



## THE AUGUSTANA HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

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Bishop Mark S. Hanson

### Greetings from Bishop Mark S. Hanson *Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

To the members of the Augustana Heritage Association:

Greetings to you from your brothers and sisters throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and across the world. It is with deep joy that I thank the members of the Augustana Heritage Association for its commitment to continuing the legacy of the Augustana Synod in the ELCA. As I travel throughout this church, I give thanks to God for the rich variety of agencies and institutions in the United States and the many churches throughout the world that share and continue this legacy.

*"I look forward to  
celebrating with  
you at the  
dedication of the  
[Augustana] Chapel  
in May 2003."*

In the fall 2002 issue of this newsletter, you celebrated the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. In the significant funding for LSTC's new chapel provided by members of the Augustana Heritage Association, you continue and expand an already-strong relationship. I look forward to celebrating with you at the dedication of the chapel in May 2003.

In the affirmation of Baptism, we ask, "Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in Holy Baptism?" Thank you for saying yes as you continue "to proclaim good news of God in Christ through word and deed." Thank you, too, for the privilege of serving with you.

In God's grace,

Mark S. Hanson, *Presiding Bishop*



Dr. David Jacox  
President & CEO, Bethphage

### Greetings from Bethphage!

*A warm hello to our friends at the Augustana Heritage Association!*

I hope you will enjoy the article about Bethphage in this edition of the Augustana Heritage Newsletter. We are proud of our history and are deeply committed to keeping our heritage alive. We view Bethphage as a living tribute to the Augustana Lutheran Church and will continue to promote our Augustana heritage as we now enter an exciting new era wherein Bethphage joins hands with Martin Luther Homes to create one of the world's premier providers of service and advocacy for people with disabilities.

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The purpose of  
the Augustana Heritage Association (AHA)  
is to define, promote and perpetuate  
the heritage of the  
Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church.

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# Heritage & History

Editorial by Arvid E. Anderson

**D**r. G. Everett Arden, in the Preface to his "Augustana Heritage" published in 1963, says, "The writer was invited to undertake the task of preparing this study (a history of the Synod) with the request that the project be completed by the time of the dissolution of the corporate existence of the Augustana Church." The Lutheran Church in America came into being in 1962 at the Detroit Convention as four candles were joined in a single flame symbolizing the merger of Augustana with three other churches. The corporate history of Augustana was complete.

Although its history had been written, the Augustana heritage continued in the Lutheran Church in America. Heritage is what is inherited in our culture, tradition, and faith. In 1988, the Augustana heritage continued on in the life of the present Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Heritage outlives written history.

It is important not to forget the events and people who gave us the Augustana Church. Dr. Arden provided a treasure in his "Augustana Heritage" publication, forty years ago, in order to help us remember. In this issue of the *Newsletter*, Arland J. Hultgren makes the case for "Telling the Story of Augustana Anew". He says, "With the passing of more than four decades and two mergers, new questions arise, and new interest has been aroused concerning the role of Augustana in the Church today." He offers examples of institutions that continue to carry the Augustana heritage in the life of the ELCA today: colleges, hospitals, homes for the aged, Bethphage Mission, and the former Augustana Seminary whose heritage is to be visualized in the new Augustana Chapel to be dedicated in May 2003 at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Hultgren then intro-

duces two highly qualified historians who will be the authors of the new Augustana history: Dr. Maria Erling and Dr. Mark Granquist, who will tell the Augustana story anew, forty years after Dr. G. Everett Arden wrote his "Augustana Heritage".

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The three lead articles in this newsletter are accounts of how our Augustana Heritage is rooted in Augustana's history. **Peter Beckman** searches for the Augustana's heart and discovers that "The heart of Augustana was its liturgy." In worship the focus was on the infinite and gracious mercy of God, words of assurance heard in the liturgy.

From the grace and mercy of God which was at the center of the liturgy came the faith and commitment from which social ministry institutions were born. **David Jacox** and **Maurice Burke** tell the amazing saga of Bethphage founded in 1913 by Rev. K. G. William Dahl in Axtell, Nebraska and today serves thousands of people in need in Bethphage's fifteen or more locations throughout the Midwest and West.

The Old Mamrelund Church story by **Charles Hendrickson** is witness to the Christian faith of early Swedish settlers in Minnesota who founded Mamrelund Church in 1869. The vitality of their devotion nurtured through worship and liturgy is reflected in the maintenance and survival of the church building from 1883 that continues to be used for worship today. **AHA**

*The Minister shall turn to the Altar, and with the Congregation unite in the following Confession of Sins:*

### **The Confession of Sins**

Holy and righteous God, merciful Father, we confess unto Thee that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against Thee by thought, word, and deed. We have not loved Thee above all things, nor our neighbor as ourselves, and are worthy, therefore, to be cast away from Thy presence if Thou shouldst judge us according to our sins. But Thou hast promised, O heavenly Father, to receive with tender mercy all penitent sinners who turn unto Thee and with a living faith seek refuge in Thy Fatherly compassion and in the merits of the Saviour, Jesus Christ. Their transgressions Thou wilt not regard, nor impute unto them their sins. Relying upon Thy promise, we confidently beseech Thee to be merciful and gracious unto us and to forgive us all our sins, to the praise and glory of Thy Holy Name.

May the Almighty, Eternal God, in His infinite mercy and for the sake of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, forgive all our sins, and give us grace to amend our lives, and with Him obtain eternal life. Amen.

*Or, the following may be used during Lent and on Holy Days:*

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

Heavenly Father, hear my prayer for the sake of Thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

# *The* **HEART** *of* **AUGUSTANA**

**A Sermon by  
Peter Beckman**

*The occasion for Dr. Beckman's sermon was a worship service at the Augustana Heritage Association Gathering in 2000 at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois. His sermon's central theme: "The heart of Augustana was its liturgy".*

**D**uring the years of my childhood, as I thought about the words of the Augustana liturgy, I formed a picture of God, not as an enemy or danger to be feared, but not as someone to be trifled with or taken lightly, either. Rather, God seemed more anxious to forgive than we were to repent. The phrases in the Confession of Sins: TENDER MERCY, MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS, INFINITE MERCY, seemed to me to speak of caring, restoring love. The confession in the Augustana Sunday School liturgy, drawn from the 51st Psalm, used almost identical adjectives in describing the character of God. The essence of sin, as it is defined in the Confession,



seemed to me to be lovelessness: "We confess unto Thee that we have not loved Thee above all things, nor our neighbor as ourselves." I could not believe that my gentle and kindly uncle was going to hell because he drank beer, a sin, I had been led to believe, that was almost as bad as dancing.

Sin, for me, was loving my parents so little that I made them unhappy with what I did or said. Sin was loving one or another of my pesty younger sisters so poorly that I slugged her. I often felt guilty and wished that I could be a better person, but I always felt that though God was grieved over my sinfulness, we both felt better after He had forgiven me, even though He knew that I would do the same thing the next day. And that's how it went all through my childhood and early adolescence. I looked forward to the liturgy every Sunday because it was so reassuring to hear again, and to participate in, the good news of God's tender mercy and Fatherly compassion.

Finally I reached confirmation age and that is when disaster struck. As part of our confirmation studies, we were assigned to read the whole Bible, beginning with the New Testament. I didn't yet know that you are not supposed to take that sort of assignment very seriously so I set out to do it over the course of the year, reporting every Saturday on the chapters I had read.

This assignment was a disturbing thing to do to an adolescent who has enough problems already. Like most people, I had never read the Bible in any connected way, a parable here and a story there, and the weekly texts, of course, but that was about it. In the beginning, as I started reading the gospels, I came across many familiar stories as well as others I had not known before. In general, my vision of God, derived from the liturgy, resonated with the Sermon on the Mount, and many of the parables, especially the parable of the Prodigal Son. But there were also passages that troubled me because they seemed so contrary to what I had been taught about God by the liturgy.

I was disillusioned to discover that the disciples, eleven of whom I had considered to be the greatest Christians of all time, admitted that they often didn't understand what Jesus was talking about. They tried to keep children away from Jesus; they wanted Jesus to call down fire from heaven and burn up an inhospitable village; they thought God pushed towers over on people or blinded people for their own or their parent's sins. Two of the best disciples went sneaking behind the backs of the others and tried to get the best places in God's kingdom. Long after Jesus' death and resurrection, God had to hit Peter over the head with a dream on a rooftop in Joppa to get him to see that God had not called the Gentiles "unclean", and that the good news of God's love was a message for them too. How come Peter didn't learn that when he was with Jesus? What was happening, of course, was the loss of my naive and simple Sunday

school mis-apprehensions.

My real problems began with the Old Testament. I was fascinated by the historical parts - Genesis and Exodus, Judges and the Samuel and Kings books, but bored by the ritual sections and the "begats". It was then that I began to see a God described who was very different from the God I had come to know from the Augustana liturgy. This new picture was not of a God full of kindness and tender mercies; rather, He was vicious and cruel, jerking Pharaoh around like a puppet so He could cause yet more disasters for the people of Egypt. He ordered the Israelites to invade the land of the Canaanites and murder every man, woman and child, an early example of ethnic cleansing. All of this cruelty and killing was justified by the idea of the Covenant. The Hebrews said that God had made a contract with them. He had chosen them to be his special people, and if they obeyed his commandments, they would receive special favors. All the other people of the world were unchosen and so were deserving of contempt, punishment, and ultimately, death.

