



The Georg Sverdrup Society

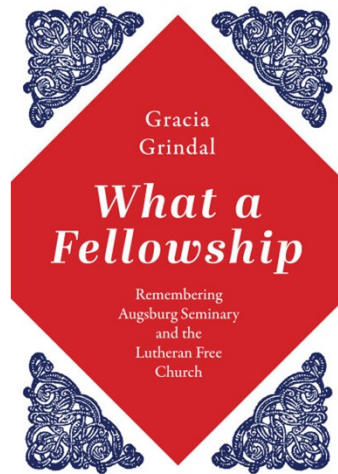
NEWSLETTER

Annual Meeting to Feature Grindal's New Book



In this Issue:

Annual Meeting	1
Summer Outing to Mankato	1
Annual Meeting Report	2
January Sverdrup Forum Report	3
Further News	3
Society Aims and Goals	4
From "The Free Church and the Congregation"	4



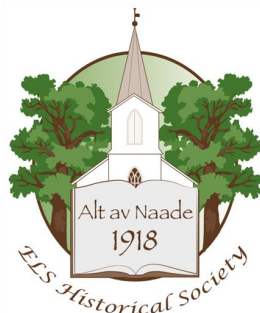
The annual meeting of the GSS will be held at the Free Lutheran Schools in Plymouth, MN on October 25, 2025. Lunch will begin at noon, followed by the program at 1:00 pm. This year's speaker is Prof. Gracia Grindal. Grindal's family was involved in the Lutheran Free Church for many generations, and she will

be speaking about her latest book from Fortress Press, *What a Fellowship: Remembering Augsburg Seminary and the Lutheran Free Church*. Copies of her book will be available for sale. Following the program will be the annual membership meeting.

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

Summer Outing to Mankato



The Evangelical Lutheran Synod, headquartered in Mankato, Minnesota, and sharing a campus with its school, Bethany Lutheran College, has a thing or two in common with the AFLC. Both planted by Norwegian immigrants, and both groups became who they are today by resisting mergers. Both are small and proud of their history. Unlike the AFLC, the ELS has a museum and a well-defined system for archiving its heritage. The Georg Sverdrup Society is organizing an outing for AFLC members interested in history to visit the ELS campus

in Mankato to learn about both their history and the history we share, as well as to glean ideas about how we might better preserve our own.

July 9, 2025

11:00—GSS Board Meeting at Living Word Free Lutheran, Mankato.

1:30—Tour of the Ottesen Museum.

3:00—(or whenever museum tour is done) Tour of the Archives of the ELS and Bethany Lutheran College.

RSVP to Brian Lunn.

2024 Sverdrup Society Annual Meeting, Glyndon, MN

The 2024 annual meeting of the Georg Sverdrup Society convened on Saturday, October 12 at Maranatha Free Lutheran Church of Glyndon, MN. For lunch, Jean Quanbeck prepared and volunteers served a spread consisting of Swedish meatballs, mashed potatoes and gravy, a cheesy vegetable blend, coleslaw, fresh buns and desert.

Following this delicious meal, the president of the society, Brian Lunn, welcomed attendees by opening the program at 1:00 PM. Conforming to tradition, the audience participated in a Sverdrup Songfest. This year's hymns were Magnus Brostrup Landstad's *Jeg ved med en sovn i Jesu navn* ("I Know Of a Sleep in Jesus' Name") and Wilhelm Andreas Wexels' *Opp alle som på jorden bor* (known in English as "Oh, Happy Day When We Shall Stand").

The presenter for this year's gathering was Mr. Gary Dahle, J.D. This is not the first time that Mr. Dahle has appeared before the society. Some readers may recall the engaging content and delivery of his presentation at the Free Lutheran Seminary's discussion forum in January 2019 regarding the Lutheran Free Church's 1898 court case versus the United Church, regarding the legal possession of Augsburg.

Mr. Dahle's topic this year was "The Legacy of Ole Dahle in the Lutheran Free Church." The subject

matter is of particular interest to the speaker, as the subject of address was his great-grandfather. Ole Dahle was born in 1853 in Møre og Romsdal, Norway and later emigrated. He graduated from Augsburg Seminary in 1888 and served congregations in Morris, Duluth, Aitkin, Deerwood and Starbuck, MN while also ministering to the lumberjacks while living in the northland. Pastor Dahle and Professor Georg Sverdrup were friends and spent time in the summers together relaxing at Farm Island Lake near Aitkin. Pastor Ole Dahle died in 1933 and was buried near that same locale.

