

**Five Generations of Meyers
In the Ministerium of the Wisconsin Synod:
A Video History**

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CH3031 – Sr. Church History
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On Friday, November 27, 2009, during my Thanksgiving break at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, my father Johann Peter Meyer of Mauston, WI and I, his son Jonathan Peter Meyer of Lake Mills, WI, sat down in front of a video camera in my living room and spent an entire day talking about our family. This is the first time that anyone has tried to put together a history of our branch of the Meyer family into a document of some format or another. I chose to document this conversation in video format. I thought it would be nice to have some sort of visual record of two generations (out of five) of Meyers who have served in the full-time ministry in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. There have perhaps been other families who have had five consecutive generations serve within the ministerium of the WELS or its precursors, but as far as I know, there have not been five generations who all held the same last name.

Much of the video is comical; and much is frank and candid. That is simply because that is how our family “ticks.” Nothing is meant to be disrespectful or intentionally irreverent. What it IS supposed to be is the reminiscing of a father and a son...two generations of a family who sincerely has been privileged to have served our God in the public ministry of the gospel. This is our story.

My dad has traced the history of the Meyers to its roots in southern and northern Germany. The Meyers at one time were hereditary musicians and *kapellmeisters* for the court of Hanover. That generational occupation ended when a Meyer married the daughter of a Rabbi in a “shotgun-style” wedding. However, for their years of service the Meyers were given a land

grant and the name Meyer took on its meaning implying “land owners of some standing.” The Meyers became dairy farmers.

Johann Peter Meyer (1840-1884)

In order to avoid thirty years compulsory military service for the king of Prussia in the late 19th Century, one Johann Meyer had his sons study for the ministry and foreign missionary service. The Meyers studied at the Hermannsburg Mission Society which produced a number of future ministers who would one day serve what would become the Wisconsin Synod. The eldest of the Meyer boys who trained at Hermannsburg, Johann, was sent to the United States in 1871 and eventually ended up serving congregations in the Caledonia Township west of the Appleton/Neenah-Menasha in the village of Zittau area and another Caledonia Township west of Racine, WI. Johann served in only two locations in the United States: both in Wisconsin and both named Caledonia Township.

Johann left behind one Anna Meta Behnken (b. 1842) whom he eventually sent for, met her at the dock on Lake Michigan and married her. In his correspondence to Meta, he asked her to be sure to include in her sewing the ability to sew a suit. This would save him the \$1 to \$1.50 which a new suit would cost. Johann and Meta were married in 1872 and had three sons and four daughters. In order to provide for the educational needs of her sons, Meta moved to Watertown to work and pay for the Prep education costs for her sons. She died in 1924. The daughters all died rather early on. Their three sons were named Johann, Herman, and Heinrich. Herman became a pastor and professor but died rather young. Heinrich was a parochial school teacher educated at Northwestern College in Watertown, WI and served in Milwaukee and Franklin, WI. It was customary (in the Meyer family for sure) that the eldest son was named after the father and followed in his father’s professional footsteps. For the purposes of our

branch of the Meyer line, we will now focus on the eldest son of Johann and Meta, Johann Peter.

Johann Peter Meyer (1873-1964)

Johann was born in Caledonia Township (the one southwest of the Fox Cities area!) on February 27, 1873. His early education was in parochial schools in both Caledonia Townships. His college preparatory education was at Northwestern Preparatory School in Watertown and he went on to study at Northwestern College on the same campus from which he graduated in 1893. Upon his graduation from the Lutheran Seminary in Wauwatosa, WI in 1896, he was called to serve St. Stephen in Beaver Dam and St. John Fox Lake, WI as a dual parish. Later, he was approached by a rural congregation in the Township of Trenton. Their background was mixed and Reformed. He instructed the entire congregation before the congregation was officially made a part of the Wisconsin Synod. He served in Beaver Dam and surrounding areas until 1902

In 1902, he was called to serve as “Inspector” and professor at Northwestern College replacing Johann Koehler in that position. This position is what might be called “Dean” today and involved the disciplining of students. There seems to have been an issue between him and his assistant Hans Moussa. The issue was not one which was personal in nature; it was simply different styles of discipline and interaction with students. Johann resigned from the position. It was thought best to allow both men to serve elsewhere. Johann was called in 1903 to New Ulm, MN to serve at Dr. Martin Luther College where he served until 1915. This was the first of two different times-of-service at Dr. Martin Luther College. The second came toward the end World War I. The current president of DMLC became rather outspoken in his sentiments against U.S. involvement in the war. His pro-German stance made him unable to serve in his capacity as president. Johann was called back in 1918 to serve as his replacement until 1920. During his time, he was able to “cool things down” in an evangelical way, in such a way that DMLC did not

have a “black eye” for long. Between his times-of-service in New Ulm, Johann served at St. Paul in Oconomowoc, WI from 1915 until 1918. St. Paul congregation still exists as a member of the LC-MS. St. Matthew of Oconomowoc is the body which broke away from St. Paul at the break-up of the Synodical Conference.

Johann’s younger brother Herman, who had been serving as a professor at the Lutheran Seminary in Wauwatosa died. Johann was called to replace him in 1920. He served as professor in most areas of study at the Seminary from its location in Wauwatosa through its move to Thiensville, WI in 1929. He also served as the seminary’s president from 1937-1953. Johann felt that it was good for “new blood” to serve in the office of president of the seminary and so he stepped down in 1953 but continued to serve as professor until his death in 1964 at the age of 91. During his years at the Seminary, he also served as the unofficial assistant pastor at St. Marcus, Milwaukee for 36 years.

