstrand's question in a chapel hour at Bethany College: "I wish I were a cat." Why? "Because a cat has nine lives." But, since God has given each of us only one life, the question was: "How are you going to use your life?"

Luther League also provided a strong global emphasis. Through Dr. B's involvement with Lutheran World Federation and the youth department of the World Council of Churches, we grew aware of the larger Church. The Augustana missionary program was kept before us, and many who served overseas first heard God's "call" at a Luther League gathering. The Bergstrands themselves made a trip around the world in 1957, conducting Leadership Labs, speaking at conferences, seminaries, and Bible schools in many countries.

If you would like to contribute to the Augustana Heritage Newsletter with an "I Remember" article, please send it to:
The Augustana Heritage Newsletter, The Editor,
1100 East 55th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60615.
(Please limit the article to 300 words).

Although I was not involved in the young adult organization of Augustana's youth program, I know it was a dynamic and effective branch, with John Hult as leader. At the other end of the age spectrum, some congregations offered Junior League for the junior high set.

I would be remiss not to point out that in some areas District League was a very lively group. I have heard of the great times had in the Chicago area, for example. Besides stimulating programs, the Luther League created life-long friendships - even marriage. Another lasting gift is Holden Village, nestled in the Cascade Mountains in Washington, still beckoning us to draw apart for reflection and renewal.

I am thankful for the Augustana Luther League. It touched my life significantly. It is my prayer that this reminiscing will not only be a grateful look at the past but that it will help keep the zeal alive.

"Into the Word and out into the world!"

THE AUGUSTANA HERITAGE MEMOIRS AND ESSAYS COLLECTION

The number of contributors to the Augustana Heritage Memoirs and Essays Collection has now grown to fifty-one with the addition of articles and publications from the following: the descendants of Lars Gustaf and Elizabeth Christina Almen, a family history covering 120 years, 1876-1996; Eleanor Anderson, Marbury Anderson, William Berg, Gerald Christianson, Donald Conrad, William Conrad, Donald Flatt, Rudolph Fredstorm, an interview by Lavern Grosc and a life story; Eleanor and Donald Hallquist, a life story of A. Leonard and Pearl Smith; Donald Hornstra, Dan Roberts, a life story; Lorraine Leaf Stavig, Reuben Swanson, Theodore N. Swanson and Harry Victorson. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of these people.

We especially invite reflections and memories about:

Leaders of the Augustana Lutheran Church
Anecdotes and stories about life in the Augustana Lutheran Church
Contributions of the Augustana Lutheran Church
to the life of the church today

Abraham Lincoln once said, "The deeds of the founders grow more and more dim with the passage of time." The Augustana Heritage Memoirs and Essays Collection will help present and future generations remember and appreciate the gifts of Augustana. Many of us have memories, collections of family histories and material which tell of the journey of Augustana. Thank you for taking some time to make your contribution to the collection.

Please send your material to Donovan J. Palmquist,
10940 57th Avenue North,
Plymouth, MN 55442.

Youth Work in the Augustana Lutheran Church

Some Personal Reflections and Impressions

Carl L. Manfred '43

I. IN MY OWN CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

I "grew up Augustana." My early memories of congregational life center on Luther League meetings held once a month on Sunday evenings. While post-confirmands were encouraged to attend these meetings, the programs were led exclusively by adults who outnumbered youth by at least 4 to 1. Today we recognize the value of transgenerational activities in the church. Perhaps our parish was years ahead of its time!

Once, when our League met with the youth group of a neighboring Lutheran congregation, we played games, led by adult leaders of the host church, after the program was over. We were amazed! Playing games had not been considered appropriate for Luther League meetings in my church. I envied my friends who were under less binding restrictions.

By the time I was in high school, things began to change. We were allowed positions of leadership in the League. On occasion, a college student (usually a P.C.) was the invited speaker at our meetings. Several of them made an impact on my life. They even used levity in their talks. That was new to me. I liked it!

During my college years, I continued with my Luther League in a variety of ways. Now my age group planned and presented the programs and other activities with guidance from adults. Some of us read Scripture, offered prayers, played musical instruments, and sang, but usually an adult gave us the message of the evening. Being in a college town, some outstanding professors and promising students gave us the good word. I still remember with gratitude talks by Dr. George Hall and Dr. Edgar M. Carlson. One of my most inspiring experiences was attending a Youth Conference at Omaha, Nebraska. It strengthened my own spiritual life, and was one of the strong influences which headed me toward the ministry. It didn't hurt one bit that in our car-load of students traveling from St. Peter to Omaha was a lovely co-ed who a few years later was to become my wife! Following my graduation from college, I assisted a pastor (later to become my brother-in-law) in his three point parish. That summer I attended my first Bible Camp, a high point in my life. Every pastor in that district attended the camp for the entire week. Seeing the close rapport between the young people and their pastors was both a revelation and a joy.

