



The Georg Sverdrup Society

NEWSLETTER

Fergus Falls to Host Fall Program and Annual Meeting



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The Fall Program of the GSS is scheduled for Saturday, October 24, at Calvary Free Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls, MN. The event will begin with lunch at noon, followed by the 1:00 p.m. program (speaker to be determined) and the annual membership meeting at 2:30. Plan to attend, and bring a friend!



The church address is 1416 County Highway 111, in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

Summer Outing in the Twin Cities

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, USA, and buried in Lakewood Cemetery

The Sverdrup Society is sponsoring an outing to the campus of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, for interested persons the afternoon of Friday, August 7. The tour will include the Old Muskego Church and the Archives housed on the campus and will conclude with a visit to Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis, where Sverdrup and Oftedal are buried. No cost to attend. Plan to come, and invite a friend!



*Interior of Old Muskego Church.
Photo credit: digitalcommons.luthersem.edu*

Hooper Speaks at 2025 ETS Conference

The Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) is a group of conservative scholars from across the nation who come together every year for presentations on different aspects of theology. In 2025, the theme for the conference centered around “Defending the Faith.” They met Tuesday, November 17, through Thursday, November 19, at the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel, Denver, Colorado.

In following their theme, the Lutheran Studies Room, hosted by the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary, invited Dr. Phillip Hooper to be a keynote speaker. His presentation highlighted “Lutheran Confessional Orthopraxy: Why a Minimal Confession Applied Is Better Than a Maximal Confession Ignored.”

Particularly notable from Dr. Hooper’s presentation was the uniqueness of the Free Lutheran heritage in subscribing to the Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Small Catechism rather than to a more extensive doctrinal corpus.

While some may view this as a detriment, Dr. Hooper described it as serving the congregations in allowing them to connect with something manageable that they can easily read and digest. Instead of average lay people trying to be aware of the contents of the whole *Book of Concord*, the Augsburg Confession, and the Small Catechism serve as applicable and readily transmissible teaching points for the heart of Lutheran theology.

—Nathan Olson



Dr. Phillip Hooper addresses the Lutheran Studies Room at the Evangelical Theological Society conference.

HELP WANTED

The Georg Sverdrup Society is run by volunteers. At present, we are seeking one or more detail-oriented persons as Event Coordinator and Journal Coordinator.

We are also seeking archive material, especially newspapers and periodicals in Norwegian.

If you would like to volunteer or have archive material you would consider donating, please contact Brian Lunn (lunnhistory@outlook.com).



January Seminary Forum, see next page.

Report on the January 2026 Seminary Forum

On Friday, January 16, 2026, the Free Lutheran Seminary hosted its annual campus Sverdrup Forum. This year's theme focused on Sverdrup and Oftedal's sermon series *Ånd og Liv*, (Spirit and Life). Mr. Loiell Dyrud convened the assembly, informing the audience that this year marks the production of the society's 22nd *Sverdrup Journal*. The organization has now translated 1500 pages of Sverdrup and Oftedal's writings. Dyrud then called on retired professor Robert Lee, who led devotions on the second chapter of James and offered prayer for the day's activities.

Mr. Larry Walker read Pastor Brian Lunn's translation of the *Ånd og Liv* sermon, "They Knew Neither the Scriptures Nor the Power of God."

Mr. Dyrud introduced Brian J. Lunn, who presented a paper on "The Written Sermon: A Brief History of the Genre in Lutheran Literature." Lunn explained how many of these written sermon collections are called *postils*. This word originates from the Latin phrase, *post illa verba textus* (after the reading of the words of the texts.) Lunn noted that Luther's postils, among many others, were utilized in the absence of a pastor or read in the home as devotions.

Lunn cited other popular Lutheran preachers whose sermons were collected in various languages.

A new tradition emerged from Sweden with the introduction of a three-year lectionary versus the traditional one-year schedule. In *Ånd og Liv*, Sverdrup and Oftedal collected sermons published in successive 1898 editions of *Lutheraneren*, the periodical of the Norwegian-Danish Conference. The LFC and the AFLC have continued this practice through publishing sermons and devotional materials.

The next presentation of the forum followed the spirit of the first in being read by a person other than its author, Jonathan D. Anderson. Anderson was a land surveyor for twenty-seven years. A chronic illness has left him significantly homebound. This new season of life has provided



Seminary student Hans Tanner reads Jonathan Anderson's paper.

him the opportunity to complete writing projects including his featured piece at the forum. His brother-in-law, AFLC seminarian Hans Tanner, read his paper in his absence.