On November 26, 1903, Johann married Lydia Reinke. The couple had four children: 3 sons Johann (Hans), Arnold, and Henry and one daughter Lydia. Johann was known as “Nixie” by students, family, and friends. This nickname comes from the Latin *nix* meaning “snow.” Johann had a full head of white hair from a rather young age until his death. Johann was very active until the very end of his life in November, 1964. He conducted his classes on Friday, Oct. 23, 1964 and insisted on preaching on Sunday, the 25th. After teaching his classes, he entered the hospital on Monday, Oct. 26th as the result of being struck by a car on the Seminary campus. The Lord called him home 15 days later on November 10th. Prior to entering the hospital in 1964, he had never been in the hospital as a patient...only as a visiting pastor. His memory lives on in many ways. His picture is on every graduating class for over 45 years. His Dogmatics notes which he prepared in German and Latin are still used in some form in English

Arnold Meyer (1907-1977)

The second of Johann and Lydia's sons Arnold was born in 1907. He attended parochial elementary schools in New Ulm and Oconomowoc and attended Lutheran High School in Milwaukee. He emergency-taught in Algoma, WI for a year during his high school career. He attended Dr. Martin Luther College to prepare to serve as a teacher in the Wisconsin Synod. His first call was to a one-room school at Woodlawn on the west side of Milwaukee. He accepted the call to serve at St. Peter/St. Stephen on what was then the south side of Milwaukee until 1953. From Milwaukee, he moved to Brillion, WI where he served at Trinity as teacher and principal for nine years.

While he was serving in Milwaukee he began to consider switching to the pastoral ministry. He took Hebrew and Greek languages at Marquette University and his other academic seminary studies off-sight under the guidance of Professor Gerald Hoenecke. He entered the pastoral ministry in 1962 via a colloquy. He served as parish pastor in Appleton and rural Peshtigo until his death in 1977. He also put his education background to work teaching on and off at Fox Valley Lutheran High School.

While at DMLC as a student, he met Mildred Albrecht, the daughter of a lumber baron from northern Minnesota. Mildred taught in Baraboo out of DMLC for a number of years before marrying Arnold. In the later years of her life after Arnold's death in 1977, Mildred became a regular contributor to the *Northwestern Lutheran*. Mildred eventually retired to Jefferson, WI where she and Arnold had purchased a home for his retirement. There she taught piano lessons and was active at St. John congregation. They had four children, 3 sons Arnold, Johann, and Mark and a daughter Mildred. Of the three, only one son, Johann, went on to prepare for the pastoral ministry. He is my dad.

Johann Peter Meyer (b. 1937)

Johann Peter was born on February 13, 1937 in Milwaukee while Arnold was serving at Woodlawn. He attended grade school and was confirmed at St. Peter by Rev. Paul Pieper, son of August Pieper. He attended high school at Northwestern Preparatory School in Watertown from where he graduated in 1959. He went on to attend Northwestern College. Johann admits he never “really” wanted to enter the ministry. It was just something he just did. He does claim that he still doesn’t know what he wants to do when he grows up. After graduation from Northwestern College in 1959, he was pretty convinced he didn’t want to go on to the Seminary in Mequon. Instead, he took a year to attend school in Germany at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Oberursel and the University in Magdeburg to major in Church History. He received his PhD. in Church History in 1960. Upon completion of his studies in Germany he weighed his options. After considering a position offered to him to work as a translator at the United Nations or to pursue a teaching career, he finally decided to apply to the Seminary in Mequon where he began his studies in the fall of 1960. Despite have achieved many credits for his studies in Germany, Pres. Carl Lawrenz suggested he take the full, three-year course load.

During his senior year at Northwestern Preparatory, he had met Annette Hoge while he was working at Bethesda Lutheran Home in Watertown. Annette was working as a music therapist at Bethesda. The two were married in August of 1961 at Grace, Milwaukee before Johann’s second year at the Seminary. Being a member of St. Paul Lutheran in Milwaukee, a member of the ALC, she was instructed and confirmed as an adult by Pastor Huebner at Grace. During their years in Mequon, they made their home in Grafton.

During the summer between his Middler and Senior years he was called to serve as a “summer vicar” at the dual-parishes of Glenham and Mobridge, SD where he regularly preached

in German. German preaching was a major theme throughout his ministry career. After graduating from Seminary in June of 1963 he was assigned as pastor to serve at Grace Lutheran in Eau Claire, MI. Arnold Meyer preached at his installation and Prof. Johann Meyer installed and ordained him. He served in Eau Claire until 1966 when he accepted the call to serve at St. Paul, Hillsboro, WI.

Johann and Annette were thought to be unable to have children, so during their years in Michigan and into Wisconsin they pursued adoption. In November of 1966, they were introduced to a thirteen-month-old child whom they would adopt and name Jonathan. Just a couple months after the adoption, Annette became pregnant and gave birth to their daughter, Kathryn.

In the fall of 1970, Johann accepted the call from the Michigan District Mission Board to begin home-mission work in Georgia. In December, 1970 the family moved to Decatur, GA where a small nucleus of Lutherans wanted to gather to begin a congregation in the Atlanta area. The purpose of this new mission congregation which chose the name Sola Scriptura was to be the mother congregation of daughter congregations which would one day be located throughout the Atlanta metropolitan area. During his years in Atlanta, Sola Scriptura went from meeting in a civic center in Decatur to buying land and building a church building and educational wing. While serving in Decatur, Johann also served congregations in South Carolina, Alabama, and Louisiana. An article from the *Milwaukee Journal* dated April 22, 1972 accounting his early work in Atlanta is included later in the Addenda. Whereas Sola Scriptura is no longer in existence as a congregation, her daughter and granddaughter congregations are alive and well all around the greater Atlanta area.

In February of 1976, the Meyer family moved to Holiday, FL where Johann accepted the

call to serve Peace congregation which had recently become a self-supporting body. He continued to be able to make use of his German language skills conducting German services once-a-month to a group of German refugees from Eastern Europe. This is the place where Johann and Annette lived the longest. He served Peace congregation for 25 years.

