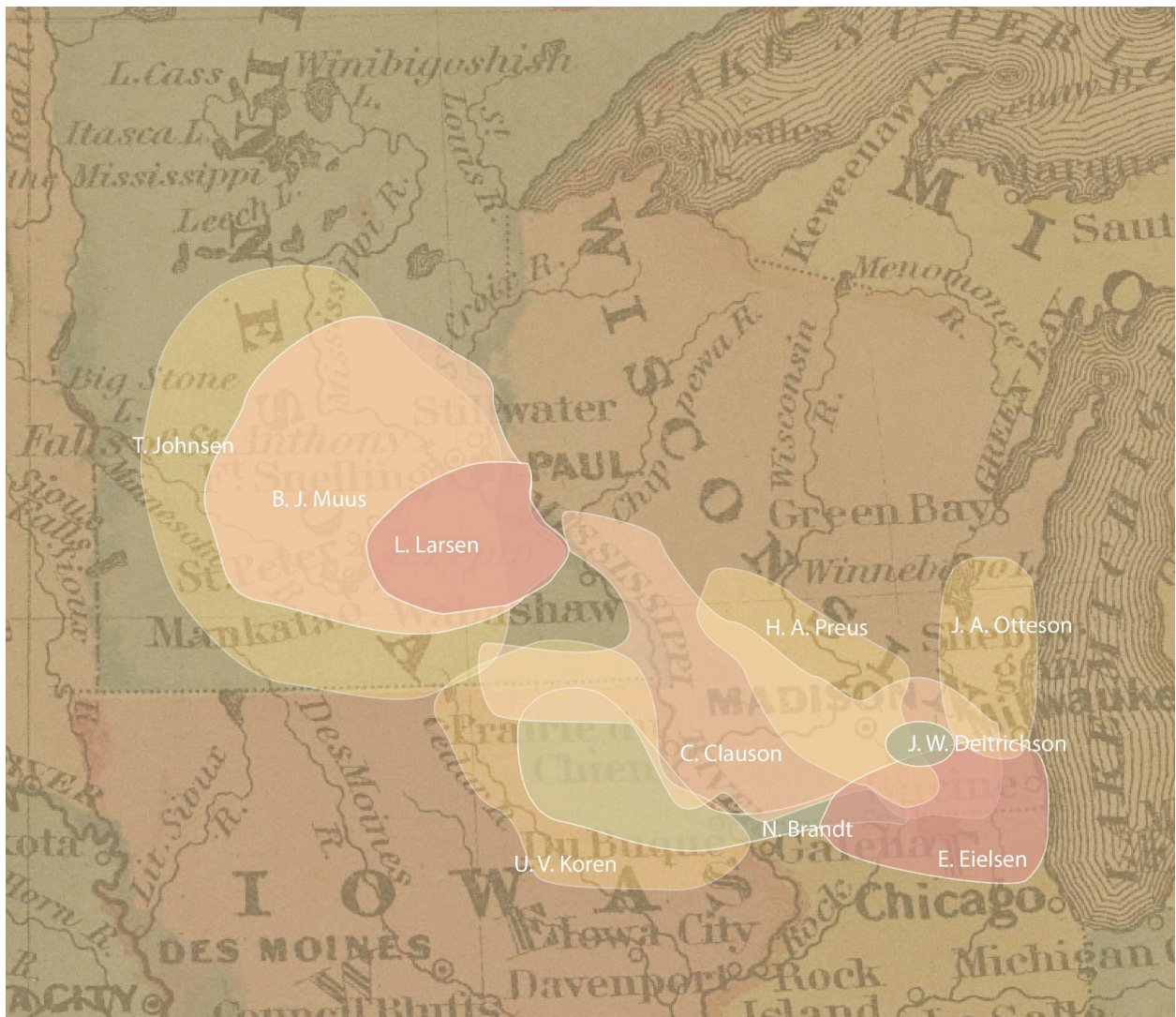




## NORWEGIAN LUTHERAN CIRCUIT RIDERS: History & Application

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The Parish of Faith Lutheran Church, Oregon, WI

Great Lakes Pastoral Conference,  
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Rough illustration of the extent of the travels of circuit riders mentioned in this essay, by J. Hendrix

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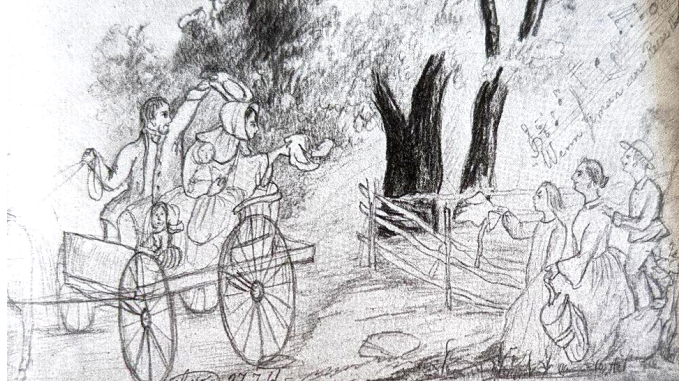
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Image: Lithograph image collage of B.J. Muus, H.A. Preus, Johs. B. Frich, and V. Koren, undated.

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## I. Introduction: When Someone Makes a Journey

When someone makes a journey,  
He can tell us all about it;  
And so I took my stick and hat  
And chose to go a-journeying.  
*That was no bad thing you did;  
But tell us more, Herr Orion.*



So sang the people as the H.A. Preus family left Washington Prairie, as Linka Preus sketched in her diary.<sup>1</sup> “*Urians Reise um die Welt*” (“Orion’s Travel Around the World”) by Matthias Claudius and set to music by Ludwig van Beethoven (Op. 52) was a popular travel song among Germans and Scandinavians. The poem humorously chronicles the misadventures of a traveler, Orion, around the world, from the Arctic, America, Asia, and beyond. You can imagine Herman Amberg Preus<sup>2</sup> rolling down the window of his horse and turning on the radio of his hot rod convertible buggy and singing this road trip song as he’s traveling between congregations mentally taking on the role of the traveler Orion (ok, maybe not...). Orion optimistically went looking for new, pleasing, and easier places and people, and instead...

And everywhere, I found,  
Was just like here,  
Everywhere as crack-brained,  
The people just like us  
And every bit as foolish.  
*That was a bad, bad thing you did;  
Don’t tell us anymore, Herr Orion.*

Well I hope you don’t say the same to me, even though you know the conclusion to this essay already. Human nature remains everywhere, so the need for the Divine Nature of Christ to be brought to and cover sinners everywhere will remain until the end of time. Ironically, ever since post-Babel, and often spurred on by similar optimism – *we’ll find someplace better!* – God uses hardship to increase, spread, and multiply people across the earth, all for the benefit of His Church, sometimes in ways completely opposite of what we would expect or want.

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<sup>1</sup> Linka Preus, Sketch R33, July 27, 1861 Wenn jeman eine Riese. Found in Marvin G. Slind, ed., “Linka’s Diary: A Norwegian Immigrant Story in Word and Sketches.”

<sup>2</sup> His son, C.K. Preus, ordained in 1876, went to Spring Prairie, Wisconsin, to help his father at his congregation. He split his time between Spring Prairie and Our Saviour’s Church in Chicago during the span of time between 1893-1895.



The spread of human nature across the planet often seems to outrun the spread of called and ordained pastors to administer the antidote, especially at various turning points in human history, such as in the day of Jonah who reluctantly traveled to the dreary mission site of Nineveh. Then, in the day of Elijah where the drought and the dry Brook Cherith, the lack of flour and bread, and the single Broom tree, served as the backdrop for a drought of priests and prophets. Elijah despaired of being alone (cf. 1 Kings 18:22; 19:4-10), even as God had illustrated just before to him that He can and does multiply a few fragments to give food and drink to sustain life – and if that’s not enough, He’ll even resurrect life.

And if thy home be dark and drear,  
The cruse be empty, hunger near,  
All hope within thee dying;  
Despair not in thy sore distress,  
Lo, Christ is there the bread to bless,  
The fragments multiplying. (ELH 189 v. 3)

A similar thing happened in the day of Jesus’ ministry, when the disciples despaired, “Where can we get enough bread for these people to eat?” (John 6:5). It happened again in the day of Ambrose and Augustine.<sup>3</sup> For our purposes in this essay, it happened again when mass numbers of Norwegians immigrated to America in the 1800’s, where fittingly, a certain preparatory address posed the question, “Can God provide a table in the wilderness?” Finally, perhaps, we see the spread of human nature outrunning the spread of pastors again today. Like the early Circuit Riding Pastors, we may again mentally find ourselves like the traveler Orion, as we travel between place to place to serve God’s people.

And yet, God promises that His Church shall always be preserved. In fact, not just *preserved* but always *on the move*, even on the offense, for the stationary gates of hell shall never prevail against it.

As we face looming pastoral shortages, we take comfort in the fact that it is God Himself who sends these difficulties, trials, and even crosses. After all, it is only from soldiers *burdened* by the weight of great arms, that an enemy runs and flees. Thank God for the burden of our great weapon, the Word of God. We bear the millstone of the collar and the yoke of the stole for this reason. Without our burden, our enemy has nothing to fear.

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<sup>3</sup> In 391 A.D., Augustine learned of someone in Hippo who was interested in joining a monastery. Though Augustine didn’t like to travel, Augustine reluctantly hiked to Hippo. Having already made a name for himself, when Bishop Valerius saw him in church that Sunday, Valerius put aside his prepared sermon and preached on the urgent need for priests in Hippo. Who among the congregation would give their life to the priesthood? The crowd spotted Augustine. Like his mentor Ambrose before him who went from being an unbaptized layman to a bishop in only eight days, Augustine was ordained a priest against his will. Afterwards the people noticed him crying, but thought it was because he wanted to be a bishop not a priest.



My assignment for this essay was not merely to give an *historical* paper, an account of circuit riders, but to give a *practical* paper, an application of the early circuit riders to our modern situation and pastoral shortage.

So, take up your stick and hat like Orion and journey with me as I tell you all about the difficulties, trials, and crosses of circuit riding pastors in our Synod's early history, and attempt to find application for similarly crack-brained people like us.

## II. Vignettes: On the Road Again

### *Hans Nielsen Hauge*

While traveling from place to place to preach to scattered sinners is certainly not a new thing, our modern understanding of it begins in Norway about a hundred years prior to the Circuit Riding Pastors in our church body with an unlikely figure: Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824), a Norwegian revivalist lay preacher who believed that original sin did not entirely negate the power of human will<sup>4</sup>



In the late 1700's, Hauge began to make use of local "supplementary religious gatherings" known as conventicles, a part of the pietistic tradition traceable to Philipp Jakob Spener's (1635-1705) method of reform outlined in his *Pia Desideria*.