The Dahle children and in-laws were known for their efforts in the temperance movement. Ole and his wife Regine also counted two missionaries among their progeny. Astrid Dahle Awes and Ragna Dahle both served in Madagascar, with the latter dying on the field.

Ole and his wife Regina also were parents to four Lutheran Free Church pastors, two of whom continued into the AFLC. Best known in this category is Trygve Dahle, for whom the women's dormitory at the Free Lutheran Bible College is named, and who was buried at Spicer, MN. Another son, Anker Dahle, served near the Canadian border at Wannaska, MN and also near Aitkin, MN, and was buried there at Dorris Cemetery.

Two other of Ole and Regine's children also were LFC pastors. Viggo S. Dahle earlier ministered at North Heights Lutheran Church of Roseville, MN and later accepted the call of the three-point parish of Nordland Lutheran Church southwest of Paynesville, Trinity Lutheran

Church of New London and Gausdal Lutheran Church south of Georgeville, MN. Viggo Dahl is buried at Nordland. Ernst Dahle led the work at Elmwood Lutheran Church in northeast Minneapolis during the 1940's and was buried at Sunset Memorial Cemetery in Minneapolis. Ernest was also a talented artist.

Following Gary Dahle's reflections on his ancestors, the program transitioned to Mr. Larry Walker reading his new translation of Sverdrup's writing, "The Free Church and the Congregation." To conclude, Pastor Martin Horn closed the program with prayer.

After a recess, Pastor Brian Lunn convened the annual meeting. Mr. Tim Larson delivered the secretary's report. Pastor Kris Nyman's treasurer's report was distributed. In old business, Mr. Loiell Dyrud publicized the progress of the 2024 journal. The assembly also received a general report from the board in addition to Pastor Horn updating those in attendance on the advancements of the journal committee. Pastor Brian Lunn spoke to the progress in publishing Sverdrup's translations. The nominating committee presented its candidates, whom the voters approved, for consideration. The cost of dues was set for the year. The meeting concluded with prayer again led by Pastor Lunn.

Submitted by Carl Fiskness



Sverdrup January Forum, 2025

On Friday, January 17th, 2025, from 9:00 AM to noon, the Free Lutheran Seminary hosted the Georg Sverdrup Society's forum following the campus' winter symposium on Wednesday and Thursday. Like the activity of the previous two days, the seminary discussion event also took place in the Student Life Center classroom with off-site participants joining online.

The theme of this year's gathering was "Sverdrup and the Fellowship of the Congregations." Pastor Terry Olson opened the convocation in prayer. Mr. Larry Walker led devotions reflecting on the theme of the servant pastor. Pastor Olson also introduced each of the three speakers.

Dr. Martin Horn lectured for the first session with the theme, "The Lutheran Free Church as a 'Spiritual Movement.'" Pastor Horn is well qualified to lead this discussion as he conducted his doctor of ministry research on the topic. Horn noted how the final president of the original Lutheran Free Church, Dr. John Stensvaag, had described the Lutheran Free Church as a spiritual movement and not simply a revolt. An awakening was necessary to sustain the movement because a constitution cannot guarantee "free and living congregations."

To affirm the origin of the Lutheran Free Church as a product of awakening, Dr. Horn discussed the roots of the movement in the pietism

of Hans Nielsen Hauge and a subsequent working of the Holy Spirit through the instruction of Gisle Johnson in Norway. Both of these events produced a similar stirring that swept through Norwegian-Americans in the 1890s. Horn further noted how the Spirit produced revival but not "revivalism."

Dr. Phillip Hooper spoke for the second session. He titled his research, "Congregations Working Together." Dr. Hooper is also well-suited to share on this topic, having recently published his book, *The American Lutheranism of Georg Sverdrup*.

The content of Dr. Hooper's presentation described the background that led to congregations rallying around Augsburg when the newly-formed United Norwegian Lutheran Church desired to separate Augsburg College from its seminary. He also noted how enrollment at Augsburg declined by 1/3, which he concludes was not all that bad considering that the school did not enter into the merger. Dr. Hooper cited interesting statistics to illustrate the faithful response not only to Augsburg, but also to the support of missionaries who had expressed support for Augsburg's belief in a unified educational process.