The opportunity to consider approaching retirement came in 2001. Johann received the call to serve the dual parishes of St. Paul Mauston and St. Luke, New Lisbon, WI. The call was to serve as visitation pastor for shut-ins and hospitalized members, preaching once or twice a month, and weekly Bible classes. In July of 2001, Johann and Annette moved to Mauston. In his almost nine years there some changes have taken place. The New Lisbon and Mauston congregations ended their relationship as dual-parishes. St. Luke has its own pastor and St. Paul has two full-time pastors serving. Johann continues to serve in his role with St. Paul, but rarely preaches anymore. The part-time call will continue until either the congregation no longer needs his services or his health hinders him from faithfully serving in his responsibilities. Throughout his ministry career, he has served as parish pastor, religion teacher in various Lutheran elementary school, and circuit pastor. At the Synodical level he has served on the Stewardship Board and with the Commission on Inter-Church Relations. To this day, he still wonders, "What am I going to do when I grow up?"

(Since this author finds it more than a little awkward to write about himself, he will now continue to make use of the third-person in reference to himself.)

Jonathan Peter Meyer (b. 1965)

As mentioned before, Johann and Annette have two children. Jonathan was born on October 8, 1965 in West Allis, WI. He was adopted by the couple in November, 1966. From a young age, Jonathan wanted to serve in the ministry, but not at the exclusion of farming, garbage

pick-up, military, and many other occupations which suited his fancy at the time. He attended public grade schools in Decatur, GA and at parochial schools at Bay Pines Lutheran in Seminole, FL and was the first graduate from Peace Lutheran in Holiday, FL. Johann and Annette struggled with the question of what to do with his High School education. It was finally decided to keep him close to home rather than way up north to a Prep School. Since during grade school he considered preparation for the public ministry, he was granted a school district waiver and attended Tarpon Springs High School in Tarpon Springs, FL for two years which offered the Latin language as an elective and Gulf High School in New Port Richey which offered German. After completing high school, he had decided that the ministry would probably not be for him so he enlisted in the United States Navy in the winter of 1982 with the goal of serving in the United States Marine Corps as a combat field-medical. Injury to his legs and feet cut his military career short. After a couple years back in Florida working various part and full-time jobs, he decided to apply to Dr. Martin Luther College to prepare to become a teacher. He began as a freshman in the fall of 1985. After graduation in May of 1989, he was assigned to teach in a one-room school with grades kindergarten through eighth grade at Redeemer, Edna, TX. The school remained open until 1991 when the congregation decided it could no longer afford to operate it.

In July of 1991, Jonathan and his family moved to Fond du Lac, WI where he served as teacher in various upper-grades and Athletic Director/coach. After six years in Fond du Lac, the opportunity to serve in an administrative position came again. He accepted the call to serve as principal, teacher of upper grades, and Minister of Parish Education at East Twin Lutheran School and St. Peter congregation of Mishicot, WI. The idea of serving a congregation outside the walls of a full-time classroom seemed appealing to him. The opportunity to serve in such a way came via a call to serve St. Paul in Lake Mills, WI as Minister of Youth and Family. The

family moved in the summer of 2002. Jonathan still serves there on a part-time basis.

While at DMLC, Jonathan met Faith Biebert of Newburg, WI. The two were married on May 27, 1989. The couple has four children: 2 boys – Caleb (Feb., 1990) and Seth (April, 1991) and 2 girls – Erin (Dec., 1992) and Lydia (July, 1994).

Not long after beginning his service in the teaching ministry, Jonathan began to reconsider serving in the pastoral ministry. After several attempts to start the process of preparing to attend Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, the opportunity came during the fall of 2002. Jonathan was introduced to retired Northwestern College Professor Cyril Spaude. Prof. Spaude agreed to begin studies in the Biblical languages in February, 2003. For the next three-and-a-half years, Jonathan sat at the Prof. Spaude's kitchen table and studied Hebrew and Greek – one-on-one. The studies began as personal growth, but Prof. Spaude suggested the Seminary be approached to see what it would take for academic qualification for entrance. Prof. Paul Wendland was contacted. He was the head of a new program at the Seminary called Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI) which oversees the pre-Seminary education for non-traditional students. The Board of the PSI accepted Jonathan's application and his formal pre-Seminary training began. Jonathan entered Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary as a Junior in the fall of 2006. The production of this history project is a requirement for his Senior Church History class. If the Lord is willing, Jonathan will be assigned into the pastoral ministry after graduation in May of 2010.

The point of this presentation is a brief history of five consecutive generations of Meyers who have served in many varied capacities through the history of the Wisconsin Synod. However a small footnote of sorts should be added here. I am grateful and excited point out that a sixth generation of Meyers has now begun his studies for the ministry. Seth, the younger of the

two sons of Jonathan is currently finishing the first semester of his freshman year at Martin Luther College. He is enrolled in the “pastor track” with a view toward preparing for the pastoral ministry at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Caleb, Jonathan’s oldest son attended Martin Luther College for a year in the teacher track. He is currently enlisted in the Marine Corps and is planning on returning to MLC to prepare for the pastoral ministry.

It should be noted that of the Meyer family, there are actually two branches of the family which have five consecutive generations who have or are serving in the ministry. Professor Meyer’s son, my Great-uncle Henry, has a son and two grandsons who are currently serving.

I can only speak for a couple of generations, but I am confident I would echo generations of Meyers-past. We are humbled and grateful to our Lord for calling us to serve his Church in the public ministry. OFTEN, we wonder why. ALWAYS, we acknowledge it can only be by grace alone!