When I got to the book of Job, I was appalled all over again. God let the children of Job be destroyed by a tornado because of a sort of bet He had made with Satan. The children were simply killed and removed like checkers from a board as if they meant nothing to God at all. Then Job and his friends spent the rest of the book arguing about why this had happened. Job was right; his disasters were not punishment for his sins. But he did not realize that God was treating him and his dead children in a way that would be considered unspeakably despicable if it were done by a human.

Of course, years later I realized what the purpose of the author was and that one ought not to take the details of the account seriously or literally. But in those adolescent years, when my concept of God was of the One who invites us to approach his throne of grace with boldness, what I was reading was shocking and disturbing. It was not only the contrast between the God defined by love and mercy and the God defined by ego and power that disturbed me. What bothered me very much was that no one else seemed to be disturbed. I tried to talk to our pastor about my confusion, but he was clearly uncomfortable about the very same things and had no satisfying answer for me, so I never mentioned it to him again for fear I might not get confirmed. I had already earned his unfavorable attention for suggesting that the "fear" part of "We should so fear and love God" in the catechism was inappropriate because I John said that perfect love casts out fear. I was not afraid of a God of perfect love. I must say that our pastor became my lifelong friend, and in spite of everything was my ordination sponsor.

For 30 years as a professor I listened to a parade of students tell me a scenario of the gospel which included the picture of a holy

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and wrathful God who was always lurking to punish us for our sins, but Jesus, who was gentle and loving had come to earth and stands between us and God. God killed Jesus instead of us. Jesus saves us from God, from suffering the just penalty of our sins. I always replied to the students that not only is it not the Gospel, it isn't even monotheism. And it isn't what I learned every week from the Augustana liturgy. The liturgy was witness to the fatherly heart of God, not to some brutal transaction between God and Jesus. The words of the liturgy were engraved on my heart, partly because I repeated the phrases every Sunday: "Holy and Righteous God," "Merciful Father", "O heavenly Father" and "thy Fatherly compassion."

It is true that the confession also mentions "the merits of the Savior, Jesus Christ." I had never heard of Anselm or of substitutionary atonement and I supposed that the phrase meant that Jesus had been a merciful and loving person just like God. It was years later that I first connected the phrase "Agnus Dei", Lamb of God, with the Passover story where the blood of a lamb, smeared on the door post, marked a home to be passed over by the death angel. In my childish ignorance, I thought that the "Lamb of God" meant that, like Mary's little lamb, Jesus was God's pet and favorite.

I also began to understand the disciples much more sympathetically. It is amazing that they did as well as they did, having been raised with all the stories that I found so contrary to the spirit of Jesus. Elijah, who specialized in calling down fire from heaven, was the great national hero along with Moses. The story of the Transfiguration seems to project the relative religious authority of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus; it is Jesus' words that are attested to by God. This is not to say that Moses and Elijah did not speak the word of God, but the word they spoke was so wrapped up in the mores, concepts, and culture of an earlier day that it is easy to miss the Gospel in their words. It is sad to see how persons accept all those cultural wrappings as if they were the Word of God.

In a sense, the disciples' confusion was the opposite of mine. We began at opposite ends of the Bible, as it were. They began with Moses and Elijah and had trouble with Jesus. I began with Jesus and had trouble with Moses and Elijah. This is not to say that everything in the Old Testament was strange and disturbing. In the Psalms, for instance, in spite of a general air of self-righteousness, there was much that spoke of an humble dependence on the mercy and goodness of God, much like the Augustana liturgy. In the Prophets, especially Hosea and the latter parts of Isaiah, there began to emerge a picture of God, grieved over the rebellion and sinfulness of the people He loved, but anxious to win them back and to rebuild their shattered lives, a picture Jesus must have cherished. He clearly continued in that strand of Hebrew tradition. But he just as clearly rejected the picture of

a God of tender ego, ferocious retribution and arbitrary power.

The baptism of Jesus was his call to ministry, his ordination, as it were, much like the calls of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Peter, too. The succeeding story of Jesus thinking through and deciding what form his ministry should take is quite properly called "The Temptations". In the wilderness, Jesus considered and rejected three forms of power as ways to gain control of peoples' lives and faith. These were ecclesiastical power, social welfare power, and finally political power. In order that his ministry should reflect and reveal the character of God, Jesus chose, not power at all, but the vitality of love. In the end, in the face of the opposition to Jesus by ecclesiastical power, social power, and political power, the vitality of love led him inevitably to the cross. Power always wins the battles with love before it loses the war.

People often mistake Jesus' ministry as one of Divine power because of the miracle stories. However, these are stories of the love of God sharing in the suffering of the world, not stories of power. The every essence of power is domination and control; there was no attempt by Jesus to use power, divine or any other sort, to gain control, to gain advantage, or even for self-protection.

This is where Jesus has differed from most of the prophets of every other time in his understanding of God. God is almost always interpreted in terms of the dominant authority figure of that time, the Alpha male of the culture. In ancient times, God was described like one of the despots of the age, male, of course, autocratic, arbitrary, and ego-driven. A notable exception was Hosea. For Augustine, in the early Christian era, the model for God was the Roman Emperor, chief of a great military presence, administrator of a vast network of authority to order and control the Empire. For Anselm, God was a feudal king, chief figure in an intricate network of rights and responsibilities binding society tightly together. Neither the Old Testament writers, Augustine, nor Anselm, were evil or ignorant. They were simply children of their times, as are we.

One summer Sunday, not so long ago, I had gone to supply preach in a small rural congregation. I came into the church basement just as Sunday School was over and met a young man with a baby in his arms. He pointed his finger at me and said with a grin, "Rehabilitation, not Retribution, right?" It turned out that he had been in one of my classes some years before and he still remembered a catch phrase I frequently used to describe the will and purpose of God: rehabilitation, not retribution.

It is Sovereign Power that must demand retribution or be diminished; it is Sovereign Love which by its very nature seeks the rehabilitation of its object. Sovereign Power which is disobeyed

generates wrath; Sovereign Love that is disappointed generates pain and sorrow in the Lover. Truly, He has borne our grief and carried our sorrow.

Some religious people think that it should be just the opposite; the sovereignty of God must create pain and suffering in the disobedient. God must unfailingly punish people for their sins. In fact, they tend to see every unfortunate event as a punishment from God. Remember the disciples and the man born blind, or the friends of Job. If God didn't punish sinners by making them suffer, they would get off scot free. That was the complaint of the older brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the parable more properly called the Waiting Father. When the younger son came back and got a welcome home party, his older brother protested to his father: "You mean to tell me that your son can go off and waste your property in riotous living and then come home and get rewarded with a big party. At least he should be made to pay back all that money and put on probation. All this time I have been a straight arrow, and what has it gotten me? It's just not fair."

The elder brother had a point. He was a good pious man, no doubt, who believed that if you spare the rod you spoil the child. He had heard that whom the Lord loves, He chastens. He thought that his father should follow the example of his God and reward the faithful, himself, and punish the wicked, his brother.

In my classes, whenever we read the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard in Matthew 20, plenty of elder brothers would speak up saying, "That's not fair." You remember the parable - workers were hired at various hours during the day, but at the end, each was paid a day's wage, no matter how long they had worked. Naturally those who had worked all day complained, but the owner simply said "Get used to it; that is how I choose to do things." It was not fair or just from the perspective of power but it is God's way, which gives people what they need, not what they deserve.

There is a great gulf between the justice of the God of power and the justice of the God of love. The God of power is fair and just. He gives you what you deserve, retribution. But when you have failed, the God of love, in his sorrow, seeks to give you what you need, rehabilitation.

Of course, the prodigal son did not get off scot free. His father suffered during the absence of his son, especially every time he got another report on what his son was doing, but he was overjoyed at his son's repentant return. The son knew the pleasure of rebellion, of doing his own thing, of not having to answer to anyone, of an undisciplined and wastrel life style. But then he knew the pain of discovering the emptiness of his life, of losing

his fair weather friends, the pain of coming to his senses, of realizing what he had done to his father, the pain and humiliation of having to acknowledge his self-centered and loveless behavior. No, the prodigal son did not escape pain and shame, but it emerged in his own heart out of his own lovelessness, especially in the presence of his father's waiting love. The aim of his father's love was rehabilitation, not retribution. For me, that is the will of the God whom I learned to know in the liturgy.

It is only rehabilitating, restoring love that makes confession possible. The prodigal son only dared to come home when he recalled the gracious kindness of his father toward the hired hands. He came hoping to share in that kindness, not daring to expect what he did receive, full restoration, with a party.

In our liturgical confession, we began with the announcement of God's loving kindness and were encouraged to approach His throne of grace with boldness. We acknowledged that we deserved to be cast away from God's presence because of our failure to love, but we asked for, not what we deserved, but what we needed, forgiveness.

God's forgiveness simply means that he does not cast us away in rightful disgust and rejection, but he accepts the pain our lovelessness causes Him, as he also rejoices when we turn to him. Forgiveness has nothing to do with forensic or legal transactions or law courts. Forgiveness, for God, means participating in the suffering of the world, even to the injustice of the cross. Forgiveness means that God keeps unbroken, on his side, a rehabilitating, restoring love even at the cost of pain and suffering. The love of God is vitality always present among us to restore and to redeem.