Eventually, Hauge would begin taking his conventicles on the road throughout Norway. He would travel as far north as Tromsø as well as twice to Denmark. He held meetings by invitation or by his own initiative. As he walked across Norway, he knitted, and wherever he stayed on his journeys, he assisted with farm chores. While his practical skills facilitated conversing with and relating to people on spiritual matters, allowing his groups to quickly grow, his unauthorized conventicles and preaching lead to his arrest no less than ten times. And yet, his arrests proved to only further his teachings, as it provided time for Hauge to devote to literary activity; writing and publishing his own materials.<sup>5</sup> Haugeism was born.

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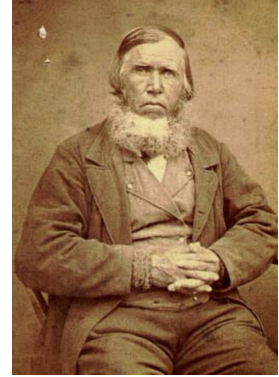
<sup>4</sup> He believed, citing stories such as Mary "choosing the good portion" (Lk 10:42) as evidence, that not only do people have the ability to reject the grace of God, they also retain the ability to choose it. Cf. Thomas E. Jacobson, "Hauge's Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod in America and the Continuation of the Haugean Spirit in Twentieth-Century American Lutheranism" PhD Thesis, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, (2018), pg. 55

[https://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=phd\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.luthersem.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=phd_theses)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pg. 47-48.

## *Elling Eielsen*

Haugeanism, with its emphasis on conventicles and lay preaching, and de-emphasis on the Sacraments and the order of the Church of Norway (both ecclesiastical and liturgical), was transplanted from to America in 1839 by Elling Eielsen, a lay preacher and evangelist, who came to Norway, Illinois leading “inspirational meetings.”<sup>6</sup> Eielsen, who opposed ritualism, formal worship, clerical vestments, and clerical authority, was “the classic Circuit Preacher:” traveling on foot between Wisconsin, Illinois, and further out west to minister to settlers and organize new congregations.<sup>7</sup>



Pietism and Haugeanism were thus ‘in the air’ around confessional Norwegian Lutheran Churches.<sup>8</sup> *Grace for Grace* contains this comment on the dissension within the Norwegian Synod churches eventually caused by Haugeanism:

“[T]here were those who, without joining Eielsen in his condemnation of everything connected with the State-Church of Norway, yet thought it in order to permit lay-preaching by such as were “moved by the Holy Ghost,” even though they had not been called in accordance with the rule laid down in the Augsburg Confession, Art. 14: “No one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the sacraments, unless he be regularly called.”<sup>9</sup>

The dissension would eventually result in the Synod’s first controversy and doctrinal statement on Lay Preaching, adopted in 1862.<sup>10</sup> It would also affect the conduct of future ministers.

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<sup>6</sup> Eielsen was actually the third lay preacher to attempt to serve the settlement. The first, Ole Olson Hettletvedt was sent out by the American Bible Society as a Bible Agent to evangelize to a wider segment of Norwegians. The second, Jorgen Pedersob was called by the Haugean Lutherans, but shortly after joined the Mormon church. Interestingly, in 1837, the same thing happened to Ole Olson – first converting to Mormonism, then to the Baptist faith. Source: “Elling Eielsen”. Ivitek Publishing. Archived from the original on March 4, 2016. Retrieved April 4, 2024:

[https://web.archive.org/web/20160304084456/http://www.norwegianamerican.com/elling\\_eielsen.php](https://web.archive.org/web/20160304084456/http://www.norwegianamerican.com/elling_eielsen.php)

<sup>7</sup> The story is told that Eielsen, finding a need for copies of Luther’s Catechism, even walked from Illinois all the way to New York to publish both Luther’s Catechism and Pontoppidan’s Explanation. The next year he did the same to publish another book. Cf. Elling Eielsen Biography, from the Norsk Museum, St. Sheridan IL, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/65c4e9a8fc21890f0769f389/t/65ce6601b00f1d49ecf7c171/1708025345989/Elling+Eielsen+BIO.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> And where Haugean itinerant preachers were not, Methodist itinerant preachers were. To become a preacher, only four questions were asked: 1) Are you converted? 2) Do you know and are you willing to abide by the rules of the Society? 3) Can you preach adequately? 4) Do you have a horse? By 1850 approximately one-third of Protestants in America were Methodists. (BLTS Class notes from “Christian Denominations,” ST506, Period 8 - The Methodist Church)

<sup>9</sup> Families were intermingled between the Norwegian Synod and Haugean congregations. According to a memoir by N. Brandt, Eielsen’s father-in-law, Hermo Tufte was a faithful member of Stub’s congregation.

<sup>10</sup> *Grace for Grace*, pg. 137ff.

## *Claus Clausen*

Around the same time and roughly to the same place that Eielsen was working, in 1843, C.L. Clausen had come to be a teacher for Norwegian-American schoolchildren in the Muskego, WI settlement. He was instead persuaded to become their minister. Rather than immediately assuming the duties, Clausen was examined by a local German-American Lutheran minister and found qualified for the office. He was then ordained and called to serve the people of Muskego.



In February of 1844, Clausen visited all the major Norwegian settlements in Wisconsin including Koshkonong. Since essentially every immigrant from Norway had been under the State Church, it could easily be assumed that anyone who spoke Norwegian was a member of the Lutheran Church. So, at each colony Clausen visited, he preached, baptized, and offered the Lord's Supper. Significantly, he did not organize any congregations outside of the Muskego area believing that he wouldn't be able to care for them.<sup>11</sup>

Clausen was not so much of an itinerant preacher as Eielsen was, or even a circuit rider. He was a missionary. After Clausen accepted a call in 1846 to the Jefferson Prairie Settlement, he started making trips westward. Beginning in 1850, Clausen became the editor of two different Norwegian newspapers, one of which was the *Kirketidende* (later, the *Emigranten*) which helped him create connections, maintain homeland networks, and publish matters of faith.<sup>12</sup>

In 1851, he traveled all the way to St. Ansgar, IA (near Northwood) to select a site for a colony. On this trip he had also gone as far north as Rush River, WI (near St. Paul) and as far south as the Paint Creek and Turkey River settlements in Iowa, taking steps towards organizing a congregation there.<sup>13</sup>

## *Johannes Wilhelm Christian Dietrichson*

Dietrichson is well-known among us as the preacher at a service in the Fall of 1844 under the oaks of Koshkonong. Dietrichson put great care into organizing the settlers, and even though they were "like sheep without a shepherd," made sure things were done properly and in good order. He had agreed to serve them only upon the settler's written request.



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<sup>11</sup> "The Beginnings of Western Koshkonong Ev. Lutheran Church," *Oak Leaves*, (Summer 1997), pg. 2.  
<https://www.els-history.org/download/oak-leaves/oak-leaves-1-2.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://wi101.wisc.edu/norwegian-language-papers/>

<sup>13</sup> Nils Brandt, "Rev. Nils Brandt's Reminiscences From the Years 1851-1855"



When he came around to organize both the Eastern and Western Koshkonong congregations, he presented four points which he felt the people must voluntarily agree with, two of which are with noting:<sup>14</sup>

2. Will you...subject yourself to the church order that the Ritual of the Church of Norway prescribes?
3. Will you promise that you shall not call or accept any other minister and pastor than such as can clearly establish according to the Norwegian Lutheran Church Order that he is a regularly called and rightly consecrated pastor? And will you show the pastor thus called by you and the congregation to spiritual leadership the attention and obedience that a member of a congregation owes his pastor in all things that he requires and does according to The Ritual of the Church of Norway?

A major difference between Clausen, Dietrichson and between Eielsen or other Haugean preachers is that as the Haugeans traveled, they looked to convert even Christians to be *true* Christians, whereas Dietrichson and Clausen recognized the majority of people they met to already be Christians, but Christians in need of pastoral care and organization.

The organization needed was not simply the order to conduct business, as if the church was merely like any other society, or even the order of calling pastors, though that was certainly true. What was important was the order of the liturgical life. The *Norwegian Church Ritual* (Rite I in ELH) was invaluable for the order amongst the early settlers. As Dietrichson went between locations, his chasuble went with him.<sup>15</sup> When life is chaotic and the world for these new immigrants is (literally) new, the familiar order around Word and Sacrament was the security and stability they needed. It might be really wild out there, but in Divine Services, God is *really* present and reflected here: there's beauty, reverence, order, and peace.



Dietrichson's chasuble on Display at East Koshkonong

Dietrichson took care of the Sacrament at Divine Services, but could not be present everywhere all the time. Reminiscent of the deacons chosen in the Book of Acts 6 to see that no one was neglected, soon after the congregation was founded, he had Koshkonong choose eight men on a geographic basis to assist him in his work.<sup>16</sup> One, Ole Trovatten was also appointed as the teacher for the schoolchildren. The teacher was usually also the *Klokker*, a well-educated man who read the opening and closing prayers of the church service and (before introduction of a pipe organ) intoned and led the singing.

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<sup>14</sup> "History of Western Koshkonong," accessed April 3, 2024: <https://westernkoshkonong.org/history>

<sup>15</sup> You can see the faded and worn chasuble on display today at East Koshkonong Church.

<sup>16</sup> The western representatives were Ole Knudsen Trovatten, Knud Aslaksen Juve, Knud Olsen Holten and Tron Kittilsen SVimbili. "History of Western Koshkonong," Ibid.

## *Herman Amberg Preus*

Some Norwegian Lutheran pastors, such as Herman Amberg Preus brought an instrument called a psalmodikon along with them in their travels from congregation to congregation in an effort to add accompaniment.<sup>17</sup>



H. A. Preus had accepted a call in 1851 from three churches around Spring Prairie as well as in Dane, and Columbia Counties, Wisconsin. He wrote after receiving the letter,

On New Year's Day, I received a letter – my heart beat fast. It was a letter of call to me to become pastor at Spring Prairie, Wisconsin. While reading the letter, my arm was about her whose love would ease life's sorrow and sweeten its joys and who did not shrink from sharing all with me. In that hour our hearts beat strongly, and our eyes expressed what the lips could not utter. This was indeed the most serious and solemn hour in all my experience. I had become a minister; I had a congregation!<sup>18</sup>

Note his words, "I had become a minister." Even with the truly wild conditions on the frontier, the call was not his to seek, nor could he do whatever he felt he must do. His call, mediated by God only through hearers of the Word, determined what he was called and ordained to do.

With great pastoral care for lost sheep, Preus's field soon grew well beyond his original charge. He preached in numerous places within a radius of fifty miles, and often he would preach at places located over one hundred miles from home. In 1854, in response to another written call from the Norwegian settlers at Lemonweir, Adams County, Wisconsin (near Mauston), Preus organized a parish there, consisting of an East and West Church.



