



The Georg Sverdrup Society

NEWSLETTER

Formo to Speak at GSS Annual Meeting

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Pastor Philip Formo, author of *Papa—A Life Remembered*, (Pecan Pie Press, 2013) will be the featured speaker at the Annual Meeting of the Georg Sverdrup Society, October 10, on the campus of the AFLC Schools.

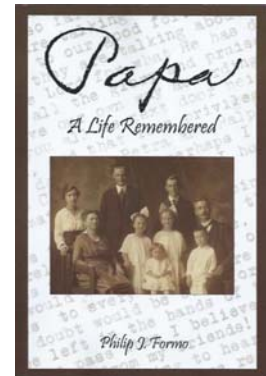
Pastor Formo, grandson of Prof. Andreas Helland, has written a fictionalized biography of his grandfather, the Augsburg Seminary professor who compiled Georg Sverdrup's *Samlede Skrifter i Udvalg* and penned his biography. Attendees will enjoy a talk from Pastor Formo entitled "Hero, Mentor and Friend," exploring the interesting and significant connections between Georg Sverdrup

and Andreas Helland.

The October 10th program will begin with a luncheon at noon, followed a 1:00 program and 2:00 business meeting. Besides Pastor Formo's presentation, the program will include presentations related to the 2015 theme of *The Sverdrup Journal*: "Sverdrup, the Devotional Writer," as well as musical selections and a time for discussion of the day's presentations.

On the agenda for the 2:00 business meeting will be Society elections, discussion of future *Sverdrup Journal* topics, and general Society business.

Pastor Formo's book will



be available for purchase as well as issues of *The Sverdrup Journal*. All proceeds from the sale of Formo's book will be directed to the Andreas Helland scholarship fund at Augsburg College.

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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, Minnesota, USA, and buried in the Lakewood Cemetery.

2015 Topic: Sverdrup the Devotional Writer

Our translators and article contributors are hard at work preparing the content for the 2015 *Sverdrup Journal*. This journal will focus on Sverdrup's devotional writings. The various papers to be included will cover Sverdrup's devotional writings from the following perspectives: Translator, Pastor, and Layman. These

articles will provide all of our readers with new insight on Sverdrup and his writing style.

The 2015 *Journal* will also include the remaining mission meditations from Volume 6 of Sverdrup's collected writings. Our translators have greatly enjoyed translating these meditations, and we hope that you as read-

ers feel the same way. If all deadlines are followed closely, the membership should have the *Journal* in hand by early summer 2016.

Please express your thanks and gratitude to our writers and translators as they tirelessly work on their contributions. We could not produce the *Journal* without them!



From “The Signs of the Times”

By Georg Sverdrup

The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. But He replied to them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?”
Matthew 16.1-3 (NASB)

Jesus demanded that the religious leaders of His time should understand the signs of the times. He does not want people to be like lifeless, thoughtless tools that serve without knowing why. Or that they should be like small children led by the hand without needing to use their eyes or intellect. He believed that the Pharisees and Sadducees did not need a number of signs to know to what the times led and what they should believe and do, beyond the signs already before them. His person, His preaching, His miracles, the awakening that had begun with John the Baptist, and many other events to which they had been witnesses were all that these

religious leaders needed to understand the situation at hand and to prepare themselves accordingly.

Jesus makes the same demand of Christians today as He did of the Pharisees and Sadducees in the past. Since what “was written in former times” was not for us to read as diversion and entertainment, despising the poor people of those days for their ignorance, but that we should look in the mirror and learn to act differently and better than did they who in olden days were so disgracefully mistaken about Jesus and His identity, namely His time and His mission in time.

In our day, there are also among us some who think that Jesus should have given quite different signs than those He did, if He wanted to move people to believe and obey. And even today there are thousands, yes millions, who are far more interested in “the geography of the heavens” and what the weather will be like than “the signs of the times” and the question of what is life’s highest truth and its most serious demand.

Yes, the weather and the wind, what an interesting topic for a conversation!

And to be honest, we will not criticize those who with God-fearing gratitude respect God’s good gifts in the natural realm and diligently use the opportunities God gives for work in temporal things. But what Jesus censures is this—that those who are so interested and knowledgeable in temporal matters are so blind and indifferent, so lazy and slow, in spiritual things.

Why do people who analyze the weather so well and devote themselves to it with so much concern not with the same acuteness and with even greater interest analyze “the signs of the times,” so as to adjust their lives and their work thereto? Or is it of no value for Christian people whether they understand their times or not, or their call and their life’s vocation?

How is it then with us? Do we understand the signs of the times? Or are there no such signs in our day?

There are some people who think the signs of the times are nothing more than the human malice

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Board of Directors Meeting

The Georg Sverdrup Society board of directors met on August 13, 2015, in Fergus Falls for their annual summer meeting. Among the topics discussed:

Increase in yearly membership dues

Due to rising costs, an increase in annual dues for individuals from \$25 to \$30 per year has been proposed. Fees for students and institutions/congregations will remain at \$15. Please be aware that this increase is a *recommendation* from the board only and will be voted on at the annual meeting in October.

