



# The Georg Sverdrup Society

## NEWSLETTER

### “Sverdrup & Augsburg Seminary” Topic for 2018



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The 2018 topic for the Sverdrup Society will be “Sverdrup and Augsburg Seminary.”

Georg Sverdrup came to Augsburg Seminary in Minneapolis in August 1874. He became president of Augsburg in 1876 and served the institution until his death in 1907.

His tenure at Augsburg was marked by controversy and debate. An early opponent, Pastor C. L. Clausen, was not far wrong when he wrote (as quoted in Dr. James Hamre’s *Georg Sverdrup: Educator, Theologian, Churchman*, p.76),

“[Sverdrup and Oftedal] were bearers of modern ideas about freedom under the stamp of Christianity, supposedly with a special calling and task to work for them.”

From an institutional point of view, a historian might view Sverdrup’s vision as quixotic and short-lived. Does this nineteenth-century scholar, who wrote in a foreign language, have anything to tell us today? Is the dream of a “free and living congregation” one whose time has not yet come? We shall consider these questions and others in 2018.



The Sverdrup family coat-of-arms (above) was first used in Norway during the seventeenth century by Lauritz Pedersen Sverdrup.

### GSS to Hold Summer Discussion at Historic Satersdal Lutheran Church



**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.

The Sverdrup Society will hold a discussion forum entitled “Understanding our AFLC Heritage” at the 120-year-old Satersdal Lutheran Church of rural Thief River Falls, Minnesota, on Saturday, July 21.

The Satersdal congregation has a long history. It was organized in 1891, largely through the efforts of Rev. Elias Aas, who as an Augsburg Seminary student first came to the area in 1885. He had been called by the



Home Mission Board of the Conference to work with Pastor Christian Saugstad that summer in the recently settled territory that spread from south of Crookston and north

into Marshall County.

Living in St. Hilaire (Thief River Falls was not yet organized), Aas records what it was like: “I was to preach, read with the confirmands, lead the meetings of the women’s societies, etc., in a territory of about 70-80 miles. . . Yes, I must say that I had my hands full that summer. I had nothing to drive with, and the farmers had only oxen for driving and the land was so flat and marshy that a large part

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## 2017 GSS Annual Meeting Held in Minneapolis

The fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Georg Sverdrup Society was held on the campus of the AFLC Schools in Heritage Hall, Saturday, October 14, 2017.

Following the noon meal, Rev. Martin Horn, President of the GSS, called on Dr. James Molstre, Dean of Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, for the opening prayer.

Since 2017 marks the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, hymns by Martin Luther were again chosen for the “Sverdrup Songfest” this year. Director of AFLC Publications and Parish Education, Marian Christopherson, led the group in singing “That Man a Godly Life Might Live,” “Our Father Thou in Heaven Above,” and “May God Bestow on Us His Grace.” This last song is considered to be the first Protestant missionary hymn. She also pointed out that Luther is considered “The Father of Congregational Singing.” Though known for his extensive writing, he also published the first hymnbook in 1624.

Past president of the AFLC and current faculty member of Association Free Lutheran Schools, Rev. Robert Lee, addressed the annual meeting with his presentation, “From Luther to Sverdrup.” Lee traced the Protestant Reformation from Germany to Denmark and from Denmark up through Norway. In a remarkable historical detail, Lee pointed out that seventeen-year-old Christian, heir to the throne of Denmark, was in attendance at the Diet of Worms when Luther gave his historical statement: “I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.” It is also believed that on that day young Christian “personally laid hold of justification by faith through the blood of Christ” as a result of hearing Luther. Since Norway was under the Danish crown

for centuries, the impact of that day had far reaching consequences. Lee then wove details of the historical intrigue as the two countries struggled to free themselves from Catholic influence and establish Lutheranism up to the time of Sverdrup in the mid-nineteenth century.

The AFLTS Seminary chorus, under the direction of Mr. Andrew Hanson, sang the well-known Luther hymn, “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come,” followed by “Great is Thy Faithfulness.”

Dressed in a black frock coat and looking very much like a nineteenth-century Norwegian author, editor of the “Sverdrup Newsletter” and *The Sverdrup Journal*, Mr. Larry Walker, read from one of his recent translations, “The Rule of Bishops.” (Both Walker’s translation and Lee’s presentation will be published in the 2017 *Sverdrup Journal*.) The closing prayer was given by Rev. Alex Amiot.

After a coffee break, Rev. Martin Horn called the GSS Annual Business meeting to order. Mr. Tim Larson, Secretary, read the minutes from the 2016 Annual Meeting. In the absence of Treasurer/Membership Chairman, Rev. Kris Nyman, Larson read Nyman’s report and noted that the GSS had 121 active members in 2017.

Since we are approaching the 150th anniversary of the founding of Augsburg Seminary (1869-2019), the

members decided that the topic for 2018 should be “Sverdrup and Augsburg Seminary.” Dues will remain the same for 2018: Regular, \$30; Institutions, \$15; and Students, \$15.

Members elected to the board were Mr. Kevin Borg, Rev. Gary Jorgenson, and Rev. Kris Nyman. Following the annual meeting, the board met to reorganize and chose Martin Horn, President; Kevin Borg, Vice President; Tim Larson, Secretary; Kris Nyman, Treasurer; and Alex Amiot, Membership Chairman.