Image: Preus' turned over wagon on the way between parishes, illustration by Linka Preus (pg. 343)

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<sup>17</sup> C.K. Preus recalls this detail in Marvin G. Slind, ed., "Linka's Diary: A Norwegian Immigrant Story in Word and Sketches," pg. 353. Slind described it as "basically a play-by-number system, 1 being do, 2 for re, 3 for me, etc., with dots for length. Many people played the instrument for evening entertainment, especially before the piano became commonplace in homes." A book for psalmodikon accompaniments for Norwegian hymns had been published after 1864.

<sup>18</sup> "Linka's Diary," Ibid., pages 116-117. Cited from Rolf David Preus, "The Legacy of Herman Amberg Preus," accessed April 6, 2024 at [www.christforus.org/Papers/Content/LegacyHermanAmbergPreus.html](http://www.christforus.org/Papers/Content/LegacyHermanAmbergPreus.html). The quote continues:

What significance, what responsibility, in those words! A congregation of souls was turning to me in matters pertaining to their salvation; their spiritual welfare rested on my heart. The Lord shall require their souls at my hand. I shall address them in God's own Word of reproof and of blessing. The Lord says, "lovest thou Me? Then feed My sheep." O Father in heaven, give me strength and Thy blessing that I may truthfully say, "yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee"; that in due time, in the midst of right many of my flock, we may gather with the great flock of the supreme Shepherd, saying, "Here, Lord, are those whom Thou gavest me!"

But, because Lemonweir was about 140 miles from Spring Prairie, he only made it there on average less than four times per year, conducting thirty-four services during the eleven years that he served the Lemonweir parish.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Jacob Aal Otteson***

Moving north, J.A. Otteson was called to serve three regular congregations in and around Manitowoc together with “eight or ten other mission stations” lying between Green Bay and Milwaukee. A sketch of Otteson’s life found in “American Lutheran Biographies” commented on this arrangement:



“This was pioneer work of the most trying kind, which demanded over against many hardships, not only a burning love for the Master’s work, but also great bodily exertion. Time was taken up with incessant travel mainly on horseback. He had to ride that way from 30 to 50 miles a day, sometimes along the shores of Lake Michigan, other times through the silent, trackless primeval forests, often in the cold of winter. Here he caught his chronic rheumatism which in later life was to plague him and remind him of the wearing trips made in his first days of bringing the Gospel of Christ to his countrymen.”<sup>20</sup>

In 1860, Otteson accepted a call to the Koshkonong parish, which was now comprised of both the Eastern and Western Churches, as well as the Liberty Church.

### ***Nils Brandt***

In the fall of 1850, Dietrichson returned to Norway, but continued to recruit more pastors to serve the increasing numbers of Norwegian settlements. That same fall he had approached a young Nils Brandt, whom he had probably learned about through his wife, whose father was a captain in Brandt’s district, about serving in one of three calls. Brandt was judged too young and inexperienced to accept those calls yet. However, with one call still vacant the following winter, Dietrichson approached Brandt again. He accepted and was ordained.



He arrived in Muskego in September, and almost immediately attended a meeting of every Norwegian pastor in America at the time, who had come to Koshkonong for the occasion of the baptism of A.C. Prues’ first daughter. At the meeting the other pastors advised Brandt to postpone his work at Rock

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<sup>19</sup> Larry Onsager, “Herman Amberg Preus” at *Roots Web*, accessed April 6, 2024 at [sites.rootsweb.com/~wijuneau/HAPreus.html](https://sites.rootsweb.com/~wijuneau/HAPreus.html)

<sup>20</sup> Cited in P. Lauritz Larsen, Tr. by G. A. R. Gullixson, “Jacob Aal Otteson: A Biography from the Norwegian,” Pg. 9



River and Pine Lake, because these congregations were small and could continue to be served for a couple of years by Rev. Stub from Muskego. But west of the Mississippi and to the north were large settlements entirely without pastoral service. Since Brandt was “disengaged,” they felt he was the obvious man to undertake missionary work.<sup>21</sup>

After traveling down the Wisconsin River, and then missing the ferry to cross the Mississippi, he found a Frenchman who rowed him across. The man advised him to follow the valley westward until he found people – “It should not take me long, he thought.”<sup>22</sup>

“With my knapsack on my back, I set off along the wagon trail up the valley...Not a house nor a human was to be seen. I walked until the stars came out. Finally I heard a dog barking and then stumbled on a doghouse where an American family lived, and there I spent the night. Fortunately, I met a Norwegian man from Paint Creek, and he directed me to follow the valley a ways further, until I came to the prairie.”<sup>23</sup>



Image: Brandt with his stick and knapsack heading to Iowa in 1851, illustration by Linka Preus (pg. 332)

Brandt drove with another American to the Eastern part of the Norway Settlement, near St. Olaf, IA. There he made his first ministerial sick-visit with a lady, giving her the sacrament. Brandt carried bread and wine with him on all his travels. The next day he conducted services in Paint Creek in a log house. Then he headed to Clermont to conduct services, and in the evening was taken to a nearby home to baptize a newborn boy. The following day, Brandt went to the Stavanger Settlement, southeast of Calmar. When he arrived, a “meeting” was already in progress led by a lay preacher sent by the American Bible Society. After the meeting, Brandt recalled something characteristic of many lay preachers:

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<sup>21</sup> Nils Brandt, “Rev. Nils Brandt’s Reminiscences From the Years 1851-1855”

<sup>22</sup> Brandt, Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Brandt, Ibid.

“We spent the night together and he cross-examined me on my relationship with [Christiania University professor] Wexels.<sup>24</sup> When I announced that I knew Wexels to be a pious Christian and that I could not condemn him in everything, he threw suspicion on me as a “Wexelianer.”<sup>25</sup>

At the service the following Sunday in Washington Prairie, some people noticed the man and some of his friends stood outside at a window and made critical remarks. The following winter an unnamed friend sent Brandt a copy of a Bible Society’s paper which told the story of a man (the lay preacher) who had labored with great blessing and was so highly regarded by the people that when he left a place, they followed him with tears. “But then there came a pastor from Norway...who sought to destroy the Lord’s work, ‘because he had to leave with shame.’”<sup>26</sup>

In a little over two weeks of his missionary trip, Brandt had conducted services at Paint Creek, Clermont, Stavanger, Calmar, Washington Prairie, performed the wedding of his sister’s oldest daughter, (whose fiance ran the ferry he had missed), conducted services again at Paint Creek, Coon Prairie, and finally in Galena, IL.

While the settings were primitive, the services were conducted still reverently and in order. At Calmar, Brandt wrote that he was permitted to spend the night in a half-finished framehouse loft covered only by a buffalo robe. The next morning he used the family’s “kitchen table,” a flower barrel with a kneading board, as his pulpit.

Along the way in his travels, Brandt recalled that he had spent another night searching for a woman who went missing in the woods after a service whom they feared might get lost and die in the cold,<sup>27</sup> and narrowly missed a party of Indians who were shooting.

After Brandt returned to Luther Valley to Clausen and G. Dietrichson. Clausen went with Brandt to Rock Prairie to try to get him released from his call so that he could continue the work of organizing churches west of the Mississippi. When they arrived on a Sunday morning, Brandt recalled, thinking “I had never seen such a disagreeable looking place anywhere in America.”



Image: The Rock Creek parsonage, near Ixonia, WI.  
Illustration by Linka Preus (pg. 331)

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<sup>24</sup> Wilhelm Andreas Wexels was catechist at Vår Frelsens Kirke (Our Saviour’s Church), Christiania (1818), becoming residing curate in 1846; he was also appointed preacher to the University of Christiania, no doubt where Brandt came to know him as a catechist. Wexels also published a commentary on the New Testament, *Forklaring over det Nye Testamentses Skrifter* (1837-54), and a volume of 30 sermons, *Tredive Praedikener* (1855).

<sup>25</sup> Brandt, Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Brandt, Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> The next morning it was discovered she had found her way to a home of a settler that night and was safe.

It was now the first Sunday in Advent. Clausen was to preach, but Brandt was to conduct the liturgy. A meeting of the congregation was held after the service to determine whether or not he should be released from his call. A vote was taken, and it was unanimously decided to refuse the release. Brandt was told the reasons later, which perhaps might sound familiar to some young pastors today:

“I had no family, I was small and easy to feed, could manage with the small salary they had promised, and besides, as one of them expressed it, I had chanted so ‘morally’ – so they ought to keep me. So the matter was decided.”<sup>28</sup>

The work of ministering to the various settlements in Iowa was still vacant. In the meantime, Clausen continued to make trips to Iowa, eventually moving to Iowa in 1853 to the colony he founded, organizing First Lutheran Church in St. Ansgar.

### ***Ulrik Vilhelm Koren***

The initial work of Clausen and Brandt in Northeastern Iowa was taken up by a young and newly married Ulrik Vilhelm Koren. Koren became the first pastor to settle west of the Mississippi, beginning his ministry on Christmas Day, 1853 at the Little Iowa Settlement and immediately thrust into a busy life. *A Biography* of Koren from the 1951 ELS Clergy Journal records the first month in the parish:



Christmas Day the service was held in the home of Thorgrim Busness, a neighbor of Egge... This was Koren's third sermon in his career so far. The Second Christmas Day he was to preach six or seven miles west of there. It didn't occur to him to use the same sermon, so spent most of the night again writing a new sermon. New Year's Day he was to preach thirty miles east of there--at Paint Creek. There he was well received and the people wanted him to make his home there. The next sermon was on Epiphany, also at Busness' home, and the following Sunday twelve to fourteen miles west of there at Hans Aakres (near Ridgeway). Then there were all kinds of ministeria. Fourteen services and meetings were conducted by him in January in the four-county parish.<sup>29</sup>

Wherever Koren preached, he would often use the common red immigrant chest as both altar and pulpit.

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<sup>28</sup> Brandt, *Ibid.* The “moral” of the story: if you want your ideal parish, chant poorly.

<sup>29</sup> H.A. Preus, “ELS Clergy Journal,” (June 1951), cited from *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 2 (Summer 1997), pg. 6. <https://www.els-history.org/download/oak-leaves/oak-leaves-1-2.pdf>



After only three months, right after Easter, Koren got sick with “bilious fever”<sup>30</sup> perhaps from over-exertion.<sup>31</sup> Koren had to take four weeks off of preaching from Cantate Sunday to Pentecost, and the next three weeks preached only once at each of the three Little Iowa locations. Claus Clausen filled in for him on Rogate Sunday, with the note “*Bededdag*” or “Bed day” written in his journal.