Rev. Brian Lunn, president of the Sverdrup Society, delivered the third presentation. Like the previous speakers, Pastor Lunn has also

researched the backgrounds of the historical awakenings that produced the LFC as a product of a new springtime, as evidenced from his translation and publication of *A Godly Contemplation: Prayers and Meditations of Hans Nielsen Hauge*. At the Sverdrup Forum, Pastor Lunn read a translation of Elias Harbo's Address: "The Unique Position, Calling, and Mission of the Lutheran Free Church." Harbo served as president of the original Lutheran Free Church for three non-consecutive terms.

Harbo delivered this address in Willmar, Minnesota, describing why the Lutheran Free Church was uninterested in the 1917 church merger that had brought together the Norwegian Synod, the United Church and the Hauge Synod. One of the distinctives that Lunn noted was how Harbo had especially distinguished the Lutheran Free Church's emphasis on *barne lærdom*, that is, "simple, catechetical learning" from the Norwegian Synod's borrowing from the Missouri Synod's theological conversation, debating theses.

Following lunch after the meeting, the Sverdrup Society's board met in the AFLC administrative building for future planning.

Submitted by Carl Fiskness

Further News

Summer Forum in Illinois

This year, the Sverdrup Society Summer Forum will be held at St. John's Lutheran-Schwer in Milford, Illinois, hosted by Pastor Joseph Frech, on Saturday, July 26. The program will begin at 9:00 and conclude with lunch provided by the congregation. Dr. Phill Hooper will give a historical presentation, and Mr. Bill Ogg will provide music and background for a heritage hymn sing.

Society Members Publish Books

2024 saw the publication of two significant books for students of Sverdrup for years to come: Pastor Robert Lee's *From Freedom to Life: A History of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations*, and Dr. Phill Hooper's *The American Lutheranism of Georg Sverdrup*. The former, by a charter member and early president of the GSS, spends a good portion of chapter 2 discussing the legacy of Sverdrup

and Oftedal in the Lutheran Free Church. Since the AFLC continues to use the Fundamental Principles, its history is of special value for the student of Sverdrup. The second volume, written by a current board member, places Sverdrup's theology in two contexts: that of his Danon-Norwegian predecessors, and of his American contemporaries. Both books are available from Ambassador Publications.



THE GEORG SVERDRUP SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

2535 Knollwood Drive
Unit 3101
Grand Junction, CO 81505-1471
Georgsverdrupsociety.org

Ordet Blev Kjødt

(The Word Became Flesh)

Directors

Brian Lunn, President
Brian Davidson, Vice-President
Karl Anderson, Secretary
Kris Nyman, Treasurer, Member-
ship Chairman
Phillip Hooper
Steve Mundfrom
Carl Fiskness
Larry Walker, Editor
Loiell Dyrud, Assistant Editor

Prospective members are invited
to contact the 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 Free Church and the Congregation”

Source: *Veiledning*, pp. 31-35, from an editorial in “*Folkebladet*,” Dec. 16, 1896. Translated by Larry J. Walker

If we are asked how things stand with the congregation in the free church, our answer is this: Quite exactly the same way as God’s Word in the New Testament presents the congregation and its standing. *We intend quite decidedly and quite regardlessly to be guided by the Word*; that is the only authority before which a Lutheran free church can bow.

The first [issue] which follows – the Christian principle for the relationship between the congregation and the fellowship, is this, that the congregation is the original [thing] and the fellowship its product: *The congregation is the only right, apostolic and Christian form* of God’s kingdom on earth during the period from the bestowing of the Spirit to the return of Christ. All

outward fellowships or churches or institutions or associations or societies have, according to God’s Word, only the right to serve as organs for the congregation, not to rule and order and command as authorities.

This principle is the first and most wide-reaching of all the rules for the constitution of churches. The individual, local congregation has God’s Word as its overseer, has Jesus Christ as its Head and Lord, has God’s Spirit as its Guide; but it has no other authority over it. It does not have the right to give away its Christian liberty to anyone else. It can indeed do this, but that is neither a biblical nor a Christian act; therefore, it has no authority before God to do it. The congregation is free according to God’s Word, but not so free as to give away its freedom without incurring guilt or suffering harm.

It is quite obvious that the New Testament would have it that Christians should not only have an inner fellowship of the Spirit with one another, but that they

should also form outward, organized congregations with proper officers and rules. We would be departing entirely from the demands of God’s Word if we were to attempt to be so spiritual as to have no outward congregation. The outward congregation belongs to apostolic and biblical Christianity. And those many people who do not wish to belong to any outward congregation because it is not spiritual enough for them – their Christianity suffers from a sad lack and weakness, although it is far from our purpose to suggest that such weak Christians are not Christians at all.

This full editorial will be published in the 2024 Sverdrup Journal.