God does not punish us for our sins. He does not send floods or droughts, illness or disasters. Rather, He seeks to save us from our sins, from the kind of life which alienates us from one another, which diminishes our love, which enslaves and overpowers us. Christ, as he weeps over Jerusalem, was sorrowing over the future the people were creating for themselves and their children through their self-righteousness and blindness. God in Christ was trying to save them from their headlong plunge into that terrible future, but they would not listen. The love of God is not sentimentality; it heals us as it judges our failure to love as we have been loved. In the presence of God's love in Jesus Christ, we are found wanting. "We confess that we have not loved Thee above all things, nor our neighbor as ourselves." We are judged for our lovelessness, but we are not condemned. God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be rehabilitated through Him. Even if our hearts condemn us, God's love does not condemn us. It judges us and it offers us rehabilitation. To refuse judgment is to refuse rehabilitation.

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At the conclusion of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, the master says to the two servants who have been faithful, who have shared and invested the love which they themselves had received, and thus expanded and increased the store of love in the world, "Enter into the joy of your Lord." But on the other hand, just perhaps, the Master may say to those whose lovelessness, whose self-righteousness, whose pursuit of power have been a cause for God's sorrow, "Enter into the suffering and sorrow of your Lord." Thus the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

I have spoken of my confusion over the contrast between the picture of God given me by our liturgy and various images of God in the Bible. The person who helped me come to terms with my confusion more than anyone else was Eric Wahlstrom, who taught New Testament at the seminary. For me he was typical of the best of the Augustana Church in his quiet, gentle, and irenic (peaceable) spirit. We had many conversations during my seminary years and especially later while he was writing his book, *GOD WHO REDEEMS*. He helped me to see that the various theories of the atonement, for example, are simply mythic ways of trying to express the suffering that God's love entails for Him, that forgiveness is not simply God saying, "Well, that's alright" and passing over sin. Like much else in the Bible and in historical theology, these theories are expressed in terms drawn from their times and cultures.

One of the good things Dr. Wahlstrom did for me was to point me to a book that was written by a Swedish Bishop just at the time I was going through confirmation. I almost felt that the book had been written for me: *THE SUFFERING GOD* by Erling Eidem. He helped me come to some of the understandings which I have expressed here.

I believe that the identity of the Augustana Synod was shaped by its liturgy. If you visited an unfamiliar Lutheran church, the liturgy told you immediately whether it was Augustana. The liturgy is what we shared every Sunday. It was truly the heart of Augustana. If our Christian love for one another is the recognition and acknowledgment of our shared humanity before God, with all our limitations, then the weekly liturgy continued to announce the gospel, to instruct us, to shape our faith, and to bind together our various ways of trying to be God's faithful people.

For some Lutheran churches, the heart of their life was a carefully defended and preserved ideology. But Augustana's focus on faith in the loving character of God rather than on ideology, or on religious experience, made it easier for the Augustana Church to find fellowship with other churches. More than most streams of American Lutheranism, Augustana was supportive of ecumenical work in the National Council of Churches and the

Lutheran World Federation. Augustana supplied leadership in these enterprises disproportionate to its small size.

I grew up knowing that a fundamental purpose of the church, fundamental not optional, was mission work, sharing the Gospel of God's love and responding to the needs of all people. In the context of the Gospel expressed in our liturgy, all this seemed very natural to me. The heart of Augustana was its liturgy. Whenever I have preached, I have been glad that the liturgy began with a clear expression of the Gospel. Then whatever came after, even if the sermon were 18 minutes of Law and 2 minutes of Gospel, as sometimes it might seem, nevertheless, the Gospel shaped the worship experience. In this day of near liturgical anarchy, what I miss most from my Augustana experience is its liturgy. I thank God that it was the definitive element of my religious life and experience. **AHA**



**Peter Beckman**

*Peter Beckman was born and raised in Portland, Oregon. Following high school graduation he enlisted in the Seabees. After several years in the South Pacific, he returned to enroll at Augustana College where he graduated in 1949. He graduated from Augustana Seminary and was ordained in 1953. He served congregations in Connecticut and Massachusetts, and in Great Falls, Montana. He began teaching in the Religion Department at Augustana College in 1960, and received his PhD degree in Constructive Theology in 1968 from the University of Chicago. He retired from Augustana College in 1990. He and Lydia Larson were married in 1948. They have three children, and now live at 64096 E. Meander Dr., Tucson, AZ 85739. Lpbeckfam@webtv.net*



# AHA HISTORY PROJECT

*Telling the Story of Augustana Anew* By Arland J. Hultgren

The Board of Directors of the Augustana Heritage Association has decided that the time is right for the writing and publication of a new history of the Augustana Lutheran Church. To that end, it has engaged the talents of two fine church historians who have been raised in the Augustana tradition and have worked with the original sources already.

The two authors of the new history, elected by the AHA Board are the Rev. Dr. Maria Erling, Associate Professor of the History of Christianity in North America and Global Mission at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and the Rev. Dr. Mark Granquist, Assistant Professor of Religion at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota.

The volume planned will be for a general audience, but will meet scholarly standards. It will include both text and photos. It is too soon to predict when the anticipated volume will appear. The leadership of the AHA wants to give the authors the time and resources to produce a work of outstanding quality, rather than pressure them to meet a prematurely set deadline.

It is fair to ask why a new history of Augustana should be published. Professor G. Everett Arden produced a history published in 1963, which has served us well. Why a new one now? With

the passing of more than four decades and two Lutheran mergers, new questions arise, and new interest has been aroused concerning the role of Augustana in the church of today. There is more information available for researches today than ever before about Augustana's leaders, congregations, parish life, and institutions (such as its colleges, hospitals, homes for the aged, Bethphage Mission, and the former Augustana Seminary). The major ministries of Augustana - including its youth activities, women's work, social concern, global mission, and ecumenical leadership - were disproportionately outstanding with American Lutheranism, as recognized by historians and others who are not of that heritage. The impact of Augustana Lutheranism in America and around the world has yet to be assessed.

The story of Augustana should be preserved not only to rekindle the memories of those who are its heirs, but also for future generations that will have heard about Augustana, but who did not experience its rich and colorful history. The AHA is the only organization with enough talents, resources, and interest to carry out such a project. The unique situation of having excellent authors to write a new history, on the one hand, and the resources and interest of so many, on the other, is a rare moment. Now is the opportune time and probably the last time that such a happy combination can occur. **AHA**

## HOW TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY PROJECT.

The History of the Augustana Lutheran Church will be a rich legacy for present and future generations. Friends of the Augustana Heritage Association are invited to make a contribution toward the publishing of this history. The budget for this project is \$160,000. Nearly \$90,000 has been committed as of December 31, 2002. Readers of the Newsletter are invited to make a tax deductible\* gift toward this publication in one of the following ways:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Contributor (up to \$999)

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# **Bethphage:**

*90 years of God's Love*  
for people with disabilities

**Renowned ministry proud of it's Augustana Heritage**



***“Bethphage serves and advocates for people with disabilities so that they may achieve their full potential.”***

Thus reads the mission statement for this renowned social ministry organization with deep roots in the former Augustana Church. For more than 90 years, Bethphage has remained true to its goal of providing the finest services and unwavering love and care for people in need. Today, Bethphage is a premier provider of service and advocacy for people with disabilities and stands at the threshold of exciting change. To understand Bethphage, in most respects, is to embrace Augustana heritage. How fitting it is that we take this occasion in the Augustana Heritage Association Newsletter to explore the glorious history of this proud Lutheran organization and celebrate its proud heritage!

At the turn of the 20th century, American society was only just beginning to change its view of “down-trodden” and “disabled” citizens. Much of the general public, caught up in the excitement of the industrial revolution, turned its back on people with disabilities and other people with unfortunate circumstances, looking upon them and their families with shame and disgrace. It was in 1913, amidst this public mood, that Bethphage was founded and began flourishing as a haven and place of hope for those that society ignored. It all began with a young Swedish pastor named K.G. William Dahl, who came to the United States in 1902. While studying to become a Lutheran minister in the Augustana Lutheran Church, Dahl translated a book, “A Colony of Mercy or Social Christianity at Work,” by Julie Sutter. The book detailed the work of the Bethel Institute in Germany that lovingly and respectfully served people with disabilities. “A Colony of Mercy or Social Christianity at Work” inspired Dahl to a special calling. Not long after that, he visited an acquaintance at Douglas County Hospital in Nebraska whom he had cared for. His friend, who had epilepsy, received the sub-human treatment that was typical of institutions of that time. This visit touched him deeply, and he began to envision a place of care similar to the Bethel Institute in Germany.

In 1912, Pastor Dahl and his family moved to Axtell, Nebraska, where he was to serve a congregation. In February 1913, Dahl organized a meeting at Bethphage Lutheran Church in Axtell. There, he introduced the cause that was so near to his heart - “The mentally ill, the feeble-minded (as they were known then), the deaf, the blind, the aged whose eyes pleaded while their tongues babbled mixed-up phrases, those with epilepsy, the physically handicapped, the poor and the down-trodden.” From all accounts, Dahl prayed, begged and even wept at this meeting. At the conclusion of this gathering, 54 people signed on as charter members of this new organization and contributed one dollar each as evidence of their faith in Dahl’s vision. On February 19, 1913, in Axtell, Nebraska, on a cold windswept prairie far from any metropolitan area, the Bethphage Inner

*Bethphage has positively impacted the lives of people with disabilities through the years. Much of this impact has been preserved and revealed through heartwarming testimonials received from service recipients and their families. The sidebars on the following pages contain excerpts of different accounts of the people whose lives were benefited at Bethphage.*

***Those who cared for the guests,*** whether they had nursing degrees or even lacked secondary education, were assigned, with rare exceptions, to the same responsibilities. The dayshift began at 6:30. The first duty of the floor attendants was to “set trays.” This involved one individual placing the tray cloths, dishes, utensils and food on as many as 12 trays, and then distributing these to the bedfast and helping another attendant and some of the more able guests with the feeding responsibilities. This task ran the gamut from pleasant to dangerous, some of the guests smiling with appreciation for each morsel, while others resisted being fed with a passion. Following this, at 7:30, the old brass school bell would ring from the door of the basement dining room. The guests who had been waiting in the hallway or sitting on the stairs would pour in and others would make their way in leisurely fashion, neither noting nor caring that people were waiting, some not too patiently, for grace to be said. Gust, dear Gust, who was so clever with his hands and who had an active and interested mind, would usually be last, coming in frequently after grace had been said. He might have been sitting idly in his rocker in his basement bedroom that was nearly adjacent to the dining room. Because of some psychological quirk, though, the bell seemed to signal a demand that he rise from his chair, walk to the far end of the hall and turn on his power saw just long enough to saw a small board or two. Then he would approach the dining room, walking along the wall with arms outstretched as though he were measuring his way to the meal.