It is interesting to note that his journal, which contains fabulously detailed records of his services, is organized not by calendar date, but by church festivals and Sundays. Although the *Biography* above notes that using the same sermon for two different congregations didn’t occur to him, it seems that is simply the kind of preacher Koren was. Although getting around to some places in his preaching circuit only happened every three, four, five, or six weeks, and he initially preached no more than three times per week, still, he wrote new sermons based on the church calendar. For instance, he preached Palm Sunday sermon at the Norway congregation; Maundy Thursday and Good Friday respectively in Painted Creek; and then preached an Easter sermon on the First, Second, and Third Days of Easter at the Little Iowa Settlement.

“But Koren must have a new sermon for every service. He recalled what Pontoppidan had said in a pastoral letter about warmed-over food for the people. So he wanted to give them the best possible. At first he wrote his sermons in full; but later under the increasing load of work, he had to limit it to outlines. He had no respect for the pastor who was ready to ‘spiel off’ a sermon on a moment’s notice.”<sup>32</sup>

Koren’s call specified three divisions: “Little Iowa,” “Painted Creek,” and “Turkey River.” In his call, not only was Koren pledged to preach God’s Word as set forth in the Lutheran Confessions, but he was also charged to use the Norwegian Ritual every third week among each of the three divisions of the parish.

Koren was able to accomplish this target among the congregations in the Little Iowa settlement, which was where he lived. He averaged about every fourth Sunday in Painted Creek. But in the southernmost region, Turkey River, he preached only about once every six weeks. In reality, the parish was much more complicated than three stations, and it was ever-growing.

“It was not an easy matter to find out where his parishioners lived. It was a month later that he heard of some living at ‘Whiskey Grove’ near what was later called Calmar. The land was new, so there were hardly any landmarks to go by. But when the land was surveyed Koren got some maps and marked in the townships and sections where his parishioners were located, using all kinds of letters and numerals as keys to locations.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Modern diagnosis would include a wide range of things under the label bilious fever.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. H.A. Preus, “ELS Clergy Journal,” (June 1951), cited from *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 3 (Autumn 1997), pg. 10. <https://www.els-history.org/download/oak-leaves/oak-leaves-1-3.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Ibid., pg. 10.

<sup>33</sup> *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 2, Ibid., pg. 6.

“The parish included Decorah, Madison township, Lincoln township (near Ridgeway), Calmar, Stavanger (Ossian), Washington Prairie, Glenwood township, West and East Painted Creek, Yaegre, Lansing on the Mississippi River, Norway, Marion, and Clermont. A little later Little Turkey [Saude] and Crane Creek [Jerico] (near Lawler) were added. This parish was then spread over six counties. Still later a mission field in southern Minnesota was added.”<sup>34</sup>

East to West, Koren’s parish covered nearly 70 miles, and North to South, was nearly 90 miles. It’s hard to fathom how he could have possibly covered the area.

Just as Deitrichson had Koshkonong choose Deacons on a geographic basis to oversee and assist him, Koren did the same at the Little Iowa congregation only three weeks after his arrival. Having the humility to recognize his youth and inexperience, Koren also found an older man, Thron Lomen,<sup>35</sup> in the congregation whom he asked to correct him “if he saw anything amiss.” Like a good Elder, “Lomen promised, and did so.”<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, Koren also requested that his people keep an eye on each other, and make him aware of any who were unworthy of receiving the Lord’s Supper. The *Biography* commented, “He didn’t want all the responsibility himself.”<sup>37</sup> Absence as well from Divine Services was readily noticed.

At the same meeting where Deacons were chosen, Koren had the congregation divide Little Iowa into school districts and sections for the Deacons to oversee. Another commission was elected to select locations for churches or places to hold services.<sup>38</sup>

Presumably, it was these men who figured out the logistics for where services were held in the various locations of the parish, and took care of informing those in the community. Koren’s wife Elisabeth would end up fulfilling the duty of a modern secretary, when besides starching her husband’s clerical collar to be ready for the next service, she would write to the various districts to tell them of her husband’s intentions to hold services. She writes of a misstep on her part of failing to write to the people at East Prairie, which led to a happy occurrence of services at home at East Prairie being switched around and her husband staying home for a little while longer:

“[Wednesday, July 12] Announcements had been made for five o’clock services at the schoolhouse...I wish Vilhelm could hold services oftener in this way – I mean in the middle of the week, when people are coming from their work; it is so pleasant. The evening, too, was very beautiful – quiet and peaceful. When the service was over, we visited a while before going

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<sup>34</sup> *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 2, Ibid., pg. 6.

<sup>35</sup> This man, it turns out, was the husband of the lady Brandt had gone looking for that one night in the woods.

<sup>36</sup> *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Ibid., pg. 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Ibid., pg. 10.

<sup>38</sup> *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Ibid., pg. 10.

home. According to arrangements, Vilhelm was to have been at East Prairie today, but I had not sent them direct word, as indeed I should have done; and everyone said they undoubtedly had not heard about it. So Vilhelm stayed home today. This was much better, for he certainly was in need of at least one day of rest.”<sup>39</sup>

This was a common theme for the wives of these early circuit pastors. Elisabeth Koren’s diary entries read like a widow of war, longing for her husband to come home. In fact, the reason we know so much about Koren today is because she saw so little of him. She wrote so much in her diary about him, and admitted that when her husband was home, her diary did not fare very well. We can paint a fairly clear picture of what life was like for this circuit riding couple, and just how many days Vilhelm was on the road.

“*Sunday, June 18.* Oh, that Vilhelm were home again! I expect him this evening, to be sure, and should be ashamed of my lack of patience, but I long so much for his return. I believe evening will never come. It has been a long day: I have been so alone, so completely alone, and have not seen a soul since they left (the Skaarlias are away). At times it became so quiet that I had to go outside just to hear the twitter of the birds. The interminable croaking of the frogs intensifies rather than diminishes the loneliness. It is beautiful outside, but so quiet and monotonous, green upon green, almost no color variations. Oh, for a mountain with a view of forest and sea! No, now I fear I am really becoming melancholy.”<sup>40</sup>

“*Wednesday, July 12.* God be praised, he had had no ill effects of the trip, strenuous as it must have been, having preached, as he had done, every other day and then the journey itself, and on top of that being wringing wet with sweat several times a day. Now he was home, and happy was he and happy was I.”<sup>41</sup>

“*Thursday, July 13.* Vilhelm has set out again [for Paint Creek], but this time I hope he will be back sooner, God be praised; and so I shall be cheerful and think of how pleasant it will be when he returns. He left this forenoon. It is already Thursday. How swiftly these days slipped away! But Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday were really good days. Now I have the memory of them to cheer me, and the hope of several similar days next week when Vilhelm returns. When Vilhelm is home, everything is different and everything is good. I shall always try, as far as possible, to be well occupied while he is away and to have no work that presses while he is home. And the evening hours after we have lit the light, how entirely different they are when Vilhelm is here and can talk to me and read to me as he did yesterday from the beautiful German hymns! God grant that when we are fairly settled in our own home this winter, he may

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<sup>39</sup> Elisabeth Koren, “Diary of Elisabeth Koren,” pg. 268.

<sup>40</sup> Elisabeth Koren, *Ibid.*, pg. 243.

<sup>41</sup> Elisabeth Koren, *Ibid.*, pg. 267.

often have a free hour and be able to spend an evening with me. What a cozy time we shall have!”<sup>42</sup>

“*[Tuesday, July 18]* Tomorrow Vilhelm will come, God be praised! But I really feel sorry for him, it is so warm; and he is probably either driving or conducting services. It is a strange kind of heat, too.”<sup>43</sup>

“*Wednesday, July 19.* No, Vilhelm apparently is not coming. I have been on the lookout, gazing in every direction all afternoon, but in vain.

The very next entry in her diary dated *Friday, July 21*, begins, “Well, now he has already gone again – Vilhelm, of course.” He had come home late Wednesday night only to leave Friday morning. Life on the road was tolling on Vilhelm too, who desired to be home. Elisabeth retells the story:

I had already thought of going to bed, when Vige [their dog] began to bark. So I went out, but could neither see nor hear anything. I stood and stared toward the gate, hoping I might distinguish him and his horse by the lightning flashes, but was utterly unable to do so. But as Vige continued to bark, I felt there must be someone. I went inside for a light, therefore, and had scarcely more than got out the door before Vilhelm stood before me, wet through and through, with beads of sweat on his face. I was very happy but quite frightened, too, when I saw how he looked and heard how, missing the road in the darkness, he had got into a thicket where the wet bushes struck him across the shoulders (how easily he could have walked straight into the brook!), and how at last he had come through down by the springhouse. His horse and wagon he had left at Aarthun's, because it was too dark to drive.

That day he had been at East Prairie, where he conducted services. The rain made him very late; moreover, the creeks, even those which are dry ordinarily, were so swollen that the water at times streamed into the wagon and poured out behind like a waterfall. And thus he had journeyed, mostly for my sake, my dear, kind Vilhelm. He had refused to wait until the following day, as his friends everywhere had begged him to. But he must promise me not to be so considerate another time; I would much rather be anxious.”<sup>44</sup>

The weather, the landscape, the lack of a social life, the recollection of family and friends back home in Norway all wore on Elisabeth, especially in her first year during her many quiet and lonely hours without her husband and before any children. However, she found ways to cope that were productive and not merely idle or escapist.

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<sup>42</sup> Elisabeth Koren, *Ibid.*, pg. 269.

<sup>43</sup> Elisabeth Koren, *Ibid.*, pg. 276.

<sup>44</sup> Elisabeth Koren, *Ibid.*, pg. 278.



More than once, Elisabeth records that when her husband was away she read sermons (especially on Sundays). On a certain Sunday [*Sunday, July 16*] at the very hour Vilhelm was conducting services in Paint Creek, Elisabeth read a sermon, read poetry, and wrote in her diary:

“As I was reading by the open door this morning with a copy of Claudius in my hand, I kept thinking how completely changed my mood is today from that of former Sundays when Vilhelm has been away, and how on the whole there has been a difference since he left this time. There is no outward occasion for it; the weather was just as pleasant before, the surroundings are the same, there is the same loneliness. The change must be in me. Several times in the past I have been quite disheartened, could not keep my mind on what I read, could not feel myself drawn to read a religious work or edified by it, found it so lonesome here, tried by walks and other devices to cheer myself, but usually in vain, and longed above all for Vilhelm. I do that now, too; I long just as much, just as fervently for him, but in a different and much better way. I feel so calm, so happy, so content – as if the same peace which rests over nature today, rests over me, too.”<sup>45</sup>

*Thursday, July 27.* “I am so often upset when he leaves; and this time it seemed as if I could not let him go – and then I was disgusted because he could see my distress. That made him unhappy, and he may perhaps think of it often and be uneasy on my account. God grant that he may not, that he may believe my mood will soon pass away! I shall really be in good spirits. I will take great pains – I will be cheerful and think of how pleasant it will be when he returns...I wish Vilhelm could know that I am all right – quite all right.”<sup>46</sup>

“*[Wednesday, August 2]* He is traveling entirely too much now...yet...his homecomings were never so pleasant before we moved here; we were never alone before.”<sup>47</sup>



Image: Linka Preus' illustration of Koren's three-seated buggy (which really had space for six). In the foreground are C.F.W. Walther, Cramer, and Hermann, whom Koren gave rides to. (pg. 352)

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<sup>45</sup> Elisabeth Koren, *Ibid.*, pg. 273.

