



# The Georg Sverdrup Society

## NEWSLETTER

### Rev. Martin Horn to Speak at GSS Annual Meeting in Glyndon, Minnesota, October 11

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#### Georg Sverdrup

- Born to Pastor Harold Ulrich Sverdrup and his wife Caroline Metella, nee Suur, at Balestrand, Sogn, Norway, on December 16, 1848.
- Died on May 3, 1907, in Minneapolis, MN, and buried in the Lakewood Cemetery.

From its inception, the Georg Sverdrup Society's Annual Meeting has rotated between Minneapolis and the Fargo-Moorhead area. This year's annual meeting will be held just east of Moorhead at Maranatha Free Lutheran Church of Glyndon on Saturday, October 11. The luncheon will begin at 12:00, followed by the program at 1:00. The GSS Annual Meeting will begin immediately after the program.

The program speaker will be Rev. Martin Horn, speaking on the topic: "The Gospel and the Congregation." Because the Sverdrup Society's focus for 2014 has been "Sverdrup and the Gospel," Pastor Horn's presentation will be of special interest to the membership.

Pastor Horn was one of the original organizers of the Georg Sverdrup Society in 2003, and he has served on its board of directors from the beginning, as well as serving a term as president. He has contributed a number of articles to the *Sverdrup Journal* in the past and is currently working on an article for the 2014 *Journal* dealing with "Sverdrup and the Gospel."

Born and raised in Kalispell, Montana, Pastor Horn is a graduate of Valley City State

College and Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary in Minneapolis and has done further graduate work at Bethel Seminary in St. Paul. He and his wife, the former Priscilla Mundfrom, are the parents of three children.

Pastor Horn has served congregations in Zumbrota, Minnesota; Astoria, Oregon; Fosston, Minnesota; and currently Kenyon, Minnesota. He has served as chairman of the Board of Publications and Parish Education for the AFLC and is currently a member of the Board of Trustees for AFLC Schools where he has served as chairman for three years.

This past summer he has been on sabbatical, which has allowed him time to study Sverdrup's application of the Gospel to the life of the congregation.

The annual meeting program will also include a recent Sverdrup translation and the traditional "Sverdrup Songfest," always a highlight of the meeting, where the audience has a chance to share in singing hymns sung in the days of Sverdrup and Oftedal.

To help provide an accurate



Pastor Martin Horn

count for the luncheon, please contact Loiell Dyrud before September 30 by email at lod@wiktel.com or phone 218-681-6964.

#### From Sverdrup's "Justification by Faith and the Justification of the World" (1877)

*"The question is this: whether a relationship with God is a living, personal relationship between a poor sinner and a merciful Father, or whether it is a matter of dead bookkeeping . . . which can be settled by the same mechanical means as, by examining a deed of conveyance, I can learn that I have received a piece of property or a sum of money." (tr. L. Walker)*

## Eielsen and Hanson

*The following talk was given at the Old Stone Church (Hauge Lutheran Church), Kenyon, Minnesota, at the Sverdrup Society discussion meeting, April 26, 2014.*

The year was 1846. A boat docked in Muskegon, Michigan, and one of my distant relations—the half-brother of my great-great-grandfather—disembarked along with his family and a group of other Norwegians. They looked around them, blinked in the sunlight—and hadn't the faintest idea what to do next. They wanted to see a man in Lisbon, Illinois, but they'd never imagined that America was so big—or so wild. So they hunkered down in Muskegon for a while, to try to figure out their next step.

One day a wagon rolled up, and a man jumped off and greeted them in Norwegian. He was a preacher, and he said he knew Lisbon, Illinois, very well. He invited my relation to get on his wagon, and he'd take him there.

They traveled over open prairie, sleeping under the wagon at night. When they reached Lisbon, they found the man they were looking for, and then the preacher took my relation back to Muskegon to arrange for the whole group to relocate.

The preacher's name was Elling Eielsen, and what he did for that group was all in a couple weeks' work for him. Wherever there were Norwegians in America in the mid-nineteenth century, Eielsen would be there sooner or later to preach the Gospel and to help them adjust to the new country.

Elling Eielsen was born in Voss in Norway, in 1804. He was converted in the Haugean revivals and soon began to follow in Hauge's steps, preaching all over Norway, as well as Sweden and Denmark, as a layman. And, like Hauge, he spent time in prison for his preaching activities.

In 1839, he came to America. He came because there was a need. More

and more Norwegians were immigrating to this country, and there was not a single Norwegian Lutheran pastor here to minister to them. Many newcomers were converting to the Mormon church.