Mission Association was born.

Dahl’s vision of helping people with disabilities consumed every aspect of his life. His efforts took the form of spreading Bethphage’s message to the public, which was no small feat when one considers the difficulty of travel in those days. After a visit at a church or school, Pastor Dahl would leave a coin bank with each member of his audience. Their extra coins would be the money needed for the food and supplies that ran Bethphage. Three years after the inception of Bethphage, 1,600 banks had

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Bethphage differed from organizations of its type at that time. There, people with the disabilities that Dahl was concerned about were treated with love and respect, not as burdens on society. Pastor Dahl deeply valued people of this plight and wanted to create a place where they could partake in a feeling of belonging. Another way that Bethphage differed was its integration and involvement with the surrounding communities. Instead of ignoring what they did not understand, Axtell and its neighboring towns sought to learn more about the worth of people with disabilities, too.

Early in the 20th century, the societal attitude towards people with disabilities was that of segregation: protect them from society by keeping them in an institution for life. Bethphage's caregiving philosophy reflected this value up until the 1950s. Bethphage's role was to give these ostracized people a place of comfort where they would not suffer these indignities. At the same time, however, it was emphasized that Bethphage was different than state institutions in that the organization was meant to be a place for people to call home. Bethphage utilized the developmental model that perceived "people with retardation as capable of growth, development, and learning." Residential services provided home-like spaces, and access to "risks" (stairs, electrical outlets, hot water, etc.). When services began evolving, there was an emphasis upon programs, rather than the buildings that would house them. Homes, apartments, hotels, and churches were where people began being served. This put people with disabilities out in the community rather than institutionalized buildings, which had helped perpetuate negative perceptions of people with special needs.

Bethphage was always receptive to new ideologies, and always represented a departure from the previous mindset of shutting people away who were perceived as different. Because of the view and success of organizations like Bethphage, society evolved from doing practically nothing to doing very much for

people with disabilities. In the 1960s, the United States government sprang into action. By the 1970s an ideological explosion toward developmental disabilities was in full swing, and Bethphage encountered massive change as a result. Bethphage was positioned to carry out its mission in a way that Pastor Dahl would not have dreamed possible.

It would be impossible to explore Bethphage history without examining its deep Swedish and Augustana Church heritages. Bethphage was founded in South Central Nebraska, where many Swedish immigrants settled in the 19th and 20th centuries. Because Sweden's national religion was Lutheran at that time, these immigrants' religion was deeply tied to their country of origin. In order to survive the harsh conditions of life on the American prairie, the Swedish immigrants remained a very close-knit and faith-based community. Bethphage was an extension of this cooperative spirit. Although Bethphage maintained its independence from the government, it depended on the goodwill of the citizens of Axtell and the surrounding communities for its very survival. Organizations like the Tabitha society, a women's group that provided charitable donations, provided support to Bethphage. Many Swedish farmers would bring eggs and other produce to Bethphage to show their support. In the early years, all administrators for Bethphage were Swedish or of Swedish descent, and were staunch Lutherans. In addition, the *Bethphage Messenger* newsletter was published in Swedish as late as the 1940s. Even the architecture on the Bethphage campus in Axtell represented an imprint of Swedish culture. Pastor Dahl and architect Olof Cervin collaborated on how the campus should look. Dahl chose a unified look on the campus using the Swedish National Romantic Style, characterized by orange tile and corbie-gabled roofs, along with masonry tile siding. The Lind Center home office building in Omaha, Nebraska, was also designed to conjure images of the Swedish-style architecture present at the Bethphage village in Axtell.

Bethphage's long-term success has always been dependent on capable leaders who possessed the vision to guide the organiza-

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**Kathy is 27 years old.** Mentally, she is more like a small child. Her behavior, her mannerisms, her speech almost everything about her with the exception of her physical features, reminds us of a little girl.

Frequently when it is suggested that she do a certain thing she responds, "I'll have to ask my mother first." Undoubtedly it was deeply ingrained in her mind that life would be much less complicated for her if she would ask her mother's permission before following suggestions that might possibly be ill advised.

One day Kathy was walking from her residence to the chapel, accompanied by one of our developmental aides and a friend, Bernita. They were en route to the chapel to attend memorial services for a friend. Quite naturally the conversation turned to thoughts of the departed friend. Bernita, a bubbly, effervescent person who bursts into song so frequently that we call her our "songbird" smiled and remarked, "Someday I'm going to heaven to be with Jesus. Do you want to go to heaven someday, Kathy?" Without batting an eyelash, Kathy replied in all seriousness, "I'll have to ask my mother first."



tion through hard times. The people who have guided Bethphage have been more than capable, and their vision has always advanced the original mission.

Pastor Dahl's message from 1913 resonated with the people he talked to, and under his influence the dream took shape. In its first year of existence, the Bethphage Inner Mission Association acquired 311 members, which amounted to \$1,118.97 in revenue. In year two, Dahl's efforts increased the membership to 1,512 and brought \$9,205.23 in membership fees. By February of 1916, 47 people were receiving care, and many more were requesting help. Not only did Pastor Dahl serve populations in need, he also purchased 40 acres of land in Axtell and completed six buildings on it, as well. Dahl's constant traveling and speaking engagements, long work hours and emotional strife took a heavy toll on him. Reverend K.G. William Dahl passed away in September 1917 at the young age of 34.

Bethphage's future hung in the balance without someone with the fiery countenance to carry the torch. The directorship was extended to a man whose style contrasted greatly with Dahl's outward personality. Dr. Carl Adolf Lonnquist was scholarly and patriarchal, yet remained tenderly compassionate. Furthermore, Dr. Lonnquist was a poet, artist, hymn writer and gifted speaker. He appealed to people through heart-warming writings that were described as responsive to human misery. Dr. Lonnquist's tenure, which lasted from 1917 through 1937, was characterized by tremendous growth at Bethphage. When Dr. Lonnquist began his term as director, the fledgling Bethphage Mission possessed a considerable debt of \$56,000 (approximately \$850,000 in today's dollars!). The feeling among Bethphage supporters was that a charismatic leader would be needed to overcome this situation and ensure the future of the organization. Dr. Lonnquist did just that, throwing himself into his work and reducing the debt in a short period of time. In the early 1920s, Dr. Lonnquist capitalized on the easy availability of funds that the American Liberty Bond program of WWI had created, building more homes and facilities in Axtell. As a result, many people with disabilities were removed from the waiting lists for badly-needed services. From 1919 to 1929, Homes Emmaus, Shiloh, Kidron, and Bethel were built, 160 acres of land were added to the campus for farming and self-sustaining purposes, debt

reduction occurred, infrastructure needs were attended to, a dairy barn was erected, and a large maintenance garage was added. In 1931, Bethphage dedicated Zion Chapel, a church that cost \$45,000 and was funded primarily by the Women's Missionary Society of the Lutheran Augustana Church. Zion Chapel is considered the spiritual heart of the campus. What makes the history of Zion Chapel especially noteworthy is that



Bethphage raised funds for its construction during the Great Depression. Of equal significance was the pivotal role of Lutheran women in the late 1920s in helping to make the Zion Chapel a reality.

During the hard times of the Great Depression, Bethphage employee salaries had to be reduced and, at times, became delinquent for months on end. It was also during the Great Depression that, on June 14, 1937, Dr. Lonnquist died as a result of a stroke he suffered

while waiting to undergo a tonsillectomy.

Reverend Arthur A. Christenson assumed the office of director of Bethphage shortly after Dr. Lonnquist's passing. Pastor Christenson's style of leadership differed from his predecessors. He left operational duties to members of the Diaconate, an organization founded earlier out of the Inner Mission Movement for women and men who felt God's call to give full time, sacrificial service to the various ministries on Christ's behalf in the Church. His method was to work mainly from a small office at Bethphage Village and to visit the campus only when his personal presence and specialized talents were needed. To the outside observer, it might have appeared that little growth occurred during Pastor Christenson's tenure, but that is not the case. When he assumed office, Bethphage had a debt of \$90,000, assets of \$396,000 and an annual budget of \$66,320. When he left office in 1957, Christenson had eliminated Bethphage's debt, assets had increased to \$1,278,742, and Bethphage had an annual operating budget of \$399,766.