<sup>46</sup> Elisabeth Koren, *Ibid.*, pg. 285-286.

<sup>47</sup> Elisabeth Koren, *Ibid.*, pg. 293

To make his trips between the congregations in the winter, Koren had a single-horse rudimentary sleigh – two hickory poles on which sat a little platform and box without springs, all held together by wooden pegs. The harness was made of bedding material.

“When Koren came riding in these contraptions and put up at a tavern and asked the hostler to grease the wagon, people would look at him as if he were a tramp and would like to tell him to grease up his own poor excuse for a wagon.”<sup>48</sup>

When traveling outside of the Little Iowa settlement, Koren would always spend the night at the home of some parishioners.<sup>49</sup> He learned to know his people well.

“They might have to tell him to climb the ladder upstairs where a bed was made up for him. There Koren might see the starlight through the cracks in the roof, or wake up with snow piled on his covers. Or the sheet, if any, might be frozen stiff from his breath.”<sup>50</sup>

Koren recognized that these people, meek and tired though they were from the primitive conditions, yet their conditions also made them hungry and thirsty for righteousness:

“They were a different type of people from those he had associated with in the cities of Norway. These farmers were the cream of the earth as far as character was concerned. Koren never found any better. They were the genuine article, and showed more sincerity, godliness, industry, willingness to make sacrifices, greater honesty, and were less demanding than he had ever observed in the supposedly upper classes in Norway.”<sup>51</sup>

*The Biography* records Koren’s reflections apparently towards the end of his life,

“Some people stress the hardships experienced by the pioneer pastors. But Koren thinks that pastors on the mission fields today may experience more hardships and unpleasantness, because the pioneer pastors were received with such genuine joy and confidence, which seems more rare today.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Ibid., pg. 9.

<sup>49</sup> At least once in Paint Creek Koren stayed in the cabin of Thomas Anderson. We have Elisabeth Koren to thank for this detail, for she wrote worrying about her husband possibly being out in the storm, hoping he was safe in Anderson’s cabin. Ibid., pg. 273.

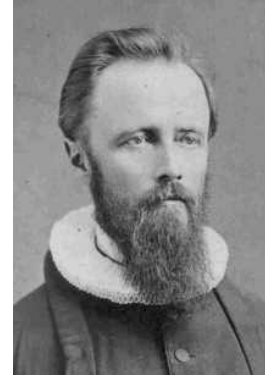
<sup>50</sup> *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Ibid., pg. 9.

<sup>51</sup> *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Ibid., pg. 9.

<sup>52</sup> *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 3, Ibid., pg. 10.

### *Bernt Julius Muus*

While Koren's parish extended into Southeast Minnesota, in 1859, another man, the Rev. Bernt Julius Muus arrived to attend a field that essentially encompassed everything west of the Minnesota River. "It is said that Muus served in an area as large as Denmark which eventually became 150 congregations."<sup>53</sup>



At least during one period, Muus' parish extended far: from New London (southwest of St. Cloud) to Grogan (by St. James, southwest of Mankato) –about 110 miles north to south, all the way over to Red Wing on the Mississippi – around 100 miles. To make the loop today via car would take seven and a half hours.

In his first year, Muus traveled a total of 6,900 miles by ox team, horse, or on foot. During his 40 year career, he served at least 23 congregations, baptized 9,377 people, married 1,268, and buried 3,909.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Craig Ferkenstand, pdf sent to the author, March 4, 2024.

<sup>54</sup> Ericson, Kathryn. "Triple Jeopardy: The Muus vs. Muus Case in Three Forums." *Minnesota History* 50, no. 8 (1987), pg. 299–300. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20179066>.

## Congregations Served by Muus

Holden, Kenyon, Goodhue Co. (1859-99)  
 + Holden Academy (1869-74), served as headmaster; later moved to Northfield and became St. Olaf College.  
 Vang, Dennison, Goodhue Co. (Valders) (1859-79)  
 Dale, Kenyon, Goodhue Co. (1863-80)  
 Urland, Cannon Falls, Goodhue Co. (1868-79)  
 Land, Zumbrota, Goodhue Co. (1868)  
 Minneola, Wanamingo, Goodhue Co. (1868)  
 Gol, Kenyon, Goodhue Co. (1863-80)  
 Hoff, Goodhue, Goodhue Co. (1860-68)  
 Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church, Red Wing, Goodhue Co. (1864-68)\*  
 Haegre, Skyberg, Goodhue Co. (1878-92)  
 Valley Grove, Nerstrand, Rice Co. (1862-67)\*  
 Fox Lake, Faribault, Rice Co. (1864-66)  
 Christiania, Lakeville, Dakota Co. (1857-66)\*\*  
 The Norwegian Lutheran Church, Nicollet [Later divided into St. Peter; Swan Lake; and Norwegian Grove; etc.] (1860-63)\*\*  
 North Waseca, Waseca, Waseca Co. (1860-64)\*\*  
 Le Sueur River, New Richland, Waseca Co. (1863-66)  
 Crow River, Belgrade, Kandiyohi Co. (1861-62)  
 Norway Lake, New London, Kandiyohi Co. (1865)\*\*\*  
 Ness, Meeker Co. (1861-62)  
 Rosendale, Grogan, Watonwan Co. (1863-71)\*\*\*\*  
 Bergen, Plato, McLeod Co. (1860-63)  
 Jackson Lake, Delevan, Faribault Co. (1862)\*\*\*\*  
 (in addition to 17 more parochial schools)

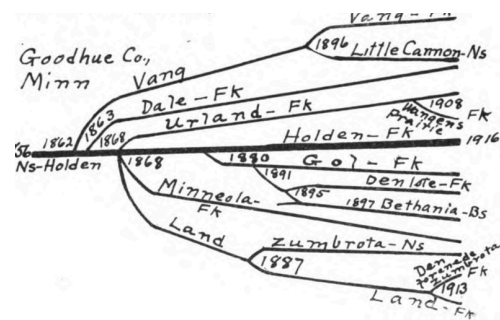
Muus founded all of these congregations, with the exception of those noted.

\*served prior to organization by Laur. Larsen.

\*\* organized by Laur. Larsen.

\*\*\* organized a year later under A. Torgeson

\*\*\*\* organized in 1859 by A.E. Friedrichsen



A diagram of churches which were daughtered or split from the Holden congregation. The Election Controversy complicated the matter of churches, sometimes doubling the number of ministers needed to serve an area.

Muus is a prime example of *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*. Even on the frontier, where work is pleatious, preachers are scarce, and difficulties arise, and sin abounds, the occasion does not give license for new measures.

Muus attempted to keep up appearances that his pastoral services were being conducted in the Confessional Lutheran style, even as Haugean substance was creeping in. Like others influenced by pietism, Muus tended to place doctrine and practice on a secondary level to a person's inner qualities or intentions. He was tempted greatly to set the growth of the kingdom of God at odds with the hallowing of God's name through pure teaching.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Cf. this entry in Muus' diary: "I continued to read my mail. No matter what papers I pick up, church papers or newspapers, wherever one turns his eyes, there is the miserable (uselige) church strife. Oh, that our Norwegian Lutheran church people might be agreed in holding fast to the simple, true and sound 'barnelærdom' (Luther's Small Catechism and, at that time, Pontoppidan's Explanation of the Catechism), and unitedly use their power in the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God, instead of, as now, tear one another to pieces. God grant it!", *Ibid.*, pg. 125.



One lay preacher recalled visiting a farmhouse where the newly installed Muus was preaching: “Rev. Muus asked, ‘Who is the man who goes from house to house in the congregation selling books?’ ‘That must be I,’ I volunteered. ‘Well, what kind of books are you selling?’ ‘It is books published by the American Tract Society, whose agent I am.’ I mentioned Pilgrim’s Progress, books by Baxert, Holazes and others. ‘They are all good books,’ remarked Muus. ‘When you call on me I shall buy some of your books for distribution in the congregation.’” The following evening Muus allowed the lay preacher to preach in the home of a neighbor.<sup>56</sup>

Rev. Østen Hanson, a self-called lay preacher of the Hauge Synod was Muus’ nearest pastoral neighbor for 37 years, living less than two miles apart. They became such close friends that during Hanson’s last sickness, Muus was a daily caller at his bedside. Once, when Muus was about to make a trip to Norway, he asked Hanson to serve his congregation in Holden. Interestingly, Hanson seemed to have more reservations than Muus. While Hanson was pondering what to do, Muus met Hanson’s wife and questioned her about what he was going to do.

“Oh,” she remarked, “would it not be foolish for him to wear a clerical gown?” “Holden church does not demand that,” answered Muus. “They might just as well use the gown in Hauge’s Synod, too.”<sup>57</sup>

On another occasion visiting at the Hanson’s home, Muus had apparently stated to Mrs. Hanson that “he had not much against religious meetings [conventicles] in the homes in the afternoon, but he was opposed to evening meetings.”<sup>58</sup>

As it was for Koren’s wife Elisabeth, Muus’ wife Oline similarly found herself home alone. Unlike the Korens whose absence seemed to make them more fond of each other, for Oline and Bernt, their relationship was deeply strained. The sins and curses of Adam and Eve plagued Bernt and Oline. Muus worked many hours, and because of that, only rarely fulfilled the work and vocation of husband. Then, when he was home, Muus, used to having to quickly organize men, was apparently very controlling of his wife. Oline, who had learned to live without him, found this difficult.

A divorce resulted in 1879, which was made very public because of the incredible rarity of such a thing happening in 19th century Minnesota, let alone between a pastor and his wife.

Oline testified that she had wanted to travel back to Norway for the sake of her health and to visit family, something most of the other Norwegian pastors’ families had been able to do, and even Bernt

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<sup>56</sup> N. Ila, N. Ilan Rønning “50 years in America” The Friend Publishing Company, Minneapolis, MN (1940), pg. 128. <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/lhbum/08330/08330.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> Rønning, Ibid., pg. 125.