II. DURING SEMINARY DAYS

I do not recall courses on youth leadership offered at Augustana Seminary during my years there. With a limited number of faculty members, there was neither personnel nor time for such courses. So I took a Boy Scout course led by two senior seminarians which was helpful. Upon arrival at Rockford, Illinois, for internship, I was informed that I was to be in charge of the youth program. Though I was ill prepared for the task, I enjoyed relating to the young people. I wish I could honestly say that I gave them the leadership they needed, but that would be stretching things. What helped was the very strong District Luther League in the area, with which we involved the young people from our parish.

III. IN MY FIRST PARISHES

The steady stream of program materials for youth groups, coming from the Youth Office of the Augustana Lutheran Church, thanks to the leadership of Dr. Wilton E. Bergstrand, was of great help in the first two congregations I served. With no Luther League adult counselors in these parishes, the materials themselves became my "counselors" and served me, and more importantly the youth, very well.

Duluth, Minnesota, the site of my second parish, was chosen for a Youth Conference held in the summer of 1949. An excellent cadre of Augustana pastors in the area at the time became involved in the planning for that event. The time I spent with Wilton and Lorraine Bergstrand gave me a first hand look at the work they were doing on behalf of the youth of Augustana.

IV. AS A MEMBER OF THE AUGUSTANA YOUTH STAFF

One thing seemed to lead to another. I was called to the Youth Staff of the Augustana Lutheran Church. To serve as an associate of Wilton Bergstrand and to have a part in the unfolding of the youth program of the Augustana Church was the experience and adventure of a lifetime.

Youth Programs, Feature Programs, Good Counsel for Counselors, The Luther League Handbook, The Uniting Word, Youth's Favorite Songs, and many other materials were distributed through

Bergstrand insisted that everything we planned, wrote, and did was to be measured by two questions:

- 1) Would it bring honor to our Lord?*
- 2) Would it help young people in the parish?*

out the Church, even to our overseas mission fields. (My daughter, missionary in Japan, reported that she found copies of *Youth's Favorite Songs* at the Lutheran Bible Camp near Hiroshima!) Guided by those same two lights, Youth Conferences, Leadership Schools, "Together" Schools (for teachers and counselors), Caravaning and Holden Village Retreat Center near Chelan, Washington were developed.

Did it work? Perhaps the most accurate barometers of support for Augustana's approach to youth ministry was the response of pastors and parishes to the annual Youth Sunday observances. I do not remember one year when the goals for the number of congregations involved and offerings received were not exceeded.

Goethe once wrote about "the inevitability of an idea whose hour had come." The Augustana youth program was such an idea. Some of us tried to replicate Augustana youth work in the LCA after the merger in 1962, but failed. I sometimes wonder if we will ever see the likes of Augustana's youth program with its profound impact upon young people at the parish level, again.

Youth Work -An Augustana Heritage

Sister Marjorie Axelton

Lindsborg, Ks

What is the definition of youth work? Luke 2:52: "And Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." To follow in the footsteps of the youthful Jesus is ideal youth work. This was intrinsic to Augustana's youth

Let's follow a group of Luther Leaguers from Des Moines, Iowa, in the World War II years. The youth not old enough for military service found stability in the church's youth program. Frequent meetings made for close friendships. Groups from other churches joined them and they called themselves the Des Moines Gang - a good gang! Bible camp at Clearlake was a place for bonding, spiritual growth and character building. Solid home backgrounds were a real plus. The group kept in touch while attending the church's colleges: Augustana at Rock Island, Gustavus in Minnesota, Bethany in Kansas, and other schools. New friendships were added through marriages.

Though widely scattered during the years of raising families and developing careers, their paths met at church conventions and Global Mission Events. Old Luther League friendships were rekindled and a reunion was planned following one Global Mission Event. Other reunions followed, 40 years after the bonding of Luther League.

**"THE LORD HAS DONE THIS AND
IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES." PSALM 118:23.**

What a large contribution a small group of Luther Leaguers made to the mission of the Church! Pastors, parish workers, missionaries, teachers, social workers, college president, deaconess, church musicians, farmers, business men and women, doctors, nurses and home-makers, each found a sacred calling to live in the love of Christ.

Thousands of Augustana Lutheran oldsters look back with deep appreciation for the youth conferences under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Wilton Bergstrand and his staff. Christ was brought into clear focus for many young lives. Powerful messages, drama, music, fellowship and worship all were a part of those stirring events.