Big changes were on the horizon for American society, the field of human services and the scope of Bethphage services when Reverend Herbert R. Ekerberg became director in 1957. Bethphage's way of maintaining its service framework was in need of adjustments. Bethphage's connection to the Lutheran Church was beginning to lessen. Charitable contributions from congregations and individuals across America, the lifeblood of Bethphage, were not what they had been in earlier years. The

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self-sufficiency model of the Bielefeld Institute, from which Bethphage had modeled itself, was losing its effectiveness. In addition, fewer women and men were willing to give up their lives in service to the Diaconate, long a steady employee source for Bethphage. In addition, the professional disability field in America was beginning to emerge and take shape. Pastor Ekerberg was blessed with high levels of energy and had a business-like mentality. He was unafraid of the past, was mindful not to let personalities interfere with efficient performance and looked to the future with great enthusiasm. His ability to make tough decisions guided Bethphage through the approaching forest of uncertainty. Pastor Ekerberg's leadership was characterized by change at Bethphage. A new constitution was ratified in 1966, shifting the focus of Bethphage services specifically on

those with developmental disabilities. This shift was due to such medical advances as medication for epilepsy, which rendered several care models outmoded. The new constitution also dissolved the Diaconate, as participation in this way of life had all but vanished in America due to cultural changes during World War II that empowered women, made them more independent and provided them with more career options. In addition, the Bethphage Inner Mission Association was disbanded and placed under the five synods of the Lutheran Church in America as Bethphage Mission, Inc. These developments represented large departures from tradition, and Pastor Ekerberg encountered many who viewed these necessary growing pains with great apprehension.

### ***Dear Friends of Bethphage,***

I think it is appropriate to attempt to put on paper some of my feelings with the recent death of my sister, Faith Vigen, who lived at Bethphage for some 20 years.

When Faith died I could not help but think of the many feelings that surround a person who is retarded. Even though she left our home for Bethphage while I was very young I remember many of the concerns that occupy a family when they have a child like Faith. There were many hours spent worrying about her, wondering about her and searching for answers.

I, of course, did not have the perspective of a parent. Nor can I presume to offer advice to those who are responsible to care for children with needs similar to Faith's.

But I can speak to what I learned from Faith. First of all, I feel that Faith brought meaning to our lives. To care about her and to be a steward of her life was not, in reality, a burden. It was a God given introduction to the meaning of life itself. She was a teacher. She helped us to learn how to care. Often, as I have gone about my work among people, Faith has been in my mind. Faith was easy to love. Others are more difficult. They may be hostile or bitter, distant or rebellious. But the need for love which Faith obviously and openly presented is concealed in every single human being. What Faith taught me has helped me to learn how to care even when the need is hidden.

Her name taught me another lesson. The secret of life is also Faith and Trust. She was never a productive person as the world measures productivity and success. And yet her life had dignity and grace within the circle of her responsibility. She could not even long for fame or fortune, but she could live responsibly where she was. We all see dimly God's direction for this world. But not all of us live in trust with the small tasks we are given. We are pulled by our anxiety for something more. There is a better way to live. And Faith was somehow more able to be open to God than are many of time's inhabitants. Perhaps it is true in many ways that the last will be first.

Faith was handicapped. But I also learned through her to give up the idea that she was a handicap to others. We, perhaps like many families with retarded children, sometimes felt handicapped by Faith. This was a sign of our own lack of understanding. Faith helped us to grow in this regard. And I think we came to celebrate her life as a gracious gift to all she knew from the hand of God.

So I have come to feel and believe that Faith was a worthy teacher of some of God's secrets. For us it is to have eyes that see and ears that hear. Faith helped us open ourselves to God. Her memory will live with us and when we die that memory will be gone. But there will be other servants of God to replace her.

With greetings to all,  
David C. Vigen



He also utilized a wide array of knowledge and technology that had been growing in the field of services for people with disabilities. Under Pastor Ekerberg's leadership, Bethphage became more interacted with the Axtell community, hired trained professionals and looked more extensively at individual development of service recipients. The services that were provided in the newly constructed activities building reflected this shift in outlook. Bethphage began to break out of its isolation and connect with state and federal agencies as funds became available for organizations similar to Bethphage. With the hiring of professionals and the involvement of government funds came a new emphasis on record keeping and other management activities.

The next director, Rev. Roland Johnson, took office in August 1967. He had earned his masters degree in social work and, as a result, Bethphage saw itself as better able to participate in the disability service revolution occurring at that time. In addition to Johnson's affinity for social programs, he was a resilient man, having been on his own since the age of fourteen. Pastor Johnson was known as a common and down-to-earth man, a real friend to all, and a man who did his best work at a desk where he might best plan, analyze and survey. His tenure saw the transformation of Bethphage into a far more professional organization. This shift was due in large part to the increased involvement of government monies and ensuing regulation. At the same time, there was an augmented effort toward preserving the civil rights and personal safety of the people served by Bethphage. Under Pastor Johnson, Bethphage employee compensation grew, and the staff-to-guest ratio increased due to mandates by the government. Normalization and developmental service models were taking hold in Nebraska and the United States as a whole, which enhanced Bethphage's efforts to improve lives and establish people served as active and valuable members of society.

Robert Turnquist followed Pastor Johnson as director of Bethphage in 1975. He had been a member of the Diaconate and had devoted many years of his life to service at Bethphage. *When he assumed the office of director, Turnquist saw himself as more of a protector and father figure than as an administrator.* It was under Robert Turnquist that Bethphage services, as they are known today, took shape. This development occurred as the result of a heightened degree of regulation imposed upon Bethphage. A phenomenal amount of work was needed to keep up with government requirements that mandated more staff, renovation of existing buildings, the construction of new ones, and the purchase and maintenance of a new record-keeping system. These regulations were comprehensive and far-reaching, covering even the charitable gifts that Bethphage had once solely relied upon. If a farmer had maimed livestock, then oftentimes he would bring it to Bethphage to be used for food. Under new regulations, these types of donations could no longer be accept-

ed, causing much dismay within the surrounding communities. The degree of change that took place during Robert Turnquist's five years of leadership was tremendous.

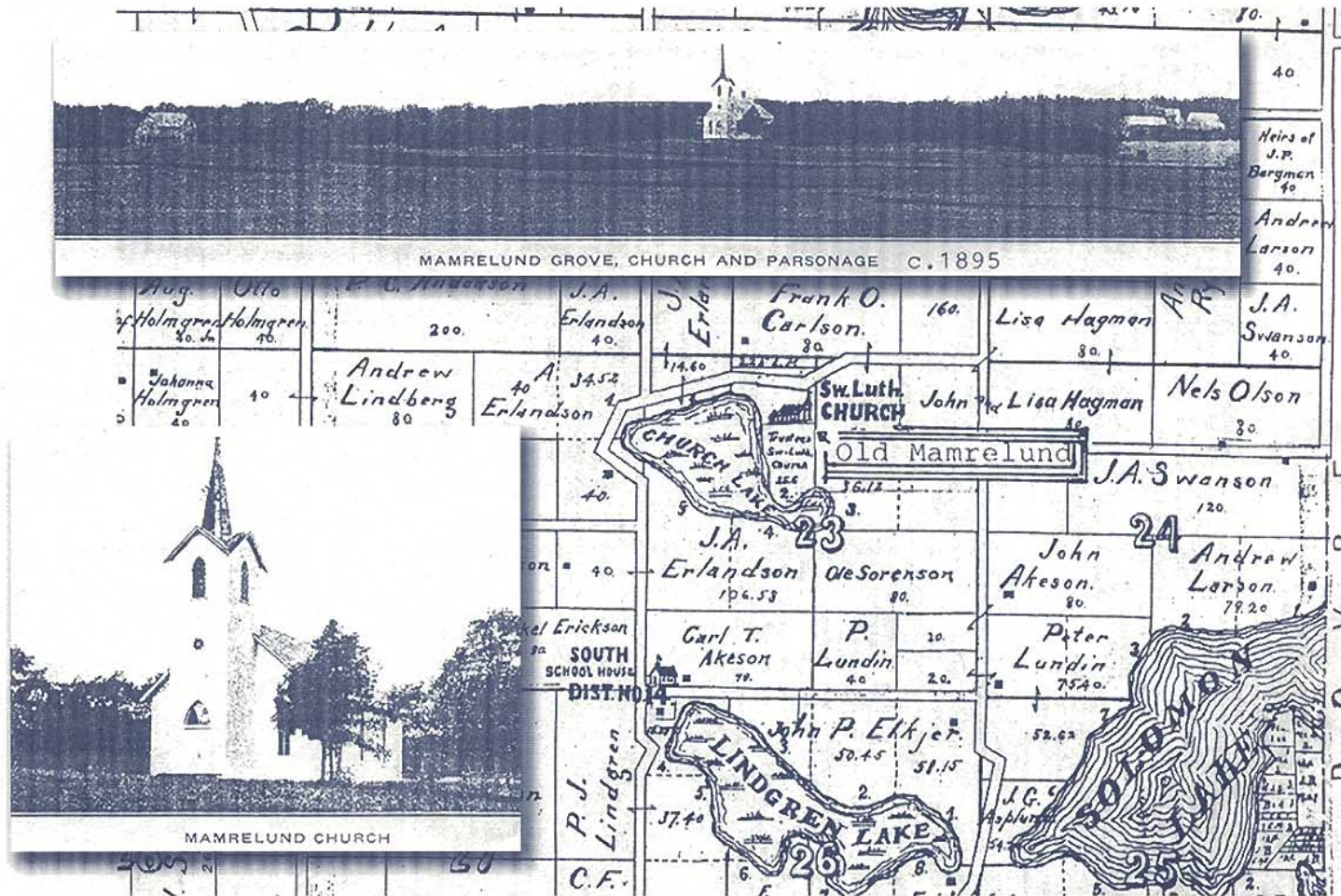
Dr. David A. Jacox began his term as president and CEO of Bethphage in 1980. Robert Turnquist had this to say about him, "I have often told people that to be the chief administrator of Bethphage today, one needs to possess the mind of a lawyer, be thoroughly versed in the field of mental retardation as contained in the textbooks, know all the multitudinous new government rules and regulations and be a bit of a politician. Fortunately for us, David Jacox meets those criteria." During the time that Dr. Jacox has served, he has guided Bethphage through the last of the broad changes that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, and he has built upon them. Under Dr. Jacox, Bethphage fully embraced the new models of service for people with disabilities, those of individual development and normalization. His tenure also brought phenomenal growth and expansion. Through many organizational changes under Dr. Jacox, such as the relocation of the Bethphage home office to Omaha and expansion into new states, Bethphage has been firmly established as one of the largest ELCA social ministry organizations and one of the premier service providers in the world. At the end of 2002, Bethphage served more than 2,300 people with disabilities in 28 programs across twelve states, Great Britain and Latvia, and advocated for thousands more.