<sup>58</sup> Rønning, Ibid., pg. 120.

himself had done. Apparently, Bernt told her that “both I and other wives who demanded such unreasonable things should be sent to [the insane asylum at] St. Peter.”<sup>59</sup>

Oline also felt that Bernt treated her unfairly in comparison to other members. He advised her to not go to communion on a number of occasions. Once, because she did not appear at the church as *Indgangskone* (refers to the Churching of a Mother) after the birth of a child.<sup>60</sup> She also claimed he denied her communion because she “forgot to empty water containers in the bedrooms at night and they froze and cracked.”<sup>61</sup>

Whatever happened, the two years prior to the divorce were incredibly stressful. Muus was at the height of his career with direct charge of seven congregations and 18 parochial schools. At the same time, the Election Controversy was raging, intense debates were held over the merits of parochial schools among Norwegian settlers, and Muus was on the front lines of founding St. Olaf College. Then, on the day that Bernt was in Northfield dedicating St. Olaf’s Old Main, their 12-year-old son died of typhus.<sup>62</sup>

After the divorce, a meeting was held in February of 1880 to discuss whether Bernt should continue as pastor. An estimated crowd of 1,000 people attended the meeting. A subsequent meeting was held to discuss whether Oline should be excommunicated for disobedience to her husband. The congregation voted, with only one dissenting vote, to have Bernt continue as pastor until the matter could be resolved. For Oline’s case, the congregation took no action, and the matter dragged on. Nothing further was reported until 1882. “By that time,” Kathryn Ericson sadly wrote in an essay on the case, “Oline was living in Minneapolis and it was reported that her connection with the church had ceased. It seems likely that the termination of her membership was by mutual consent.”<sup>63</sup>

While Rev. Muus was very successful numerically, his conduct on the frontier serves as a contrast to the conduct by men like Clausen, Brandt, Koren, and others.

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<sup>59</sup> Ericson, Kathryn, *Ibid.*, pg. 301.

<sup>60</sup> The churching of mothers, a rite of a new mother coming to church for the first time after the birth of a child, after the Presentation of Jesus’ in the Temple at 40 days old, was nearly universally expected for Norwegian mothers. U. V. Koren in his journal mentions the Churching of Mothers as one of his main pastoral services.

<sup>61</sup> Ericson, Kathryn, *Ibid.*, pg. 301.

<sup>62</sup> Ericson, Kathryn, *Ibid.*, pg. 302.

<sup>63</sup> Ericson, Kathryn, *Ibid.*, pg. 302.

## Thomas Johnsen

One final man, whose picture is illustrated on a stained-glass window at Norseland, is worth mentioning. Thomas Johnsen, installed by Pastor Muss on August 6, 1843, succeeded Muus in both area covered as well as conduct. If the circuits covered by the aforementioned pastors were impressive, Johnsen outdoes them all.

It has been said that when Koren's original eight-county parish was eventually divided, it took twenty pastors to serve the various congregations. In contrast, Johnsen traveled a seventeen-county territory, from Emmet County, Iowa to Douglas County, Minnesota – a distance of 165 miles from north-to-south and 90 miles from east-to-west, which eventually took fifty pastors to cover.<sup>64</sup>

Rev. Craig Ferkenstad has done extensive research into Johnsen already, including detailing all of the parishes covered by him:

“Thomas Johnsen was no itinerant preacher who simply went from place-to-place. In addition to the five congregations, which called him, he was expected to serve the growing number of Norwegian settlers in western Minnesota.”<sup>65</sup>

The same month he was installed, he traveled to view the vast extent of his mission field to the south. Ten weeks later he set out again to visit congregations to the north. Ferkenstad tracked Johnsen's figure-eight circuit:

It must have been [an] exhausting experience for the young pastor...as he journeyed from the southernmost to the northernmost reaches of a parish which, at that time, was a distance of 120 miles in length. After completing the initial visit to the five calling congregations, and conducting a service on November 1 at Nicollet, he again left to visit the congregations to the north. He returned home in time for a service on November 26 and then, following a service on December 6, left to revisit the congregations to the south returning home just in time for a service on December 20. He then conducted Christmas Day services both at Norseland and at Swan Lake, on December 27 he conducted a service at the Northern Grove, and December 29 in St. Peter.<sup>66</sup>

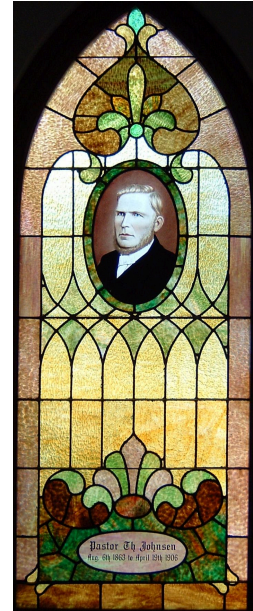
One story told about Johnsen gives an example of the dedication Rev. Johnsen showed towards his members:

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<sup>64</sup> Craig A. Ferkenstad, “Farewell My Jonathan: A Biography of Pastor Thomas Johnsen, Pioneer Pastor, Norseland Lutheran Church: 1863-1906”, Norseland Lutheran Parsonage, St. Peter, Minnesota. (Second Edition, 2013), pg. 22.

<sup>65</sup> Craig A. Ferkenstad, “Farewell My Jonathan,” Ibid., pg. 8.

<sup>66</sup> Craig Ferkenstad, “Farewell My Jonathan,” Ibid., pg. 17.



“It was in 1873 while preaching at the Bergen church in McLeod county that the terrible blizzard occurred in January. It raged for days and hundreds of people and thousands of animals perished. The storm delayed him and he found that he could not reach his family on the day they were expecting him by riding horseback through the huge drifts where the horse floundered helplessly. He left his mount at New Auburn and struck out afoot in the bitter cold, walking 40 miles to quiet the anxiety of his people. He walked to Swan Lake, 14 miles, many bitterly cold days so that his flock there would not be disappointed when time for services arrived.”<sup>67</sup>

In 1870, Pres. H. A. Preus made a synodical visitation to the parish. He asked the congregation the (always reassuring) question of whether or not they were satisfied with their pastor. They responded with the desire that “in the future the Pastor would make more visits to families of the Congregation.” (Oofta) To which Preus asked pastor Johnsen whether the Worship Services were well attended. “Johnsen said that he could not state that they were poorly attended but that many Services were considerably neglected.... [He] reminded them:] By neglect of Divine Services one is not edified and in addition it sets a bad example for the young and others....”<sup>68</sup>

As his field continued to grow, his focus narrowed. “Pastor Johnsen’s concern was for the souls which he served...[and] It was the invisible Church which was the center of his activity.”<sup>69</sup> Whereas other circuit riders had a hand in the construction of church buildings, including Koren who selected the highest hills around for his church’s locations, Johnsen only saw the construction of five buildings in his entire circuit. The rest he left to his successors.

Even after his successors came and the Norseland parish was paired down into only three congregations there was not a Divine Service every Sunday for each congregation. Ferkenstad:

“The pattern became two services/month at Norseland, one service/month at Norwegian Grove, and one service/month at Swan Lake. Norseland would have Christmas Day and Norwegian Grove or Swan Lake would have Second Christmas Day. I’m not sure when the third congregation had the service. Likely it was when the pastor came.”<sup>70</sup>

In his congregations, when he or another trusted minister was not there, there was no Divine Service. The congregation still gathered, but the Sunday School teacher was to “read the text” and conduct

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<sup>67</sup> Norseland Lutheran Church, 100th Anniversary (St. Peter, Minnesota, 1958), page 10, cited from Craig Ferkenstad, *Ibid.*, pg. 21.

<sup>68</sup> Craig Ferkenstad, “Farewell My Jonathan,” *Ibid.*, pg. 28.

<sup>69</sup> Craig Ferkenstad, “Farewell My Jonathan,” *Ibid.*, pg. 26.

<sup>70</sup> Craig Ferkenstad, pdf sent to the author, March 4, 2024.



Sunday School.<sup>71</sup> He also introduced the practice of Private Confession prior to receiving the Sacrament of the Altar by referring to this as “the oldest custom in the Lutheran Church.”<sup>72</sup>

Johnsen knew where to focus his energy and what likewise should be the focus of his members’ energies. What served their souls was not his efforts, but rather the Word and Sacraments.

### III. Application

#### *Something, Not Nothing*

As pastors once again become more scarce, it might be tempting to find solutions with the maxim that *something* is better than *nothing*. The same phrase is commonly heard today when individuals who were at one point raised and confirmed in the Lutheran faith go off to become a part of (usually) some sort of non-denominational church likely because they are bigger and have more families. Usually this is spoken by parents attempting to console themselves or calm the pastor. And while the maxim is true, in a sense, the ‘direction of travel’ is crucial to call the truth *good*. If Orion was to set out on a journey in a junk heap of a vehicle, not likely to get ten miles, and pulled out of the driveway heading the wrong direction, something is *not* better than nothing. The goodness of such ‘something’ should be measured in relation to the starting point. For an unbeliever in the throes of Satan to wind up being brought to faith in a non-denominational church, then, yes, something is better than nothing. We also pray that such a person continues to read Scripture and comes to a more full understanding. But that does not mean we start imitating whatever the *something* is that non-denominational churches have.

Similarly, while many of us may have weak delinquent members who largely go without the Divine Service for three, four, or even seven years, and we try to bear with them in patience and also with firmness, to think of creating a congregation *solely* of individuals who have gone without the Divine Service for the same amount of time would be a difficult burden to say the least. And yet, that is what we see as Clausen, Brandt, Koren, Johnsen, and others traveled around to organize congregations.

However, the impression is given that these families *did* have other opportunities to have the Word of God preached to them by other lay preachers or revivalistic traveling ministers, but they chose not to align themselves with them, or even hear them repeatedly, instead holding steadfast to their upbringing in the Lutheran faith. While their catechesis could be (and was) described as “impoverished,” they still had some level of catechetical knowledge. In other words, they did not “settle” for something simply because it was “better than nothing,” but they recognized that waiting for a preacher who would organize a congregation “in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments be rightly administered,” (AC VII), was a lot like keeping yourself chaste waiting for the marriage.

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<sup>71</sup> Craig Ferkenstad, “Farewell My Jonathan,” *Ibid.*, pg. 29.

<sup>72</sup> Norseland Lutheran Church, 4 April 1866, cited in Craig Ferkenstad, *ibid.*, pg. 28.

In the cases of these Lutheran families, although they may not have been able to have a preacher for a long time, what they had already *was* something, better in fact, than what the local pietist-sponsored conventicle could provide.

My parish's "circuit" includes the local minimum security prison, where I have an audience of around 14 to 20 protestants of some stripe or another. I am only permitted by the regulations there to do Bible Studies with them (no Services), and only once a month at that, but my content is the Catechism. I regularly tell or remind them that the primary texts of the Catechism were called the *Enchiridion*, a word which derives from the dagger that ancient soldiers would carry on them at all times. They would not carry a big sword, but they could carry the dagger and be ready at a moment's notice for any attack. I try to have these inmates memorize the Catechism. Some do.

So the *Enchiridion* should be for all of our members. They might not have the full sword all the time, nor the general with them to direct them. But with the *Enchiridion*, they have enough to defend themselves and their families until such time that they are permitted to rejoin the larger army and partake of the full weapons of that army.