Bible camps sprang up from coast to coast, bringing Augustana youth together. Several congregations built their own camps. Let's follow another youth program blending camping and family life. Mount Olivet Lutheran Church of Minneapolis, Minnesota under Dr. Reuben Youngdahl, purchased a site in northern Minnesota for its own youth camp. Christ-centered was key to teaching of the Gospel to all ages. Camping was for grades three through high school, plus weekends for men, women, singles, young married couples and families. This reached over 2,000 people.

Camping was an integral part of the year around program. The "Fellowship for All" program stressed family unity. Service projects, Bible study, worship and a variety of activities completed the program. It became a tradition, with generation after generation taking part.

We have briefly followed two youth programs, just a sampling of the youth work of hundreds of Augustana Lutheran Churches. Deep in our hearts we cherish our Augustana heritage. Thanks be to God.

THE AUGUSTANA HERITAGE ENDOWMENT AN UPDATE

As of November 1, 1997, over \$1,200,000 has been committed through cash, life income instruments, bequests and pledges toward the endowment for the Augustana Heritage Professorship for Global Missions at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

Please use the enclosed card and return envelope to indicate how you wish to participate in honoring the heritage of Augustana Seminary and the Augustana Lutheran Church.

Thanks to the hundreds of people who have made commitments toward the Endowment.

I REMEMBER MY EXPERIENCES IN THE AUGUSTANA CHURCH

One of my classmates has asked for my recollections of Augustana. To begin, with the exception of a ULCA congregation in Warren, I have never known anything but Augustana. My college years were spent at Bethany College, an Augustana school. Here I met classmates, like Paul Berggren, who were deeply involved in the church. These young students used their gifts in local and area churches. The spirit of Augustana was to train future pastors with hands on experiences. At the seminary I heard the impressive sermons of the Mattson brothers. Later another Mattson, Ted, would awe hundreds of folks at the Asilomar conference on World Missions.

At the 1959 convention in Hartford, Augustana's leaders were laying the track for merger that led to the LCA. It made sense. Though we are now ELCA, much good can be learned from remembering our heritage. The people of Augustana bonded together as one big family. Our daughter Martha in Lancaster, PA crossed paths with the Alan Magnussons, cousins of the Abrahamson sisters, the Crowners, and Isabelle, wife of my classmate Roland. Just recently in Lindsborg, Gerald Leaf and Barbara, son and daughter-in-law of an old time pastoral friend, Phil Leaf, have started building a home. We have a heritage to share and remember.

These are the highlights of my memories: Dr. Bergendoff's lecture at Harvard, conventions in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Rock Island. District meetings, conference conventions, installations and retreats contributed so much to the joy and the spiritual journey in Augustana.

A crowning experience was the gathering of my class for its 50th anniversary at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, the seminary where the heritage of Augustana resides. We were made royal guests for a positive, creative and Christ centered event

PERRY CARLSON '42

**AUGUSTANA HERITAGE
SESQUICENTENNIAL GATHERING
SEPTEMBER 18-21, 1998
CHAUTAUQUA INSTITUTION, CHAUTAUQUA, NY**

The Sesquicentennial Gathering of the Augustana Lutheran Church, in the beautiful setting of the Chautauqua Institution, will be a time of remembering and giving thanks for our heritage, a time to celebrate the gifts of Augustana in our lives, for group reunions and meeting friends from past years and a time to strengthen our calling in the life of the church today. The meetings will begin at 1 pm Friday, September 18, 1998. There will be many great speakers, hymn sings, and much much more.

Among the persons who will be a part of the program are Herbert Chilstrom, Reuben Swanson, Harold Skillrud, Joseph Dahlquist, David Vikner, William Berg, Doris Spong, David and Kathleen Hurty, Hartland Gifford, Duane Carlson, John Kendall, Bernhard Erling, Bud and Jean Swanson, James Ford, Lyman Lundeen, Lowell Almen, Krister Stendahl, James Echols, Louis Almen, Charles Bergstrom, Lee Wesley, Donovan Palmquist, Paul Cornell and many other leaders, including a planning committee of 25 persons.

If you wish to participate in the Gathering, you must request registration materials. Registration materials will be sent to you after February 1, 1998; the deadline for registration is July 1, 1998. Please clip the coupon below and mail it to the "Augustana '98."

PLEASE SEND REGISTRATION MATERIALS FOR
"AUGUSTANA '98" TO:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

MAIL TO: "AUGUSTANA '98"
SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES PROGRAM
P.O. BOX 20
JAMESTOWN, NY 14702-002

THERE IS STILL TIME TO BECOME A PATRON FOR THE GATHERING.
SEND A MINIMUM OF \$10 PER PERSON BY DECEMBER 31, 1997 TO THIS
ADDRESS.