—Loiell O. Dyrud



*Pastor Robert Lee speaks on the Reformation in Norway, wearing a busserull, a traditional Norwegian workman’s shirt. Photo: Tim Larson.*



*The AFLTS Seminary Chorus sings for the Annual Meeting. Photo: Tim Larson*

## January Seminary Discussion Forum

On the morning of January 19, the Georg Sverdrup Society held its twelfth annual discussion forum at the Hauge Chapel of AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minnesota. For the second year in a row, the forum focused on “Sverdrup and the Reformation.” However, this year’s papers were broader in scope.

Rev. Martin Horn, GSS President, welcomed seminarists and guests. He then called on Rev. Alex Amiot for a brief devotional in which Amiot spoke about the impact Sverdrup’s writing on the congregation had had on him as a seminary student, and concluded with prayer.

GSS translator and editor of *The Sverdrup Journal*, Larry Walker, read from one of his recent Sverdrup translations: “The Rule of Bishops.” Here Sverdrup compares the enslaving drive for power that motivated the building of the Tower of Babel to the enslaving drive for power that motivated the bishops to rule over the congregations, eventually evolving into the Roman Catholic Church.

Session I was a paper by Rev. Steve Mundfrom entitled

“The Congregation in the World: Exploring the Fundamental Principles.”

Mundfrom states that “The Fundamental Principles are deeply dependent on Luther’s theology of the two kingdoms.” Beginning with the first Fundamental Principle: “According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the kingdom of God on earth” to the twelfth, Mundfrom analyzes and categorizes the Fundamental Principles according to Luther’s right-hand kingdom (the spiritual rule of God in the hearts of Christians) and the left-hand kingdom (the rule of God in the world).

In Session II, Rev. Terry Olson presented his paper on “How the Lutheran Free Church ‘Lost’ the Lutheran Free Church.” His paper discusses the main reasons why the LFC decided to give up its sixty-five years of congregational freedom and merge with the American Lutheran Church. Olson attributes the loss of the LFC to three main reasons: first, the desire to belong to a bigger church body; secondly, that the LFC’s unique polity was nev-

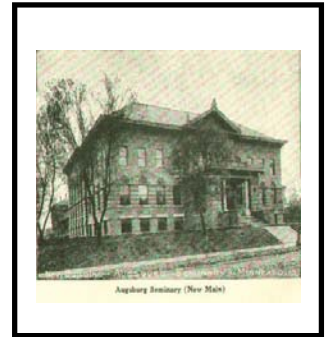
er fully explained or understood by the congregations despite the specific demand in the Rules for Work to do such; and thirdly, the failure of Augsburg Seminary to continue teaching congregationalism as emphasized by Sverdrup.

Session III was made up of a panel including Rev. Terry Olson, Rev. Martin Horn, Rev. Robert Lee, Dr. James Molstre, and Mr. Loiell Dyrud. They discussed the implications of Pr. Olson’s paper for the AFLC today under the topic: “Lessons That Can be Learned.”

Good participation came from those in attendance, and a lunch was served following the event.

The papers presented by Mundfrom and Olson will be printed in the upcoming *Sverdrup Journal*, along with Rev. Robert Lee’s paper “From Luther to Sverdrup,” which was presented at the GSS Annual Meeting last October. Larry Walker’s “The Rule of Bishops” as well as other translations will also be included.

—Loiell O. Dyrud



Above: Mr. Larry Walker reads from his translation, “The Rule of Bishops.” Right: Pastor Terry Olson reads his paper, “How the Lutheran Free Church ‘Lost’ the Lutheran Free Church.” Photos: Tim Larson.







## THE GEORG SVERDRUP SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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georgsverdrupsociety.org

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### Ordet Blev Kjødt

*(The Word Became Flesh)*

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#### Directors

Martin Horn, President  
Kevin Borg, Vice President  
Kris Nyman, Treasurer  
Larry Walker, Editor  
Alex Amiot, Membership Chair  
Marian Christopherson  
Gary Jorgenson

Tim Larson, Secretary

Prospective members are invited  
to contact the treasurer  
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](http://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**.

## Satersdal Lutheran Church (cont.)

*(continued from page 1)*

of it stood under water.” This account is from his fascinating autobiography, *The Pioneer Pastor*. He walked throughout the territory and said his feet were never dry until he got back to Augsburg Seminary that fall. But largely due to his determined efforts, the Lutheran Free Church congregations around Thief River Falls, Newfolden, and Argyle were established. Oddly enough, in spite of his difficulties as an intern, he accepted a call to the area in 1886 and served for almost five years. Among his other endeavors, Aas was one of the organizers of Oak Grove Lutheran High School in

Fargo.

Satersdal joined the Lutheran Free Church in 1897 and continued until 1959 when it voted to join its sister congregation, Our Saviour’s Lutheran, in Thief River Falls. However, Satersdal still holds two services a year: one on Memorial Day as well as a Candlelight Christmas Service in December.

The discussion forum will begin at 9:00 and continue until noon. Two papers will be presented including Rev. Alex Amiot, “Pastoral Ministry in Light of the Justified Congregation,” and Rev. Terry Olson, “How the Lutheran Free Church ‘Lost’ the Lutheran Free Church.” After each presentation, a panel will discuss the papers with

the audience. Other shorter presentations will also be part of the morning.

Marian Christopherson, organist at AFLC Schools, will be playing Satersdal’s recently reconditioned 125-year-old reed organ. Following the event, a noon meal will be provided.

For more about Satersdal, go to the Satersdal Cemetery website: [satersdal.org](http://satersdal.org). Or for information and how to get to Satersdal, contact Loiell Dyrud at 218-681-6964 or [lod@wiktel.com](mailto:lod@wiktel.com).

—Loiell O. Dyrud