We need to think carefully about the trend to use conventicles *within* congregations today, dividing the congregation into similar demographic or interest groups, and inventing all sorts of titles for new 'lay ministry positions.' We want people in Scripture after all, and something is better than nothing, right?

If only we already had an organic group of people who shared interests, had schedules that aligned with one another, lived near each other, shared meals together, and who could also study God's Word together...

As confessional Lutherans, we recognize that the family is the basic foundation not only of society, but also of the church. Let us embrace this truth, and encourage men especially to fulfill their vocations of husbands and fathers – *hausvaters* as our Catechism calls them. Don't simply go join a group outside your home, even if there is no pastor nearby to serve you weekly. We need to drill into our people that they do *not* have nothing. They have the *Enchiridion*. And they have their family. Many of the early congregations that circuit riders traveled miles to get to, after all, were sometimes made up of only two families. How meek. But, "The meek shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5).

God will indeed fill the earth with the Gospel, even if it takes some time for preachers to catch up. God's kingdom certainly comes. See your home as your first and most important "small group." It is *the* kingdom. *Your* kingdom. It was out of the family that "Men began to call on the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26).

The same goes for pastors. For those who are married, our call to our congregations is second to our call to be a husband to our wives. Case in point in different ways are Elisabeth Koren and Oline Muus. After all, the position of pastor is a good work, says Paul to Timothy, then going on to listing "the

husband of one wife” second only to the quality of being blameless or above reproach (1 Tim. 3:1-2), the two going hand-in-hand. If we are going to be the husband to one wife, we need to be sure we do not deprive her, except by her consent, for our wives have authority over our bodies (1 Cor. 7:4-5). Love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. You need not kill yourself working to save the church. Christ already did that.

Because Christ already did that, this will affect our conduct, what we do, and what we prioritize in the time we are permitted in our parishes.

### *Conduct & The Lord's Supper*

To our modern way of doing things, the way services were conducted in these 19th century circuit riding visits would seem like they were deficient in order with their necessary informality. However, informality does not have to mean lacking order or reverence. Elisabeth Koren describes a service held at the home of a Rognald Belle, Sunday, July 23, 1854:

“It was a warm drive to his place; but we managed to get safely through all the creeks, which were still high. “What a crowd there is today!” said Vilhelm, as we came closer to the house, where people were camped outside on every available stump and piece of timber...When we came inside, every place was taken. A chair was immediately brought for me, however, and I did not have such a bad seat – just opposite the open window – until the communicants had to come forward. But then, with many others, I had to give up my place and go outside. It was out of the question to think of getting in again and without a doubt it was best to stay outside anyway, for although it was hot, there was fresh air instead of the stifling atmosphere within. There were many more outside than in; they crowded about the windows and doors in order to hear.”<sup>73</sup>

Sounds like disorder. But look closer. Her mention of “the communicants” coming forward implies that not all who were eligible communed. Koren’s journal records relatively small groups of people communing each service, in comparison to the large families likely gathered.

From the records of the various Synod pastors, it’s fairly clear that whenever a pastor was present among a congregation to “conduct services” (always in the plural), the Lord’s Supper was among those *services* conducted. The *Service* of the Sacrament was ordinary, and celebrated “as often” as believers gathered to remember the death of Jesus, even though perhaps not all came forward each time.

Even C.L. Clausen, though formal congregations did not exist and would not exist for some time, everywhere he visited, he conducted the Lord’s Supper. Johnsen instituted private absolution before communion of his members, which likely limited the number of communications, but each gathering

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<sup>73</sup> Elisabeth Koren, “Diary of Elisabeth Koren,” pg. 280-281.

was a *Divine Service*. The service was not about him, or even him being there, but about the Word and Sacraments which he was ordained (ordered) to proclaim and distribute.

Restoring our terminology might help our members with their theology, and help us move forward in a time where long periods of time may lapse before ordained ministers can be present.

A “Divine Service” is a service where the Lord’s Supper is *offered*, though not necessarily *distributed*. If a Pastor is present for a Sunday service (or weekday equivalent), he should celebrate the *Divine Service*.

It would do well for us to get away from the early 20th century innovation of communion being offered only on “communion Sundays.” It is true this is practiced, in part, because the early circuit rider had a schedule for when he visited. But that’s exactly *why* he came there. He was there to conduct “*services*,” to administer the Sacraments. Today however in many places, the Sacraments have become tied more closely to arbitrary dates than to the man called to administer them.

Consider: If the pastor goes on vacation over a communion Sunday, what happens? Does a layperson without the ordination (order) to be a steward of them administer them simply because “it’s that day of the month”? Does a nearby pastor unfamiliar with the parish administer them simply to keep the calendar?

The Sacraments were made for man, not man for the Sacraments. I will suggest that collectively every church in the Synod should be working towards celebrating the *Divine Service* and *offering* communion every Sunday. If the pastor called to administer the sacraments goes on vacation or is gone a few Sundays, those are the “non-communion Sundays.” The congregation will get along just fine (and perhaps easier) with a layman to “read the text.”

Catechetical, or prayer offices, such as Prime and Matins are perfect for these situations, not only do the rubrics note laymen can lead them, but the purpose of these are not necessarily to remember the death and resurrection of our Lord by eating and drinking His body and blood, but for teaching/catechizing or making petitions to the Lord of the Church. And simply having the text of Scripture be read without commentary is not a bad practice for hearers to learn how to simply *listen* to Scripture.

Receiving the Lord Jesus in our *mouths* in addition to in our *ears* is a pretty good reason for us to celebrate the Lord’s Supper often like this. Besides, our *immediate* need is not a lack of preachers to be in places, but a lack of being where the preacher is. A “faithful member” by today’s statistical norms is someone who attends services once every 2nd or 3rd week. A communion schedule of every other Sunday means the member may unfortunately go quite some time without the Lord’s Supper. In our thanksgiving collect we pray that God, through the salutary (saving) means of His body and blood, “would strengthen us through them in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another.” If we want our congregations to grow together to be able to withstand worldly pressures and pastoral

absences, offering the Sacrament often is not a bad place to start. It also catechizes our members that the Lord's Supper is not of less importance than the Word, that having pastors is actually indispensable, and they should seek out places where the Sacraments are administered in purity, again not simply to settle for the local community church that only has a preacher and his message.

### ***The Church is Incarnational, not Virtual***

The administration of the Lord's Supper brings up another point that we need to think about with vast circuits.

Digital streaming technology makes it incredibly easy to tune in over long distances to a live event going on in a completely different part of the world. Yet, as the pandemic taught us, it's "just not the same." Similar comments were heard yesterday at the eclipse: "You had to be there!" If the 19th century circuit riders had Zoom, would they have actually used it? I'm not convinced they would have. The church, called the *ekklesia*, or "the gathering" for a reason, is something that is impossible to partake in virtually. You have to be there. Certainly much teaching and a certain level of catechesis can be done virtually, meetings can (and in some cases perhaps should) be done virtually.

But the invitation to "worship with us virtually" is an oxymoron. Virtual church cannot be *ekklesia*. Yes, of course the Word is still proclaimed, no one is doubting that, but again the "direction of travel" makes a difference. Studies have revealed what screens do to us psychologically: we literally tune in to the screen and tune out of the real world. When the service becomes something to sit and tune into, and becomes about the preacher and his message, we are less likely to be bodily engaged. That might be very attractive in the short-term, but what a detriment this would be to evangelism as a whole.

Our religion is incarnational. Jesus became incarnate to dwell with us *physically*. He said "do this" while actually using his body to give us His body. After He bodily rose from the dead, Jesus stood among His disciples to *breathe* on them, ordaining and instituting Holy Absolution. Then, immediately before ascending bodily to fill all things according to His human nature, He directed us to "go into all the world" to baptize with water in connection with the Word. Even much of Catechesis is physical. Soldiers do not prepare for battle simply by learning the theory of war, but by "going through the motions," with their swords or *enchiridia*. Engaging our bodies and physically going through the motions in Divine Services or Catechesis is essential.

Now, can a congregation of Christians gather in one location while a sermon is live streamed in? Perhaps, but would the group be better served by resurrecting the office of *Klokker* and appointing him to "read the text" incarnationally to the gathered people while they work together, building each other



up by singing Matins or another Daily Office to one another? We all would admit that there is something beautiful when lay people take up the arms of the Gospel, singing it to one another.<sup>74</sup>

Perhaps a Daily Office could be followed or accompanied by virtual catechesis, live streamed from wherever the 21st century circuit rider is located, and intentionally focused on catechesis or training men how to be catechists to their families. In a week or two, or even three or four, when the ordained minister is present again, the entire congregation gathers to be “strengthened and preserved to life everlasting” through the incarnational eating and drinking of His Body and Blood. “Do this as often” as the congregation gathers to celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ.

#### **IV. Conclusion: The One Who Knows and Does**

We have only scratched the surface of the vast history of circuit riders. But it is clear that our situation is in many ways similar to the nineteenth century. For us, the words of H.A.Preus who lectured in Norway in 1867 in an attempt to recruit more pastors, are worth hearing today:

When the Synod was founded in 1853, seven pastors served about forty congregations...Our synodical association now numbers thirty-eight pastors with about 200 congregations [roughly 5 churches per pastor]...[B. J.] Muus and [Thomas] Johnson in northwest Minnesota, for example-actually serve as many as thirteen to sixteen congregations. These congregations can be up to 300 English...miles from each other; they can be reached only by horse and wagon...Congregations in Kansas and Dakota have up until now been served by a pastor who lives in Chicago, 600 English miles away. The congregations in Texas, like the congregation in New York, are more than 1,000 English miles from Chicago and are visited by one of our pastors during the winter....Often two of them are large enough to require the undivided attention and service of one pastor. Add to this the considerable work necessary on behalf of the entire church body devolving on a small number of the clergy. If you add all this up, it is easy to see that the Norwegian pastors in America are greatly overburdened with work... [Settlers may] have been there two, three, four, sometimes as many as seven years without a visit from a Norwegian Lutheran pastor. It may be that someone from one of the sects has visited them, but they do not wish to abandon the church in which they have been raised. In all these years they have not partaken of the Lord's Supper and many of them have children, some of them large, who are not baptized. With no one to preach to them and thus to teach, advise, and admonish them, a good many of our people have already grown indifferent to the Word of God and the church. Many of our young people who have grown up without proper Christian instruction are leading a life of idle dissipation. Indeed it can be heartrending to hear of it and even worse to see spiritual conditions in these places. They truly are sheep without a shepherd.

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<sup>74</sup> By the way, meditate on the Canticles in the various daily offices sometime: they each are songs from the Gospels of responses to hearing the simple Word of the Gospel proclaimed by a messenger through whom “God has visited and redeemed His people.”