Today, the original spirit and mission of Bethphage is alive and well. Pastor Dahl's spirit and burning desire to serve those whom no one else would exist in the hearts and minds of those who lead Bethphage. Bethphage not only lives on as the organization of choice for thousands of people with disabilities in America, but also works feverishly to advocate for those in need of services around the globe.

Bethphage is now engaged in an historic process called Joining Hands. It is a project to consolidate Bethphage with Martin Luther Homes, another renowned Lutheran service provider. *At the conclusion of this project in July 2003, the resulting organization will be one of the world's premier service providers and advocates for people with disabilities. AHA*

***If you would like more information,*** would like to support a Bethphage program near you or learn about giving opportunities at Bethphage, please call the Bethphage Public Information Department at 1-800-279-1234. You can also visit us at [www.bethphage.org](http://www.bethphage.org). Also consider a visit to our Miracle of the Prairies Lodge and Retreat Center at the historical Bethphage Village in Axtell, Nebraska. Individuals and groups are welcome. Check it out at [www.bethphage.org/retreat](http://www.bethphage.org/retreat).





# Old Mamrelund Church

by Charles Hendrickson

*It is not the oldest congregation in Minnesota, not even in Kandiyohi County,  
but its surviving building from 1883 is a rare hardly-touched treasure.*

**O**n September 15, 1863, Johan Gillberg arrived from the province of Värmland in Sweden and homesteaded in Section 2 of Mamre Township of Kandiyohi County.

In December 1869, Gillberg, fellow homesteader John Rådman, and other Swedes, and Norwegians, founded Mamrelund Church. It joined the Minnesota Conference of the Augustana Synod. Gillberg and Rådman were among its first Deacons. Rådman had named both church (first) then township from the Swedish word Mamre, possibly from the old Swedish Bible phrase "den lunden Mamre," the grove where Abraham rested. The first pastor's name, Lundblad, also is indicated to be a part of the church name.

After the framework of the 1870 "Meeting House" was destroyed by a windstorm, a second structure was constructed. In 1883 the present church was built on a new site on the east side of Church Lake in section 23 of Mamre Township at a cost

of \$1,452.04. Many oak trees grew up around the church, and the lake protected both church and trees from the prairie fires which regularly swept in from the west.

But Gillberg and Rådman were attracted away from Mamrelund Church and Augustana by the pietism of the New Mission movement. They joined Lundby Swedish Mission Church nearby, and in 1886 Gillberg attended the "Northwestern Christian Convention" in Minneapolis, became an early Mission Covenant pastor, and served the Lundby church not far from Mamrelund. Lundby became a Mission Covenant Church, merged with nearby Salem Covenant Church and eventually disappeared.

The Gillberg and Rådman families were not alone in leaving the organized and very-Lutheran Augustana for the non-liturgical, non-confessional pietism of the Mission movement. This created a crisis for Augustana, but it weathered the storm with the



Swedish-Lutheran liturgy, theology, and practices largely intact.

In 1915, the members at Mamrelund decided to move the congregation four miles south to the small village of Pennock in Kandiyohi County. They abandoned "Old" Mamrelund and established "New" Mamrelund Church in town. Because there were many years of burials in the cemetery, the congregation retained ownership of the land and left old Mamre intact.

The practical nature of the congregation created several unusual results: The sound of the old bell at the old church seemed better than the sound of the new bell at the new church, so they simply exchanged bells in 1960.

The inside walls of the church are wonderfully decorated with phrases in Swedish. By 1989, Swedish was no longer understood, so devoted member Philip Johnson commissioned translations in English to be painted beneath the Swedish phrases. The translations are not quite accurate.

On the left front is, "hören aff eder själ må lefva" which is incorrectly translated, "Listen that my soul shall live." It should read, "Listen that your soul shall live."

On the right front, "frukten Gud och gif honom ära" which is incorrectly translated, "Praise God and give Him honor." It should read, "Fear God and give Him Honor." Modern churches prefer praise rather than 19th century fear.

Since the church is small, 30' by 42', the closely-spaced pews fill the room. When the service is over, the ushers start at the front and successively pull the center-aisle end of each pew forward to give those in the next pew enough room to exit. Full attendance creates a new rubric - move pews during postlude.

Summer worship is at 8:45 a.m. on the 3rd Sunday of June, July, and August. A slightly heated Christmas Eve worship is at 4:00 p.m. The church also serves for some weddings, baptisms, and funerals. A picnic follows the July service.

The church has no electricity, no running water, no telephone, and no heat (basement furnace inoperative). It was inspiring to see the black "The Hymnal" from 1925 in the service. It is used only for singing hymns; the liturgy is modern non-liturgy. Even more inspiring was the sight of some members using the small,

no-music, text only 1925 edition of the hymnal. These also serve for home devotions.

Since Old Mamre closed in 1915, the 1925 hymnal was not used there while it was a fully functioning church. The current use of "The Hymnal" seems perfect, very fitting and may yet inspire a future use of the Augustana liturgy. The church was built just a year before the publication, by the Augustana Book Concern, of the 1884 Swedish language "split" hymnal. This

may have been used at Old Mamrelund, but another question is whether they adopted the new English language hymnal of 1900/1901 before old Mamre was closed in 1915. Swedish continued in use at New Mamre in town until 1941.

The church has original, beautiful oil lamps over the center aisle. These are destined for restoration. A typical home parlor pump organ (melodeon) provides very adequate music by a

competent organist who must foot pump the entire service.

Behind the altar is not a reredos, but a painting of a reredos. The painted cross is depicted with a permanently draped white cloth. The plaster walls are decorated in subdued colors, probably from the last early work in 1903. The effect of the interior is transfixing. The beauty, within the simple structure, is gem-like and in an early style and feeling.

The situation of the church and its surroundings is evocative of the immigrant worship past. An unmarked gravel road leads to the church, and one must know how to get there. The gothic-revival, single-pane, clear-glass windows look out into a dense grove of trees (The Mamrelund Oaks). At each service the congregation sings the hymn "Mamrelund", commissioned in honor of Werner Berglund with words by Julie Maroti, and tune by Randall Davidson. This congregation has its own hymn.

In the 1880s, Rev. and Mrs. Johan Gillberg and the children left Minnesota, never to return. They were neither the first nor the last to convert from Augustana to Mission Covenant, or the only Minnesotans to leave the blizzards and grasshoppers to settle in California.

In 1960, Birgitta Gillberg, my future wife and the great grand-niece of Johan Gillberg, arrived from Sweden in St. Peter, Minnesota to teach Swedish at Gustavus Adolphus College. Unknowingly, she was now close to where her relatives had

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Interior of the Old Mamrelund Church



homesteaded a century before. Not until years later would either of us know about the 19th century Gillberg settlement only a few miles from where I grew up in Kandiyohi County.

Today, Old Mamre serves the functions of a very characteristic immigrant Swedish-American Lutheran building which, at a modest level of activity, continues to be used as a real church, not just a museum. Its members and visitors gather for modern worship services in a wonderfully unmodernized building. These are not the worship services of the immigrants, but contemporary services with restless children and the busy commotion of a small sanctuary filled with people.

The bulk of information in this article is from the incredible 1905 "Illustrated History of Kandiyohi County, Minnesota" by Victor Lawson. Lawson was an important layman in Augustana, and many consider his book to be the finest county history in the USA. Mamrelund members Philip Johnson and Helen Fosso, of rural Pennock, provided me with important information.

In 1983, the Emigrant Institute of Växjö and the Nordiska Museet of Stockholm, published, "Building Traditions Among Swedish Settlers in Rural Minnesota." The author, Lena A:s-on-Palmquist, researched immigrant building methods in Kandiyohi and Chisago Counties of Minnesota and related them to methods in Sweden. Pictured in the book are photos and floor plan of Old Mamrelund along with log cabins and other early structures in Kandiyohi County, including others in Mamre Township.