Eielsen settled first in Fox River, Illinois, where he began a small congregation in his home. That congregation still exists and is part of our AFLC today. This may have been the first Norwegian Lutheran church in America—though that claim is disputed.

At the request of his congregation, Eielsen went to Chicago and found a German Lutheran pastor there who was willing to ordain him. Thus he may have become the first Norwegian Lutheran pastor ordained in America—though that claim is also disputed.

What is not disputed is that he was the first Norwegian Lutheran publisher in America. Needing teaching materials for his confirmation classes, he traveled to New York to get an English translation of Luther's Small Catechism printed. Later he went back to get a Norwegian book printed—Pontoppidan's *Explanation* of the Catechism, the first Norwegian language book ever published in this country. That job involved a side trip to Philadelphia to get the typeface he wanted, and when the books were finished, he carried them on his back, back to Illinois, on foot, in the dead of winter.

Elling Eielsen was not afraid of hard work. He served many congregations over the years, but his chief work was traveling as an evangelist. He preached to Norwegian settlers in Texas. He preached in Kansas. He preached in the Dakotas. And, of course, he preached right here.

As Eielsen's ministry bore fruit, congregations were established, and they looked to him as their leader. So in 1846, a new church body came to be. Its name was—and I'm not joking here—the Evangelical Lutheran Church



*Larry Walker speaks on Eielsen and Hanson*

in America. But it was better known as the Eielsen Synod.

Eielsen was probably not the best choice for a leader. His gifts were for evangelism. He was not a good organizer. He did not work well with people. He had a fiery temper, and he tended to see disagreement as heresy.

There was conflict in the Eielsen Synod. It had already split twice when, in 1876, a majority of the congregations decided they could no longer accept a paragraph in the constitution concerning church membership. Eielsen would not hear of a change. And so the majority of the congregations left to become the Hauge Synod. A small group continued under the old constitution and Eielsen's leadership.

The Hauge Synod chose as its first president a man named Arne Boyum. But the second was Østen Hanson, and he was pastor of Immanuel and Hauge churches,

*(continued on page 3)*

## Eielsen and Hanson (cont.)

Kenyon, Minnesota. He served this parish for 37 years and never took another call. Unlike Eielsen, Hanson knew how to stay put.

Østen Hanson was born in Telemark, Norway. Although his faith was every bit as solid and biblical as Eielsen's, he had the ability to disagree with people without being disagreeable. He had a gift for organization, and he knew how to choose his battles.

Hanson was one of the leaders of the group of young pastors that broke with the Eielsen Synod in 1876. But I'm happy to report that that schism did not make them lifelong enemies. Later in his life, Eielsen visited Pastor Hanson

in the parsonage over in Aspelund, and he held meetings in this parish.

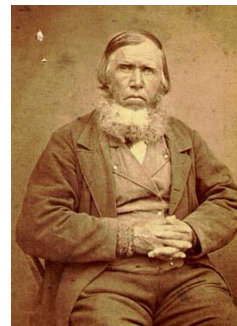
Ole Rølvaag tells us, quoting the Bible, that there were giants in the earth in those days. These stone walls have echoed to the voices of prophets. Hauge and Immanuel congregations have a powerful—even a heroic—spiritual heritage.

It's not a heritage just for looking back on. I think it's a heritage that has something to teach us today. Just as our ancestors had to find ways to practice the old, true faith in a strange new environment, so we face a strange new environment today. America was less different from Norway in the

nineteenth century than it is today from the country many of us grew up in. Once again our task as Christians is to work in new circumstances, speaking the timeless Gospel in a new language.

May the same Spirit who worked in Eielsen and Hanson work in all of us here today, pastors and laity alike, as we carry on the ministry of repentance and faith.

—Larry Walker



*Elling Eielsen (1804-1883)*

## GSS Holds Spring Meeting in “Old Stone Church”

On April 26, 2014, the Sverdrup Society met in rural Kenyon, Minnesota, at “The Old Stone Church,” the original church building of Hauge Lutheran Church of Kenyon. GSS members from Upper Michigan and North Dakota as well as Minnesota were in attendance. It was a brisk spring morning, but the sun shining through the windows slowly warmed the 140-year-old historical landmark.

Built of native limestone, the building is a simple sanctuary reminiscent of a *bedehus* or “Prayer House” in Norway. The church retains the original wooden benches for seating about 100 people. The original altar setting, communion rail, and elevated pulpit have all been retained as well as the balcony that can be reached by

climbing a narrow, winding stairway.