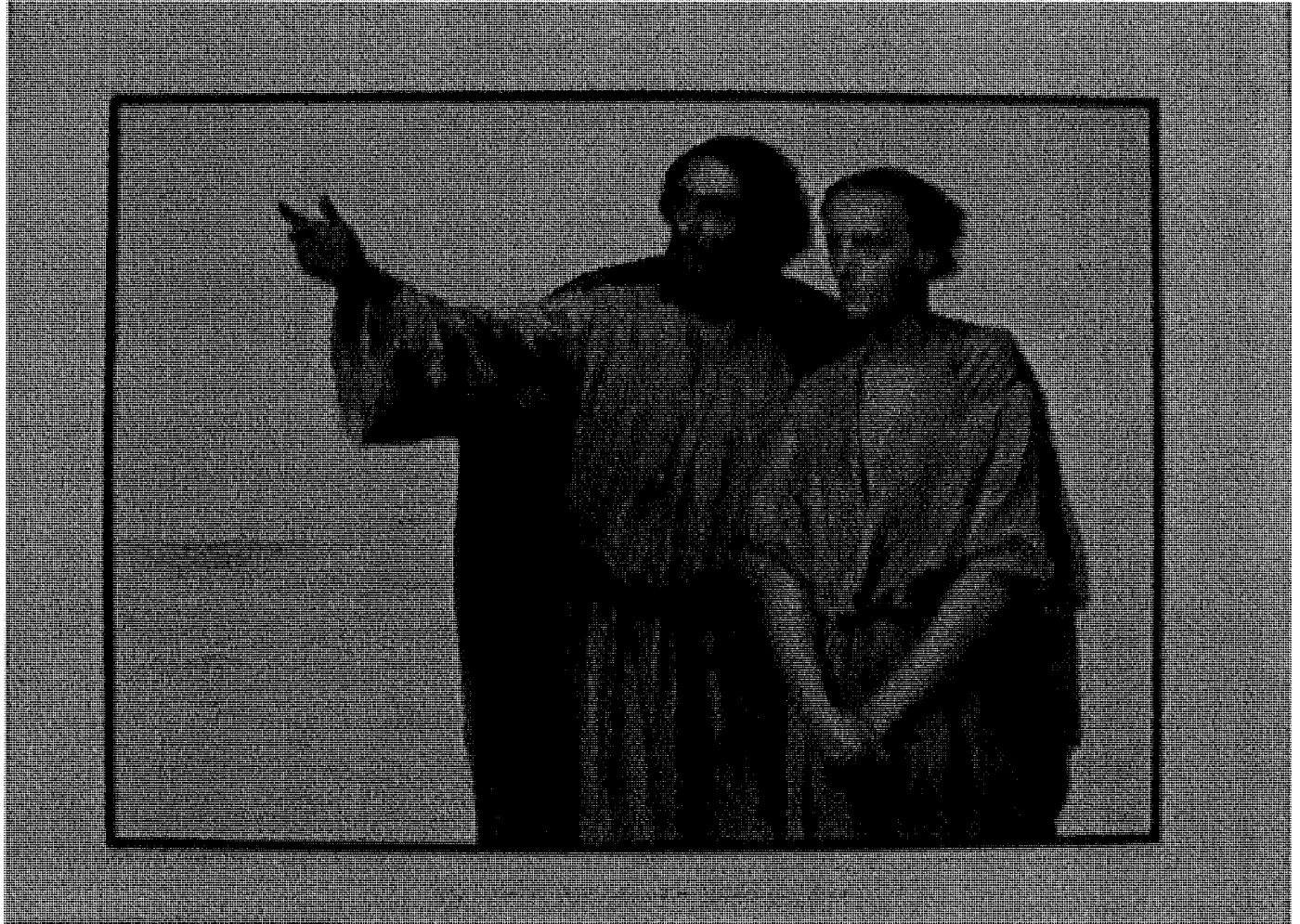
Addenda of Photos



Johann P. Meyer's 1896 graduation photo from the Lutheran Seminary in Wauwatosa, WI

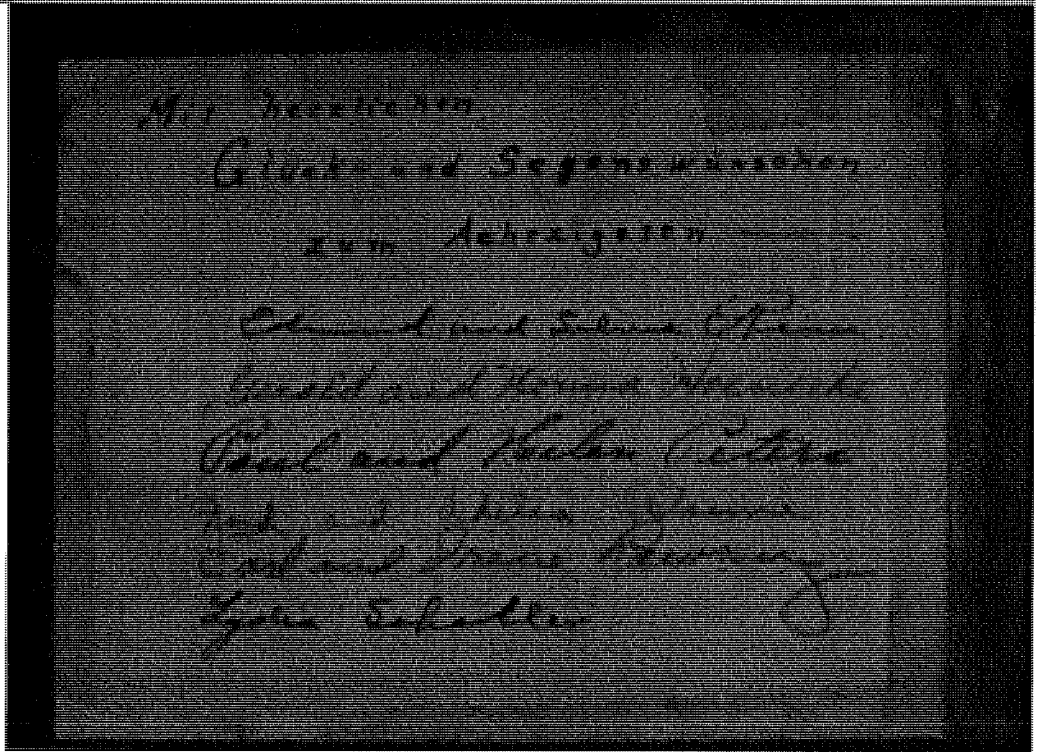
Confirmation photo of Johann's son, Arnold, taken in 1921.