The historical physical situation of Old Mamrelund gives us a glimpse of how the immigrants provided for their worship. Though we arrive by car, not by foot or horse, the modern comfortable world disappears a bit as we enter the churchyard and then the building itself. Though it is not used, we can imagine hearing the opening sentence of Augustana worship, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts! The whole earth is full of His glory." AHA



*Charles Hendrickson was born and raised in Willmar Minnesota, only a few miles from Old Mamrelund Church. His wife Birgitta grew up in the*

*province of Värmland, Sweden and after graduating from Uppsala University, emigrated to the United States. She teaches Swedish, Norwegian and German at Minnesota State University at Mankato. Two sons, Eric and Andreas work with their father building pipe organs at the Hendrickson Organ Company in St. Peter, MN. (507) 931-4271; e-mail hendorg@aol.com. Charles wrote an article in the Fall 2001 AHA Newsletter about the History of Augustana Music.*

## Recollections &

### Augustana's Last Ordination

By Gerald L. Youngquist

On the evening of June 27, 1962, pastors and delegates from Augustana churches across the United States and Canada gathered in the Ford Auditorium in Detroit for the final official rite of the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church.

A Service of Ordination was to be held for forty-five recent graduates of the Augustana Theological Seminary in Rock Island, Illinois. The graduation service had been held in Centennial Hall at Augustana College on May 29th. Dr. Karl Mattson, president of the seminary, was the preacher for the graduation service. His sermon title was, "The Thrill of Tradition."

The baccalaureate service for the class was held on May 27th in Trinity Church, Moline, with Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, president of the United Lutheran Church in America, as the guest preacher. His title was "A Burning and Shining Light." There were actually fifty-three graduates who received the Bachelor of Divinity degree, but only forty-five graduates had applied for ordination. Those forty-five had been assigned parishes or new missions and had received calls to those offices and thus were eligible for ordination. It was the practice of the Augustana Church to offer choice to ordinands between urban/rural, established/new mission and geographical location which the synod tried to honor. Not everyone was pleased with his assignment, I was and most were.

Earlier, on the day of ordination, the ordained were required to sign the ministerial roll of the church. This was done alphabetically. The class started on number 2470 and ended on number 2514. On that basis, I like to "brag" that I was the last one ordained by the Augustana Church. My picture was taken with Dr. Leonard Kendall, secretary of the Church, Dr. D. Verner Swanson, my sponsor, and Dr. Melvin Lundeen, president of the Church.

Actually our class was ordained all at the same time. At a large altar rail in the Ford Auditorium, all forty-five ordinands knelt with their sponsors and ordaining officers. We all said our ordination vows in unison. As our sponsors placed the stoles on our shoulders with the laying on of hands, the president said to the candidates, "Take thou the authority to preach the Word of God and to administer the Holy Sacraments of the Church. The



# Reflections



left to right: Dr. Leonard Kendall, Gerald L. Youngquist, Dr. D. Verner Swanson, Dr. Melvin Lundeen

blessing of the Lord be upon you, that you may go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit may remain."

On June 28th, the morning following our ordination service, the pastors and delegates of the four merging churches met for the opening service of the constituting convention of the Lutheran Church in America, a service of worship and Holy Communion. Some 7000 communicants were present for this service.

I am a son of Zion Lutheran Church, Gowrie, Iowa. Through my freshman year in high school, Dr. D. Verner Swanson was my pastor. He served Zion for eighteen years before moving to Geneva, Illinois. He baptized me, confirmed me and was my sponsor at my ordination. The strong tradition of piety and leadership at Zion has led to more than twenty-five pastors coming from that parish.

My parish assignment was to First Lutheran Church, Kirkland, Illinois. I served that church for nine years. In 1971, I received a call to First Lutheran Church in Monmouth, Illinois, where I served for twenty-four years, retiring in 1995.

Both parishes I served were former Augustana Synod churches. In Monmouth, the strong Swedish heritage has been kept alive with smorgasbords, Lucia Festivals, and an annual use of the liturgy from the Augustana Hymnal on the Sunday closest to our founding date. Of course, "Children of the Heavenly Father", in English and Swedish are favorite along with "Hosianna" on Christmas Eve in Swedish.

I treasure my Augustana Heritage and the many people who influenced my growing-up years. The class of 1962 continues to hold reunions every five years and the friendships remain deep. I feel blessed to have been a part of Augustana. AHA



# Recollections & Reflections

## Augustana's Western Mission Through the Eyes of A "Younger" Son

By Hal Nilsson, '65

Mission was in the lifeblood of the Augustana Lutheran Church. I experienced that mission in four western contexts.

### I

Palo Alto, California is an avante garde community shaped historically by its proximity to Stanford University and more recently by high tech industry. In the early 1920s, Augustana planted a congregation a few blocks from downtown to serve Swedish immigrants who worked mostly in the service sector. The congregation, known as Bethlehem, later chose the more prosaic name "The Evangelical Lutheran Church." On Easter Sunday 1935, matchmakers in the congregation invited to dinner a young man who had come from Sweden a few years before and a young woman newly arrived in Palo Alto from Norway via Tacoma. Earlier that day the young couple had heard the Easter message proclaimed by the pastor, N. Everett Hedeon of the Augustana Seminary Class of 1932. By the next year when the couple was married, Clarence Carlstrom had arrived to be the pastor. A couple of years later I was born to that couple, their only child. I was baptized by Pastor Carlstrom.

My first memories of that congregation, early during World War II, are of dignified liturgy. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" was imprinted on my mind and heart at any early age. The solemnity of Holy Communion, which I observed from a distance, was marked by the carefully pressed white covering on the altar rail. In the immediate post-war period, mission took on flesh and blood as the congregation sponsored several displaced families from Estonia and Latvia. "The Lutheran Companion," on which I tested my developing reading skills, taught me about the national and global mission of Augustana. A newly ordained pastor, Paul Frykman, stretched the speed limit of his red Studebaker to take us to Sunday School picnics on the beach at Santa Cruz.

The arrival in 1951 of Pastor Theodore E. Johnstone, also of the Class of '32, began a new era. One could expect few stories but clear law and gospel in his long sermons. As we discussed the 600-plus questions in his two-year confirmation syllabus, we learned, Bible, church history, ethics and

Augustana heritage. One night a week during the summer two or three carloads of Luther Leagues descended upon a migrant camp in the Santa Clara valley, movie projector and volleyballs in hand. We shared Bible stories and games with Mexican youth who had spent the day in orchards picking apricots. During a five year period of the Johnstone tenure, five sons of that small congregation entered seminary.

It is a testimony to the seed well-planted; the congregation continues vital ministry to the ever-changing face of Palo Alto under the leadership of another heir of Augustana, Kempton Segerhammar.

### II

California Conference Luther League thrived in the early and middle 1950s. Highpoint of the year was the annual convention, often held in the stunning seaside beauty of Asilomar Conference Center on the Monterey Peninsula. Occasionally Wilton Bergstrand or Carl Manfred augmented the inspiration provided by California pastors, including Carl B. Anderson (whose tragic demise in the 60s would also touch a parish I later served), Connie Johnson, Phil Jordan, Ragnar Kastman, and Cyril Lucas (one of the Augustana's first African-American pastors). We were introduced to the Vasteras Bible Study and encouraged to carry the Word as members of the Pocket Testament League. Music, prayer, and romance flourished at campfires on the beach. Congregations competed for best attendance and talent. Friendly rivalry existed among St. Paul's, Oakland; Trinity, Fresno; Luther Memorial, Sacramento; Mt. Olive, LaCrescenta; First, Palo Alto; Angelica, Los Angeles; and Bethany, Berkeley. Friendships were made that persist to this day. Conference Luther League shaped us in faith, vocation, community, and stewardship. It was an eminently successful mission to youth.

### III

Ascension, San Diego was the product of Augustana's post-war push to serve growing suburbs. Mission developer Ralph "Jeep" Carlson worked under the leadership of Conference President Carl Segerhammar and Mission Director Gib Fjellman to grow a faithful congregation.

Although Ascension spent a few years as Augustana congregation, I discovered when I arrived as its pastor in 1967, after a brief stint as a mission developer, that it bore Augustana marks. Its members, only some of Augustana or even Lutheran back-



ground, were open to inter-Lutheran and ecumenical expressions of faith. Traditional liturgy, blended with new forms of music, anticipated present trends in church life. Members had strong interest in substantial adult education. The congregation continually sought ways to be in mission to fast-paced California neighborhoods while remaining faithful to its roots.

#### IV

Zion, Salt Lake City, is an emblem of Augustana's 19th century mission efforts. In 1882, funds originally designated for Native American ministry were diverted to begin a mission in the heart of Mormonism. One goal was to reclaim Swedish converts to the LDS from their mother faith. Accordingly, Dr. S. M. Hill of St. Peter, Minnesota, gathered five faithful on July 18th of that year to charter the first Lutheran congregation in Utah.

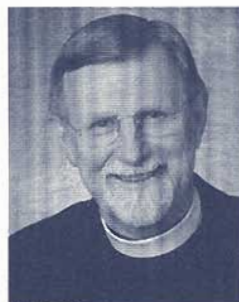
Swedish language was used at least occasionally for worship until 1930, about as long as the congregation received mission aid. During those years of slow numerical growth, pastoral tenure averaged 3-4 years. But those pastors planted and watered the gospel well. At the beginning of my 15-year term, I became acquainted with several who had been baptized at Zion in the early 1900s and remained in the congregation their entire lives. Augustana's national leaders, including, P. O. Bersell, would visit the congregation on their cross-country train trips. Early in the 20th century, Zion mothered mission congregations in the mining towns of Park City, Eureka, and Bingham. Zion, together with Elim, Ogden, founded a few years later, forged a strong Augustana presence in the sometimes hostile environment of Utah.

The congregation provided a training ground for students and first-call pastors, including Harold Lorimer, Carl B. Anderson (1938-42), and Tom Wersell (1942-46). Neale Nelson guided it from 1957-70, some of its most vibrant years of growth and development. Zion's Augustana heritage was celebrated at its centennial in 1982 by the presence of Reuben Swanson, secretary of the Lutheran Church in America.