Hauge Lutheran Church was organized in 1859 with the assistance of Pastor Arne Boyum of Spring Prairie, Minnesota, and the itinerant pastor and church planter Elling Eielsen of Illinois. The congregation first met in homes and in the local school. Construction of the sanctuary began in 1872 and was completed in 1888.

Because of changing demographics, the Hauge congregation decided to build a new sanctuary in the village of Kenyon in 1902, and the old sanctuary was abandoned and allowed to deteriorate. After standing vacant for forty years, the building was in rough shape and necessary repairs were first made on the

building in 1947 and again in 1959. Extensive repairs were also made in 2004 and 2006. Today, the restored Old Stone Church stands as a testimony to the early Norwegian “Haugeaners” who desired to express their faith in simple worship in the new land.

Pastor Martin Horn presented a paper on Pastor Østen Hanson, the first pastor of Hauge Lutheran. Pastor Hanson was not a typical Norwegian Lutheran Pastor in America in his time. Norwegian pastors, like B. J. Muus in neighboring Holden Parish, were generally university educated and often came from prominent, wealthy families.

Østen Hanson was neither. He came to America when he was fifteen, a member of an

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*“The Old Stone Church”*





## THE GEORG SVERDRUP SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## Ordet Blev Kjødt

*(The Word Became Flesh)*

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*Prospective members are invited to  
contact the membership secretary at  
PO Box 400, Beulah, ND 58523.*

## Book Review: *Papa—A Life Remembered*

The name of Andreas Helland should be a familiar one to members of the Georg Sverdrup Society, for it was Augsburg Professor Helland who collected and edited the material for the six volumes of Sverdrup's works, plus writing the first Sverdrup biography (*Georg Sverdrup: The Man and His Message*, Messenger Press, Minneapolis, 1947). Now Helland's grandson, Philip J. Formo, has authored a fictionalized memoir based on the life of his grandfather, entitled *Papa—A Life Remembered* (Pecan Pie Press, 2013). All proceeds from the sale of the book will be directed to the Andreas Helland scholarship fund at Augsburg College.

The story begins in the village of Fitjar on the island of Stord, south of Bergen in western Norway. It follows the boy's journey to the Stavanger Cathedral School, on to the university in Oslo (Christiania), and then to America. It was interesting to read of his teaching at Harmony, Minnesota, and his studies under Prof. Sverdrup in Minneapolis at Augsburg Seminary, an institution where he would serve for most of his life. A background of the struggles within Norwegian-American Lutheranism at the time will especially interest our GSS members, as well as his first parish at McIntosh, Minnesota. I was pleased to see the mention of missionary Lars Skrefsrud and the season of revival at St. Olaf congregation in north Minneapolis, where Helland served before joining the Augsburg faculty.

The book is well written and was a pleasure to read. It clearly involved a lot of research. Hopefully the author will be invited to one of the Sverdrup Society meetings in the near future to tell us more about his grandfather, and perhaps to help the reader distinguish the history from the fiction.

—Pastor Robert Lee

## GSS Holds Spring Meeting in "Old Stone Church" (cont.)

ordinary immigrant family. He had little education. His first years in America were spent in Wisconsin, where he was known as a "rascal." Yet by the time of his death, he had become one of the most respected Norwegian Lutheran pastors in America.

His path to the ministry began when he attended a Haugean prayer meeting in his community. Surprising everyone in attendance, he stood up and declared, "I have been a wild character, but now I want to become a Christian."

Hanson moved with his family to Aspelund, Minnesota, and after several years began "holding school" in the community. In 1859, he married Marie Gulbrandson, who was fourteen years old at the time. When the Haugeans in the area organized Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Hanson was asked to preach. In

1861, he was offered a call to be the full-time pastor of a parish that consisted of Hauge and Emmanuel Lutheran of Kenyon and St. Peter's Lutheran in Red Wing. Pastor Elling Eielsen ordained him into the original Evangelical Lutheran Church of America or "Eielsen's Synod."

Hanson admitted that when he was ordained he was young in the faith, but he was a lifelong student and became a well-respected theologian and leader. Through his study, Pastor Hanson became concerned about the Hauge's Synod constitution, which contained a clause restricting membership to those who had gone through a "genuine conversion." In 1876, he and others led a movement to adopt a new constitution without the restriction clause, and this led to a split in the Hauge's Synod.

During his lifetime, Hanson served many years either as president or vice president of

the Hauge's Synod until his death in 1896.

Larry Walker, who grew up in this area, presented a paper on Norwegian Lutheran immigrants (his paper is published elsewhere in this newsletter).

—Pastor Martin Horn



*Pastor Horn speaks at Old Stone Church*