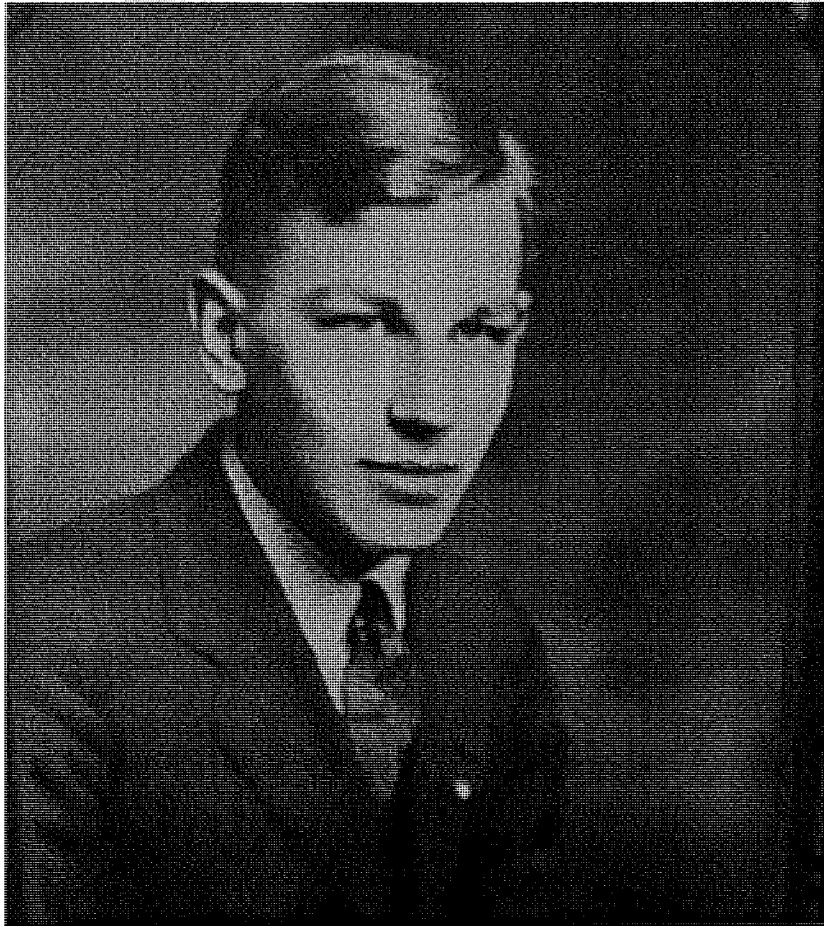




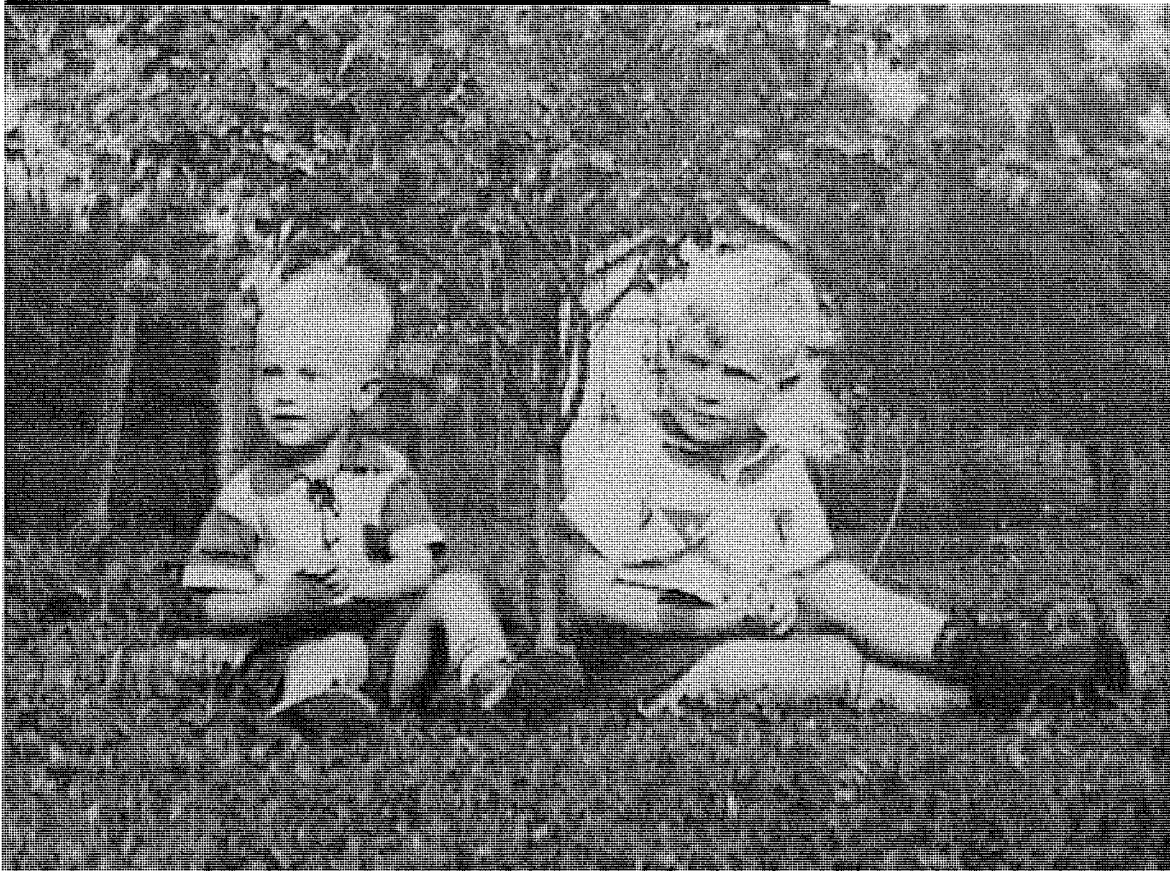
The photo above is of a framed picture depicting Jesus sending out an apostle with the verse from Mark 16:15. This was presented Prof. J. Meyer by his Seminary colleagues on his 80th birthday – February 27, 1953. The signers are pictured to the right and taped to the back of the print.