Tanner read Anderson's paper entitled "The Revival Preaching of Orthodox Pietism: An Analysis of Georg Sverdrup's and Sven Oftedal's Sermons in *Spirit and Life*." Anderson noted how orthodox pietism inherited this strain from Gisle Johnson's teaching in Norway. This emphasis concerned: 1) an overarching concern for salvation, 2) personally experienced salvation, 3) ongoing transformative sanctification, 4) a special emphasis in sanctification on God's work in baptized children and youth, 5) continuous inner fellowship with God, and 6) a loving concern for souls that motivates social and spiritual ministry.

These distinctives contrasted with that of the Norwegian Synod, which valued "pure doctrine and objective Christian truth to the exclusion of subjective response." This emphasis was especially observable in the stress on the objective justification of the world. Sverdrup and Oftedal challenged this perspective, deeming it an understanding that only evoked a psychological consciousness versus conversion.

Anderson noted that compared to the Norwegian Synod, orthodox pietism felt closer to the ethos of the Hauge Synod. Nonetheless, the latter

group demonstrated a tendency to appeal to behavioral signs in the believer as evidence of conversion versus their simply being the fruit of faith.

Those in attendance also enjoyed a third presentation with Dean of Free Lutheran Seminary, Dr. James D. Molstre, reading his paper: "From Text to Pew: Anchoring Congregational Life Through the Law and Gospel Framework of the Sermons of Georg Sverdrup and Sven Oftedal." Four sermons Molstre evaluated from *Spirit and Life* were "In Faith and In Doubt" from Matthew 14, "The Acceptable Year of the Lord" from Luke 4, "A New Righteousness" from Matthew 7, and a sermon on Zacchaeus from Luke 19.

Molstre employed a rubric that determines if the sermons possess a "fallen condition focus" as articulated by homiletician Bryan Campbell. Molstre also examined how the sermons proposed a thesis statement of a "big idea." Further criteria Molstre assessed were whether "the sermons were truly expository, . . . were interpreted in their literary context, law and gospel were applied, and the content meaningfully connects with its intended audience."

Molstre noted that one needs to keep in mind that these sermons were intended to be read versus being preached, given that their length would likely require only ten minutes to be read aloud. However, this shortened attention span caused these sermons to be "more reflective, didactic, and densely theological than contemporary oral sermons. On the other hand, they reveal a remarkable pastoral intentionality, a desire to shepherd souls and to apply scripture to daily life."

Lastly, Molstre concluded that these homilies would still be appropriate for today's readers given that their exegesis remained close to the scriptural text. *Ånd og Liv* would be comprehensible and edifying to current consumers, as Sverdrup and Oftedal did not wander far afield in their commentary regarding events specific to their era.

—Carl Fiskness



THE GEORG SVERDRUP SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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(The Word Became Flesh)

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Loiell Dyrud, Assistant Editor

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> 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**.

Excerpt from “In Faith and In Doubt”

Source: *Aand og Liv*, Fourth Sunday after Epiphany. Translated by Jonathan D. Anderson.

And again and again, when the Lord’s servants have ventured out against the violent passions of human hearts both at home in the congregation and in heathendom, they have certainly had to repeat Peter’s experience, [namely,] that they have sunk every time they have looked away from the Lord and toward their many difficulties; but no one who has tried to raise the cry of distress like Peter, “Lord, save me!” has cried in vain. The Lord has also heard the cry of the one with little faith—indeed, the one with doubt—and has immediately helped, adding the reproachful and yet blessedly comforting word, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Why? In reality, you have no reason to doubt if your position is like Peter’s. If it is at the Lord’s command

that you are walking on the sea, then pay no attention to anything other than the Lord’s command and the Lord’s eye, which follows you so kindly the whole time you are placed in such great danger. And above all, if you feel that you are beginning to sink, then do not neglect—even in the moment of doubt—to cry out to your Savior; and behold, He will immediately stretch out His hand to you and hold you up.

There are so many apprehensive souls among us who walk so fearfully and are therefore so near to sinking. They see all the opposition around them, and they feel doubt and despondency and unworthiness within them. Hear the voice of Jesus: “Do not be afraid any longer, only believe” [Mark 5:36]. “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” Jesus, who has commanded us to walk in the world with His witness to the world, yet sees all our journey and all our danger, and He sees no reason why we should doubt. If we see something that frightens us, then it is be-

cause we are looking too low and too short; we are not looking up high enough to the Lord and far enough forward to glory with God.

“Because I live, you will live also,” says Jesus to His believers [John 14:19]. During the many dangers and great difficulties of the wilderness journey, let us hold fast to the Invisible One as if we beheld Him. And even if we are led strangely through storm and calm, let us hold fast to the faithful hand of the Savior that is extended to us through the dark storm clouds which seem entirely to shut up heaven above us. And even if we let go of His supporting hand for a moment, so that we feel we are sinking when He is not holding us up, then let us remember that such an experience is beneficial to us in order that we might once again learn the old cry of distress: Lord save us! Amen.