Mabel Hultquist embodied for me the mission character of Zion Church. Daughter of a polygamous Mormon family, she married Arnold, an Augustana Lutheran from Tribune, Kansas. Mabel was baptized with her first child in 1923 by Pastor Carl Glad. Her gentle spirit did not keep her from clearly articulating the gracious gospel to her Mormon family and neighbors. She loved Jesus, whom she delighted to meet in weekly Eucharist in her

later years. Her church nurtured her to witness to her city through ecumenical and civic involvements.

Augustana's commitment to mission has made an indelible mark on the life of this "western son". For that I give thanks to God. AHA



Hal Nilsson

*Hal Nilsson, a native of Menlo Park, California, graduated from Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas, in 1960, and from the Lutheran School of Theology, Rock Island, in 1965. He later earned a D.Min. from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. He served as a mission developer in suburban Los Angeles, and as pastor of parishes in San Diego, Salt Lake City and Albuquerque before retiring in 2001. He is now doing interim ministry in the Rocky Mountain Synod.*



## Coming Events

### Convocation on Worship and Spirituality\*

**Monday, May 5, 2003 / 1:00 p.m.**

For more information contact Julie Ryan at 773-256-0708.

### Dedication of the Augustana Chapel at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago\*

**Monday, May 5, 2003 / 3:00 p.m.**

The guest preacher is Mark Hanson, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. A reception follows the dedication.

For more information contact Bernadine Gibson at (773) 256-0710.

*\* Located on the campus of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago 1100 E. 55th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60615.  
800-635-1116*

### Augustana Heritage Association Gathering 2004

The Gathering will be held at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota, (507) 933-7001, on **June 25-27, 2004**. The theme of the biennial Gathering and meeting is: **UNTO A GOOD LAND: AUGUSTANA YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW**. The Fall 2003 issue of the *Newsletter* will have more detailed information.

### AHA Worship at Edina, Minnesota

**Sunday, September 28, 2003 / 2:30 p.m.\***

The annual Augustana Service of Holy Communion will again be held at Normandale Lutheran Church, Edina, Minnesota on Sunday, September 28, 2003, at 2:30 p.m. The Rev. Doctor Herbert Chilstrom will be the preacher.

The service will begin with a hymn sing, followed by the full service of Holy Communion. A social hour will follow in the fellowship hall. The address of the church is 6100 Normandale Road, Edina, Minnesota. The phone number of the church is (952) 929-1697.

For more information, please contact  
Jack Swanson  
home 952-941-1697  
work 612-340-7194  
e-mail JOSwanos@aol.com.

*\*Please note the change in date from May to September in 2003.*

### First Pipe Organ of the Augustana Synod to be Renovated at New Sweden Chapel

By Ned Ratekin

The New Sweden Chapel, the 142 year old home of the first congregation of the Augustana Synod, still stands today in rural Jefferson County, Iowa as a triumphant symbol of the courage and faith of those who built it. The chapel, built by Iowa's first Swedish settlers in 1860 to replace their original log structure, was declared a Shrine by the Augustana Synod when it celebrated the 100th anniversary of the New Sweden congregation in 1948. The chapel has since been placed on the National Register of Historic Places and has been maintained by a volunteer Chapel Committee to preserve the heritage that it represents.

When the chapel was under construction in 1859, a member of the New Sweden community was convinced that the new church should have an organ. He traveled 250 miles to St. Louis, purchased the hand-pumped pipe organ, hauled it back to New Sweden, and arranged for its installation in the gallery at the rear of the sanctuary - the first pipe organ in the Augustana Synod. After nearly a century of use, the organ fell into disrepair, and has not functioned for several decades.

In recent years, when visitors to the chapel, including many from Sweden, have asked about the fate of the pipe organ in the gallery, the response has been: "Restore the old organ in the gallery? Too expensive! Too far gone! Never happen!" Now there are plans to make restoration of the organ happen.

Recently, when new Sweden pioneer descendent Everett Smithburg was busily cleaning out years of deposit in the attic area of the chapel, he came across several old organ parts, and that led him to wondering about the possibility of restoration. Everett mentioned the organ to Bill Layne of Mt. Pleasant. Bill, who has spent a lifetime taking apart, fixing, and putting back together all kinds of old organs, decided he wanted to see it. After looking at the organ, Bill just started fixing. He has the single manual keyboard pretty well cleaned and restored with a few replaced parts, and now he's working on the pipes, the bellows, and all their connections.

Bill will contribute most of his time to the effort, and he says the cost of the whole restoration project, including cleaning, locating and purchasing replacement parts, materials for crafting new parts, and assembling the several intricate connections should be somewhere around \$5,000 - an amount con-



siderably below the previous estimates of \$20,000 to \$30,000 that have made the project unfeasible.

The Chapel Committee is looking to the descendants of the original Swedish settlers, those who have worshipped in the New Sweden Chapel, and those interested in preserving the heritage of this first Augustana community, to provide for the organ restoration. Contributions in support of the project may be sent to Jerry Luzadder, 303 W. Main St., Lockridge, Iowa 52635. AHA

*Ned Ratekin is a member of The New Sweden Chapel Committee; he can be reached at 126 W. Stonebrook Dr, Apt. 163, Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641 (319) 385-8539*

## Letters to the Editor

*Letters, comments, and suggestions to the editor are always welcome. Articles are invited. They will be acknowledged and will appear in a future issue of the Newsletter as space is available.*

Don Sjöberg writes: "I wondered whether people are looking for personal contacts or Augustana printed material and the Newsletter might serve to make mention of those searches. For example, I may want to contact someone who was an Augustana Luther League caravaner in Canada but only have the name, or I am looking for a copy of a Luther League song book. Readers could contact the inquirer directly."

*Editorial note: This is a good suggestion. Please know that any such inquiries by readers will be included in next issues of the Newsletter. Be sure to include your address, phone number, and e-mail address (if you have one.)*

Our apologies for not always giving full acknowledgement of sources and articles. For example, recent communications from AHA did not correctly refer to the hymn book produced by the Augustana Heritage Association. It is "Songs of Two Homelands" and is edited by: Ronald T. Englund, Glenn C. Stone, and John O. Swanson.

Howard S. Olson, who was editor of "The Africa Theological Journal" for many years, when he and his wife Louise were missionaries in Tanzania, writes: "It was good to be reminded in the last issue of Sister Ingeborg Nystul's years of faithful

service."

"I thought it may be newsworthy to mention a few of my privately published books after Lou and I returned from 43 years of missionary service in Tanzania.

1. "Footprints" (2001), a 400 page memoir from my birth until the completion of our stint in Tanzania. Since I observed a lengthy publishing hiatus, friends may have thought this signaled my demise, especially since the grave leaves no footprints.

2. "Selected Cross-Cultural Essays" (2001), studies in musicology, linguistics and religion.

3. "Reference Companion to Set Free, African Ethnic Hymns" (2002). In 1993, I had compiled a notated collection of thirty hymns from fourteen ethnic sources, and it was published by Augsburg Fortress and is still available together with a cassette tape. People inquired about the background of these songs and this is in response to that interest.

4. "A Grain of Mustard Seed" (2002) is a collection of 51 of my homilies preached over a span of years in a variety of venues.

If anyone is interested, he can obtain any of these volumes from: Howard S. Olson, 1925 Grand Cypress Land, Sun City Center, FL 33573

From "Humor and Happenings from Augustana Days" by Theodore E. Matson. 1977:

"This story went the rounds at Augustana Seminary in the early 1940s. President P. O. Bersell, who enjoyed cigars, visited the campus one day and was walking with Dr. Conrad Bergendoff, the seminary president, when he spotted a good sized cigar butt lying in the grass. Bersell said to Bergendoff, who doesn't smoke, 'Is that yours?' Bergendoff said, 'No, go ahead. You saw it first.'"

"Dr. Alfred Bergin, giant of a man, was pastor for many years of Bethany Lutheran Church, Lindsborg, Kansas. The students at Bethany College gave wide circulation to some of his announcements at church services.

Right after World War I, everybody was getting Ford cars. As Dr. Bergin was going into the church for the funeral of a pioneer lady, he took note of all the shiny autos, instead of the rows of horses and carriages he was accustomed to see. This so impressed him that he began his sermon by saying, 'Wouldn't Mrs. Nelson be surprised if she knew there was not a single horse at her funeral.'" AHA



## Our Trip to the Augustana Heritage Gathering in Lindsborg, Kansas

By Glenn and Barbara Johnson



Following the AHA Gathering at Bethany College in June 2002, Glenn and Barbara Johnson produced a journal of their trip from Santa Cruz, California which took them to Colorado and Lindsborg. Their journal has nine pages of detailed description of their various visits and their experiences at the Gathering. In addition, they have assembled 105 pictures, many of them from the Gathering, where they took pictures of individuals, small groups, events, and displays.

Their journal is a colorful and interesting account of both their personal journey and of the

Gathering program and people. It is being placed in the Augustana Heritage Association archives at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. Visitors to the archives are encouraged to read and enjoy Glenn and Barbara's fine contribution to the Augustana Heritage Association's records. **AHA**

*The Johnsons can be reached at 2013 Halterman Ave., Santa Cruz, CA 95062. Glenn was ordained in 1959. They have served in Santa Maria, Danville, Sacramento, and Santa Cruz, California. They have three children.*

**THE AUGUSTANA HERITAGE ASSOCIATION**

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