Notice the bottom signature of Lydia Schaller, widow of the late Prof. Schaller who was killed prior in an automobile accident.





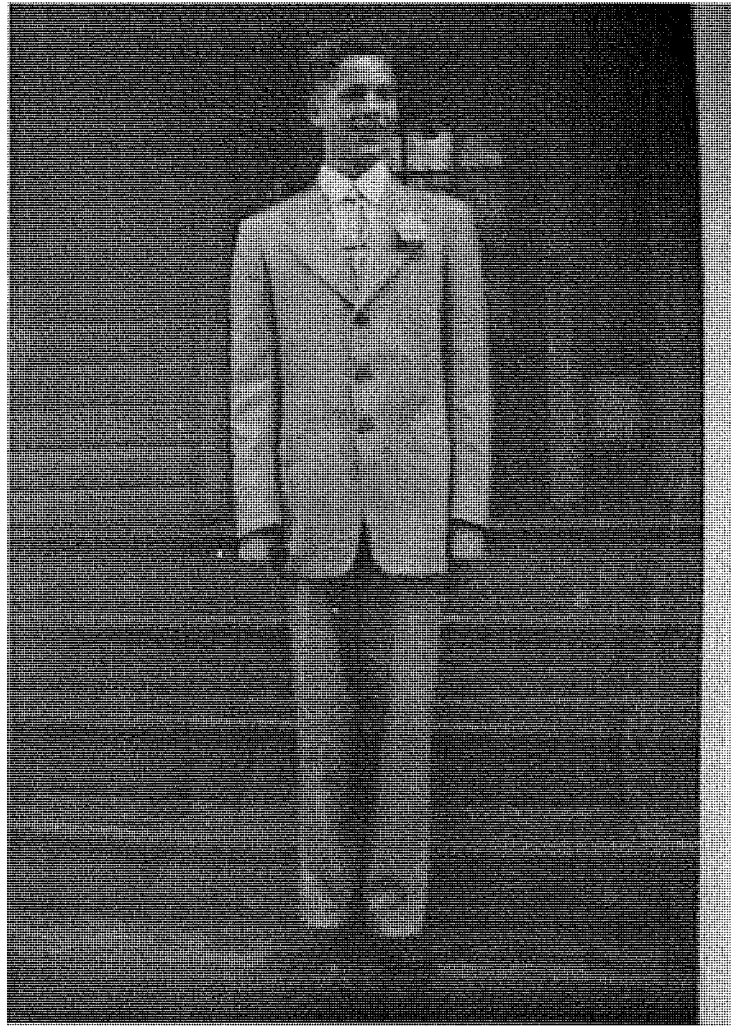
Arnold Meyer's graduation photo from Lutheran High School, Milwaukee, WI.



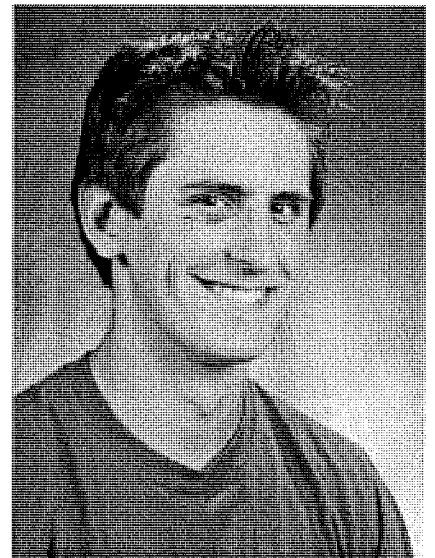
Childhood and confirmation photos of Arnold's son Johann.

Here Johann is pictured on the left with older brother Arnold in summer of 1940.

Confirmation photo of Johann taken in 1951.



Jonathan Meyer's Junior year picture at the Seminary, fall 2006



Seth Meyer's freshman picture at MLC - fall, 2009

His Parish Covers 2 States and He Drives 500 Miles

By David A. Runge
of The Journal Staff

Atlanta, Ga. — Like an old time circuit riding pastor, the Rev. John P. Meyer has a parish that includes two states and he drives up to 500 miles, round trip, to carry out his ministry.

Meyer, born in Milwaukee, came here early in 1971 to be the first pastor of Sola Scriptura Lutheran Church, a mission congregation of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Previously he was the pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Hillsboro, Wis.

His longest trip takes him to Columbia, S. C., to conduct services once or twice a month for a congregation without a regular pastor. On other occasions he celebrates Holy Communion for three servicemen at Ft. Gordon, Ga., about 200 miles from Atlanta. He does the same for a woman 175 miles away in McRae, Ga.

Platteville Request

Once a member of a Wisconsin Synod congregation in Platteville, the woman got in touch with Meyer about joining his congregation.