Translation committee

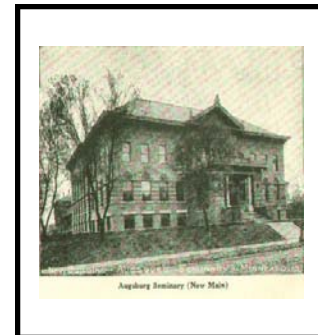
After 10 years of existence, the current board members of the Georg Sverdrup Society have felt the need to form a committee to insure that translations in the future will maintain a level of consistency. The Norwegian of Sverdrup's day is different from the language today, and this committee will strive to see that Sverdrup's writings are presented as closely to his original intent as possible, while using English phrasing that is comprehensible for today's readers.

Discussion Forums for 2015

The Society plans to hold its annual discussion forum at

the AFLC Seminary on the last Friday of J-term, as has become the norm. Notification on the specifics of this event will be sent out closer to the actual date.

The board is also seeking other venues at which to hold additional discussion forums. Preliminary steps are being taken to schedule some type of discussion forum in the spring of 2016 at the Norwegian American Historical Association (NAHA) archives on the campus of St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. Please contact any board member to indicate interest in this event as planning goes forward. We are also interested in your suggestions.



Formo—Annual Meeting (cont.)

(Cont. from page 1)

The annual meeting program will also include 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.

The cost for the luncheon will be \$12.00. To help provide an accurate count for the servers, please contact Steve Mundfrom before September 30 by email at pastorsteve@gracefree.com or phone 701-845-2753.

All the day's activities will be held in Heritage Hall on the AFLC Schools' Campus, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Plymouth, Minnesota.

Augsburg Seminary, "Back in the Day"

Pastor Carl P. Vaagenes, one of our chief translators and a graduate of Augsburg Seminary, reminisced recently on an address by Dr. T. O. Burntvedt, President of the Lutheran Free Church, to graduating seminarians in 1955:

"Our church has no claim to perfection. . . . But there are some truths which God has given to us to use and to bless us. . . .

"First, Georg Sverdrup's great contribution was 'THE LIVING CONGREGATION.' Where the Word of God is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered," he said (echoing the Augsburg Confession), "there is life, spiritual life.

"Second, THE CONCEPT OF EVANGELISM I would say, this has been a strong mark of our church. . . .

"Third, SIMPLICITY IN WORSHIP has also been strongly emphasized by us. Throughout church history, . . . the movement toward elaborate liturgies, vestments and formalism has tended to come at the expense of spiritual life.

"Fourth, our LAY ACTIVITY has been the object of much envy among our Lutheran sister synods. Lay participation and leadership in the work and witness and worship of our congregations has come, you know, . . . from our Haugean background."



THE GEORG SVERDRUP SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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*Prospective members are invited to
contact the membership secretary at
the above address.*

The Georg Sverdrup Society was organized in December 2003 and is open to anyone interested in the life and work of noted Norwegian-American theologian Georg Sverdrup (1848-1907). The society is registered in the State of Minnesota as a 501(C)(3) nonprofit corporation. Its activities, which are guided by a seven-member board of directors, include:

- Promoting the study and understanding of the New Testament congregation as understood and explained by Georg Sverdrup;
- Endeavoring to advance the ideal of “free and living congregations” as envisioned by Sverdrup;
- Seeking to foster further translation of Sverdrup’s writings into English;
- Encouraging the study and application of the “Fundamental Principles” and “Rules for Work” as used in the Lutheran Free Church and as continuing to be used in the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations;
- Enlarging the interest in Sverdrup’s works by organizing discussion groups and providing speakers on request;
- Operating a **Sverdrup Society** website linked to <www.aflc.org> for members of the Society and others interested in the life and work of Georg Sverdrup;
- Maintaining a current bibliography of Sverdrup’s translated work as well as a current bibliography of materials written about him;
- Publishing a newsletter for members that provides information on the Society’s activities as well as general information about Georg Sverdrup;
- And encouraging research and study of Sverdrup’s life and work by publishing an annual *Sverdrup Journal*.

From “The Signs of the Times” (cont.)

By Georg Sverdrup

(Cont. from page 2)

and ignorance that are always with us in increasing degrees. But certainly that is not what Jesus has in mind when He talks about the signs. He is thinking rather about everything great and glorious that God puts in front of all people in His dispensations. When Jesus came, it was God’s salvation and God’s kingdom that came, and it stirred the spirit world even as spring brings movement in the physical world. True enough, it was a

time of judgment upon all the old sinfulness and the world’s very essence even as snow and ice and cold must recede before the spring sun and summer warmth. Kingdoms fell and people were judged when God visited humankind and set His Son among it as the true King of life and salvation. But in the same way, heaven’s saving power also moved among the children of men, and no tongue was able to express the joy and gladness they experienced, which opened hearts to the salvation and light that dawned

in the Son. It was just such things that Jesus had in mind when He spoke of the signs of the times, the first powerful movements of God’s kingdom that began as small as a mustard seed that fell upon the earth and grew up and became large enough to fill the whole world.

—Translated by Carl P. Vaagenes

(The full text of this translation will be available in the next issue of the *Journal*.)