It makes one thank God that there is someone left who knows how bad things are and calls for help.”<sup>75</sup>

The one who knows how bad things are and pleads to the Father on our behalf, is that not Jesus?

Many things are certainly also different today than in days past. Hospitality culture is one of these things. We find it odd and intrusive when someone comes to our home. Yet, the early circuit riders found the old Norwegian proverb to be true, “Where there is heart room, there is house room.”<sup>76</sup> When Jesus sent out the 72 without knapsacks as sheep among wolves, they stayed in many homes, but we infer that they were also not welcomed perhaps in even more. Still, they lacked nothing (Cf. Luke 10:1-12). Now, Jesus says, “he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one” (Luke 22:36).

So, take up your stick, your sack, and your *enchiridion*, not like Orion, but as a Circuit Rider, and journey with Jesus. He is the Shepherd of scattered sheep who lays down *His* life for them, not ours:

<sup>11</sup>For this is what the Lord God says: *I myself* will seek the welfare of my flock and examine them carefully. <sup>12</sup>As a shepherd examines his flock when he is with his sheep that have been scattered, so *I will* examine my flock and rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. <sup>13</sup>*I will* bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land. *I will* shepherd them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys, and in all the settlements of the land. <sup>14</sup>*I will* pasture them in good pasture, and their grazing land will be on the high mountains of Israel. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and they will pasture on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. <sup>15</sup>*I myself will shepherd* my flock, and *I myself will let them lie down*, declares the Lord God. <sup>16</sup>*I will seek* the lost. *I will bring back* the strays. *I will bind up* the injured. *I will strengthen* the weak. *I will destroy* the fat and the strong, and *I will shepherd them* in justice.<sup>77</sup>

Jesus has already made the journey for us and told us all about it. That’s no bad thing.

*Soli Deo Gloria.*

Rev. Jeff Hendrix,  
Week of Quasimodogeniti,  
Parish of Faith Lutheran, Oregon, WI.

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<sup>75</sup> H.A. Preus, ed. & tr. by Todd Nichol, “Vivacious Daughter: Seven Lectures on the Religious Situation Among Norwegians in America,” *The Norwegian-American Historical Association* (1990), pg. 42-44.

<sup>76</sup> Bolette Marie (Stub) Bergh, “Memoirs of Bolette Marie (Stub) Bergh,” in *Oak Leaves*, Volume 1, Issue 4 (Winter 1998), pg. 7-8. <https://www.els-history.org/download/oak-leaves/oak-leaves-1-4.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> The Old Testament Lesson for this coming Sunday, *Misericordias Domini*, Ezekiel 34:11-16 (EHV), emphasis added.

Appendix A. Koren's Travels 1853-1854. ~Festival Portion (Christmas to Trinity 2)

	Little Iowa			Painted Creek		Turkey River		Northern Iowa		Southern MN		
Week of — or Festival Day	Little Iowa (East Wash. Prairie)	Little Iowa Sett. (West)	Little Iowa (NW)	Painted Creek I  (East PC?)	Painted Creek II  (West PC?)	Clermo nt	Norwa y	Sand Prairie  (North. Iowa I?)	Medors Grove  (North. Iowa II?)	Spring Grove  (South. MN I?)	South. MN II?	<i>Other Acts perfor med this week</i>
Christmas	<i>1st Day of Christmas Sunday</i> <i>At home of Thorgrim Busnaes (East, Near Egge Cabin)</i>  Divine Service 3 churchings of mothers 4 baptisms of children	<i>2nd Day of Christmas Monday</i> <i>At home of Embret Haugen (7 mi. West)</i>  Divine Service										
New Year's Day (Sunday)	<i>Friday Epiphany</i>  Divine Service 3 churchings 3 baptisms of children 7 communicants			<i>Sunday</i> <i>At Sivert Wold</i>  Divine Service 1 churching 1 baptism of a child								
Epiphany 1			<i>Sunday</i> <i>At home of Hans Aakre (West, near Ridgeway)</i>  Divine Service 4 churchings 3 baptisms of children 2 weddings 13 communic ants									<i>Thursd ay Little Iowa congreg ational meeting</i>  <i>Saturd ay 1 weddin g</i>
Epiphany 2	<i>Sunday</i> <i>At John Andr. Axdabl</i>					<i>Tuesday</i> Divine Service	<i>Thursda y</i> Divine					<i>Wednes day 3</i>

	Divine Service 1 baptism of child affirmed 1 churching					5 baptisms of children 7 churchings	Service 2 baptisms of children 2 churchings					weddings, 2 baptisms of children, 1 consecration of a grave  <i>Saturday</i> Congregation Meeting at Paint Creek
<b>Epiphany 3</b>	<i>Friday</i> <i>At home of Thron Lommen</i>  Divine Service	<i>Thursday</i> <i>At home of Hans Lovbraaten</i>  Divine Service		<b>Sunday</b> <i>At home of Sivert Vold</i>  Divine Service 4 baptisms of children 2 churchings	<i>Monday</i> <i>At home of Helge Naes</i>  Divine Service 2 baptisms of children 2 churchings 1 wedding							
<b>Epiphany 4</b>		<b>Sunday</b> <i>At land of Lars Thorsteinsen</i>  4 churchings 4 baptisms 16 comm.	<i>Wednesday</i> <i>At home of Ole Myrane</i>  2 churchings 2 baptisms of children 12 comm.									<i>Thursday</i> 5 consecration of graves at Little Iowa
<b>Epiphany 5</b> <i>(no Sunday service anywhere)</i>							<i>Monday</i>  Divine Service 5 baptisms 5 churchings 12 comm.	<i>Wednesday</i>  Divine Service 1 affirmation 1 churching 2 weddings 6 comm.	<i>Thursday</i>  Divine Service 12 baptisms 13 churchings 13 comm.			<i>Friday</i> 1 wedding & 1 baptism at Spring Grove Prairie
<b>Septuagesimi</b>	<b>Sunday</b>											

<b>ma</b>	<i>At home of Rognald Belle</i>											
	Divine Service 1 baptism 1 churching 13 comm.											
<b>Sexagesima</b>		<b>Sunday</b> <i>At land of Lars Thorsteinsen</i>										<i>Monday</i> Congregation meeting at Little Iowa  <i>Tuesday</i> 1 wedding & 1 baptism at Little Iowa  <i>Thursday</i> Little Iowa Meeting to divide into districts
		Divine Service										
<b>Shrovetide</b>				<i>Monday</i> <i>At Thomas Andersen</i>	<b>Sunday</b> <i>At Helge Naes</i>		<i>Friday</i> Divine Service Cng. mtg. 1 baptism 1 churching					<i>Tuesday</i> Meeting of Paint Creek
				Divine Service	Divine Service							
<b>Lent 1</b>						<b>Sunday</b> Divine Service 5 baptisms 6 churchings Cong. mtg. 22 comm.						<i>Friday</i> Cong. mtg. of Little Iowa



<b>Lent 2</b>	<b>Sunday</b> <i>At Rognald Belle</i>  Divine Service 1 affirmation ?? comm.	<i>Monday</i> <i>At Ola Baekken</i>  Divine Service 1 affirmation 1 churching	<i>Tuesday</i> <i>At Erik Gudbrands en Egge</i>  Divine Service 2 baptisms 2 churchings									<i>Thursday</i> Meeting of joint leg. Comm. of Little Iowa  <i>Friday</i> Confirms for Little Iowa 14 present
<b>Lent 3</b>				<b>Sunday</b> <i>At Arne Barsgrind</i> Divine Service 4 baptisms 4 churchings 2 weddings 12 comm.								<i>Monday</i> Confirms for Painted Creek  <i>Friday</i> Confirms for Little Iowa
<b>Midlent Sunday</b>			<b>Sunday</b> <i>At Erik G. Egge</i>  Divine Service 1 baptism 1 wedding Parsonage Committee									<i>Friday</i> Confirms for Little Iowa
<b>Annunciation to Mary [Lent 5]</b>	<b>Sunday</b> <i>At Rognald Belle</i>  Divine Service					<i>Thursday</i>  Divine Service 3 churchings 2 baptisms 33 comm.						<i>Friday</i> Confirms at Clermont  <i>Saturday</i> Consecration of a grave

Palm Sunday				<b>Maundy Thursday</b> <i>At Helgenaes</i>  Divine Service 13 comm	<b>Good Friday</b> <i>At Sivert Wold</i>  Divine Service 7 baptisms 12 comm.		<b>Palm Sunday</b>  Divine Service 2 baptisms 2 churchings 19 comm.					<i>Wednesday</i> Confirms at Painted Creek
Easter Sunday	<b>1st Day of Easter Sunday</b> <i>At Rognald Belle</i>  Divine Service 3 baptisms	<b>2nd Day of Easter</b> <i>Monday At Ola Baekken</i>  Divine Service 2 baptisms 18 comm.	<b>3rd Day of Easter</b> <i>Tuesday At Erik G. Egge</i>  Divine Service 4 baptisms 20 comm.									<i>Thursday</i> Confirms for Little Iowa
<b>1st Sunday after Easter</b>								<i>Sunday At Erik Slaen</i>  Divine Service 4 baptisms 1 wedding 28 comm.	<i>Monday At Thorgeir Luraas</i>  Divine Service 12 baptisms 27 comm.	<i>Tuesday At Gudbrand Ruud</i>  Divine Service 2 baptisms 2 weddings 36 comm. 1 cons. of a grave	<i>Thur. At Elling Soelberg</i>  Divine Service 4 baptisms 24 comm. 1 cons. of a grave	
<b>2nd Sunday after Easter</b>		<b>Sunday</b> <i>At Ola Baekken</i>  Divine Service 1 baptism 1 churching										<i>Monday</i> Conf. for Little Iowa  <i>Sat.</i> Conf. for Painted Creek I
<b>3rd Sunday after Easter</b>				<b>Sunday</b> <i>At Arne Barsgrund</i>  Divine Service								<i>Sun.</i> Conf. for Painted Creek II

				5 baptisms 5 churchings 16 comm.								
*Illness?												
*Illness?												
*Illness? "Beddeddag" Rogation Day	<i>Sunday</i> <i>At Rognald</i> <i>Belle</i>  Divine Service, held by C. Claussen 1 baptism _ comm.											
*Illness? Pente- cost												<i>Sunday</i> 1 weddin g at home
Trinity	<i>Sunday</i> <i>At Rognald</i> <i>Belle</i>  Divine Service 2 baptisms 2 churchings											
1st Sunday after Trinity		<i>Sunday</i> <i>At Ola</i> <i>Baekken</i>  Divine Service 4 baptisms 4 churchings										<i>Friday</i> Confir mands for Little Iowa
2nd Sunday after Trinity			<i>Sunday</i> <i>At Erik G.</i> <i>Egge</i>  Divine Service 23 comm.									