Sola Scriptura was organized through the initiative of lay members of the Wisconsin Synod who found each other far from their former homes. It all began when George Thompson, a Delta Airlines pilot who had lived in Baltimore, wrote to the Soul Conservation Com-

mission in Detroit, which maintains a record of addresses when members move from one place to another. With the agency's help, Thompson got the names of six families, including 13 adult church members, who were interested in organizing a congregation. They established the first Wisconsin Synod church in this state.

1st Adult Confirmed

The first adult confirmed by Meyer was a Southern Airways pilot who has since gone on duty in South Vietnam as an Army major and liaison officer between the Saigon government POW camps, the American command and the Red Cross. His wife and daughter remained in Augusta, Ga., and are still members of the congregation.

The congregation has grown to 80 baptized members, including 45 confirmed. The oldest member is 41 and the average age is under 20. Many are heads of families who were transferred here by the firms that employ them. They come from 18 states and no two families were members of the same congregation before.

Area Canvassed

About 70 persons, on the average, now attend services being held temporarily in the North Clayton Civic Center, south of the city and about a mile from the Atlanta airport.

Seven members of the Lu-

theran Collegians, a Wisconsin Synod student auxiliary, spent a week here last summer, canvassing areas to ascertain the ratio of church members and those who belong to no church. The immediate area of the civic center has been ruled out as a site for a future building because it is almost solidly Baptist and Methodist.

"We are not interested in stealing Southern Baptists," Meyer said.

The survey has concentrated on several areas on the east side of perimeter Highway 285, a four to six lane road circling the city. Ideally, the congregation would like to find property close to the belt road and an exit ramp to make it convenient for the members, some of whom drive up to 30 or 40 miles to get to church.

\$25,000 an Acre

Such land brings up to \$25,000 or \$30,000 an acre, Meyer reported, but the members hope to spend less than that.

Many in the congregation would like to build a school as well as a church, Meyer said. He said that although possibly two-thirds of the members consider Atlanta only a temporary home, they have been willing to put time, money and effort into the plans for a church.

The congregation hopes to have its own church and to be self-supporting by the end of 1974. The synod now provides almost half of the \$16,000 annual budget.

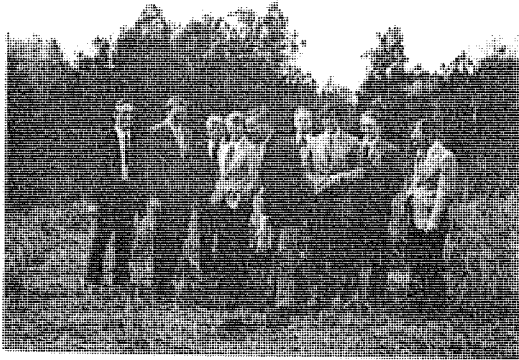
All are cordially invited to attend these

Worship

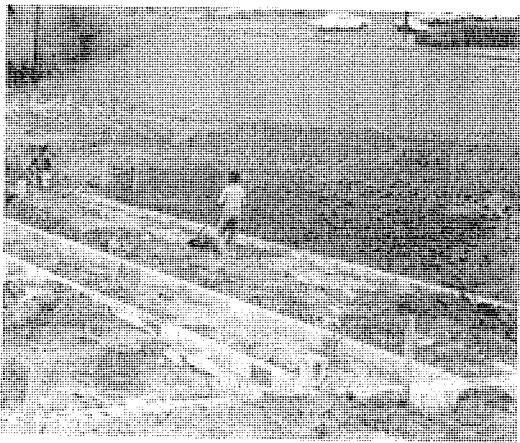
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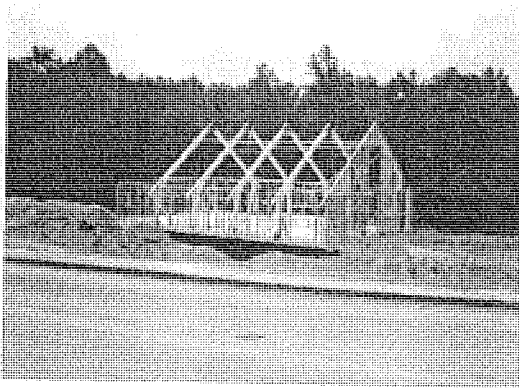
Building the Kingdom in the Empire State of the South



Ground breaking at Sola Scriptura on March 3, 1974, presided over by Pastor Meyer and the Church Council.



Preparing the foundation.



The church taking shape.

Sometimes God's schedule is not our schedule. Moses was ready to take on the leadership of the children of Israel 40 years before God called him to the task. Moses had to wait. In His own time God did appear to Moses in the burning bush and call him to lead His people Israel out of Egypt. Our Synod talked about doing mission work in South America a long time before God's chosen hour came and He made it possible for us to bring the Gospel to the continent to the south. We have also had to learn to wait for God's time in the work of building the kingdom in Georgia, the Empire State of the South.

The first Lutherans in Georgia were the Salzburger refugees who established a Lutheran colony in Ebenezer, near Savannah, in 1735. The kind hospitality accorded them by General Oglethorpe moved Johann August Urlsperger, a German theologian who was a friend of missions, to publish a pamphlet: "De praestantia colonia Georgiensis prae coloniis aliis" (The Ways in which the Colony of Georgia Excels the other Colonies). In 1780 Urlsperger founded the Baseler Christentums-gesellschaft. This led, in 1815, to the establishment of the Baseler Missionsgesellschaft, a society for training and sending missionaries. Although Urlsperger had hoped that missionaries would be sent to work in Georgia, that hope never materialized. God's hour had not yet come. Instead, many of the Basel missionaries were sent to the midwestern part of the United States. Some of the early pastors of the Michigan and Wisconsin Synods were men who came from the Basel Mission Society.

Little work was done in Georgia by any Lutheran church bodies until after World War II. As the population

of the country became increasingly more mobile, Lutherans from other parts of the country found themselves transferred to Georgia, particularly to the Atlanta area. Small Lutheran congregations began to develop. The Mission Board of the Michigan District of our Wisconsin Synod investigated the possibility of starting work in the Atlanta metropolitan area in 1965. Again it did not materialize. God's hour had not yet come.

Our present mission work in Georgia received its start from a letter sent to the mission board of the Gulf-Atlantic Mission District in the spring of 1970, by a Lutheran family concerned about doctrine. Pastors Ray Wiechmann and Ed Renz visited the family and made arrangements for an exploratory meeting with other interested people in the area. Thirteen people attended the meeting on July 19, 1970, which was conducted by Pastor Karl Peterson of Birmingham, Alabama. When exploratory services were authorized, Vicar Karl Henkel helped find a place of worship for the group, the North Clayton County Civic Center. The congregation has used this location for its worship services since August 10, 1970.

By the end of November, 1970, the little group had organized, and had chosen for itself the name *Sola Scriptura*, a name both unique and confessional. On January 24, 1971, the present missionary was installed as pastor of the congregation.

From the very beginning, the District Mission Board as well as the General Board for Home Missions and the Synod's Board of Trustees were all aware of the need for a building in order to do permanent mission work in a part of the country where temporary facilities are looked on with extreme suspicion, and where

Pastor Joh. P. Meyer grew up in Milwaukee and graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1963. Before accepting the call to Atlanta, he served congregations in Eau Claire, Michigan, and Hillsboro, Wisconsin. The Meyers have two children and are enthusiastic about the work in Georgia.

the Lutheran Church is almost unknown. Sola Scriptura Congregation did not have to wait nearly as long as some missions have had to wait in the past for funds to be made available from the Church Extension Fund. But God's time had not yet come. Many local obstacles had to be met and overcome first.

Now God's time has come. On Sunday, March 3, of this year, after the morning Communion service, a joy-filled congregation drove the 17 miles from its temporary place of worship to the building site, to break ground for their new church. We know that the building itself is not a means of grace. Neither is the human voice. But the human voice is the instrument that conveys the Gospel by which the Holy Ghost brings sinners to the saving faith in the Lord Jesus, and gives them forgiveness for all their sins. The new church building will be a place where the saving Gospel will be spoken and the precious gift of forgiveness shared.

Despite a very high rate of membership turnover, Sola Scriptura has grown to be a congregation of 60 communicants, over 100 souls. The members who have been served during the past four years came here from 26 different states. It is our prayer that we will also reach more of the local population with the Gospel when we are in our new building.

Next to Satan, distance is our worst enemy in doing mission work. Our present membership is scattered from the mountains of northern Georgia and the cities of eastern Tennessee to the Piedmont of central Georgia. The distance between the members farthest north and those farthest south is over 400 miles. The two girls in our confirmation class this year live 130 miles apart. We

leave home before 7:00 A.M. to get to church for the 10:00 A.M. service. We can only be humbly grateful that our Lord has moved His people to such faithfulness.

The same Lord has also moved you, our brothers and sisters in the faith, to great faithfulness. We are grateful for your faithfulness in your prayers on our behalf, your faithfulness in bringing mission offerings to subsidize our work, your faithfulness in providing CEF funds that enable us to build, your faithfulness in sending us the names of people moving into our area. But there is another

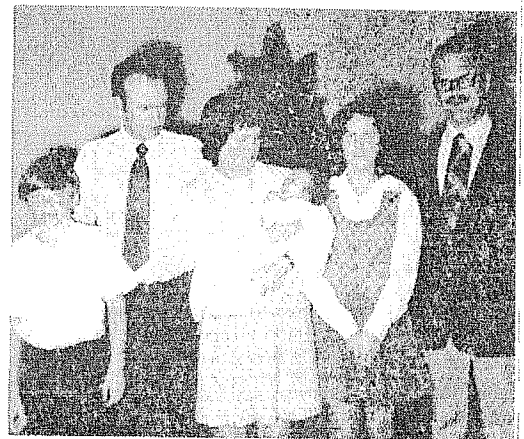


Confirmation 1974: Linda Thomason and Lisa Serheim live 130 miles apart.

faithfulness that has been most encouraging. Ours is an area through which many tourists travel, to which many come on business or to attend conventions. It has been an agreeable surprise to see how many of you have gone miles out of your way to worship with us. I recall especially a businessman from one of our congregations in the Midwest who was flying to Charleston, and had to change planes in Atlanta. It was a Wednesday in Lent. He called the missionary about services and then changed his flight to a later one so that he could worship with us before continuing on his trip. Such faithfulness cannot but encourage us in our otherwise isolated station.

How will we continue to build the kingdom of God in the future in the Empire State of the South? By means of preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments, of course.

The question is rather "Where?" Sola Scriptura Congregation serves the entire metropolitan Atlanta area, which has a population of nearly two million. From our location near the intersection of I-285 and I-20 in DeKalb County we can well serve the eastern part of the city. In the future we must look northwest to Cobb County, northeast to Gwinnett County, and south to Clayton and Fulton Counties, fast-growing areas in which we already have some members. Under the Lord's blessing, missions in each of these areas are possibilities. Monthly services are being conducted



A baptism on Christmas Eve.

for the military population of Augusta, to the east, by the missionary in Columbia, South Carolina. Our sister synod, the ELS, serves the Savannah area from Christ Lutheran Church in that city. Services have been conducted in other parts of the state, mainly for our military people. The results of these services indicate that the Lord would have us continue to concentrate our efforts in the Atlanta area at present.

A complete report of our work of "Building the Kingdom in the Empire State of the South" would also speak of sins and human frailties; but above all it would show the work of God's grace and long-suffering in the lives of the faithful. Eternity alone will reveal the unfading blessing the preaching of the Gospel of Christ has wrought in our midst.

Joh. P. Meyer