

Light in the Darkness

Children's Christmas Program at Saude
December 17, 2017

The Norwegian Synod was established in America in 1853. The Rev. U. V. Koren was one of its early leaders. He organized numerous congregations in the area, including the Saude congregation in 1857 and the Jerico congregation in 1867.

A controversy over the doctrine of election fractured the Synod in the 1880s. The controversy later reignited when leaders in the major Scandinavian Lutheran church bodies proposed a merger, even though they were not in full agreement on the Bible's teaching.

When the merger was finalized in 1917, a small group of pastors and congregations refused to go along. They resolved to continue in the old paths of the Norwegian Synod and reorganized that church body in 1918. This synod, now called the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), will mark the 100th anniversary of its reorganization in the coming year.

This program looks back on that Norwegian Lutheran heritage, which was brought to America from the remote lands of northern Europe. In the midst of the long, dark winters in homelands old and new, the Norwegians gathered around the light of God's Word. They also sang warm Christmas songs about the bright Light that God sent into the world of darkness to save sinners.

CONGREGATION: #144.1-7 - "Thy Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We"

INTRODUCTION: Pr. Faugstad

The bright greens started their transition toward a dull brown, the days ended progressively sooner and sooner, and a cold wind crept down from the arctic north through the majestic fjords. Winter was once again coming to Norway. Families methodically but urgently prepared food and kindling and braced themselves for the longest season. The cold and dark could dampen even the most cheerful spirit.

But as brightly as the fire burned in their little homes, so the flame of faith glowed in their hearts. The One who had saved them would not forget about them. Spring would return in glory just as surely as He would. So while the cold wind howled outside, the Norwegian people sang. They sang of the Christ-Child and rejoiced in this gift sent to them with love from their heavenly Father.

With spring came hope and renewed ambition. Families looking for better prospects and opportunities jammed everything they could in traveling trunks and bought tickets for the voyage to America. They had been told that there they would find fertile land for the taking,

land like what the Lord's people inherited in Canaan. The land was good, but the work to settle it was hard. And the days may not have been as short, but the winters felt just as long.

By firelight the people again reviewed the promises of God in His Word and sang their beloved hymns. In this way, by means of study and song, fathers and mothers passed down the faith to sons and daughters. Like a flame shared from one candle to another, this hope in Christ was transmitted from generation to generation.

And now that hope has come to us. How can we keep the hope of Jesus alive? How can we be sure that the flame of faith will not become extinguished among us? It is the same now as it was for our forefathers. Jesus comes to us still through the preaching, hearing, and singing of His Gospel.

This is why we gather again today around the light of God's Word, so that we can hear of *"the true light, which enlightens everyone"* (Jn. 1:9). This Light is Jesus our Savior. He is the Light that *"shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"* (v. 5).

CONGREGATION: #144.8 – "Thy Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We"

God Gives Light

NARRATION: *The first verses of the Book of Genesis describe the creation of the world: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." But God did not leave the world in darkness.*

RECITATIONS: Kindergarten-1st Grade (Genesis 1:3, 1:4, 1:5, 1:14, 1:16, 1:17)

GIRLS' CHOIR: #108.1-4 – "Creator of the Starry Height"

CONGREGATION: #108.5-6 – "Creator of the Starry Height"

Darkness Reigns

NARRATION: *Soon after God's creation was complete, the devil tempted Adam and Eve to sin, and the world was plunged into spiritual darkness. Because sin is passed down from generation to generation, darkness reigns in the earth. An absence of light is keenly understood in some parts of Norway, where in the winter months the sun never rises above the horizon.*

RECITATIONS: 2nd-3rd Grades (John 3:19, 3:20, 1 John 2:11, Ephesians 6:12)

CONGREGATION: #110.1, 6 – "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

A Glimmer of Light

NARRATION: *After the fall into sin, God promised to send light into the dark world. He promised to send a Savior. This promise was for people in every corner of the world, from the north to the south and from the east to the west.*

RECITATIONS: 4th Grade (Numbers 24:17, Malachi 4:2, Luke 1:78-79, Psalm 107:13-14)

CONGREGATION: #90.1, 2, 5, 6 – “Savior of the Nations, Come”

The Light Comes

NARRATION: *The fullness of time had come. The time of the Savior’s arrival was here. A bright light shined in the darkness.*

CHRISTMAS GOSPEL: St. Luke 2:1-7 (1st-4th Grades)

CHILDREN: #127.1-4 – “I Am So Glad when Christmas Comes”
(first verse in Norwegian: “Jeg er så glad hver julekveld”)

RECITATIONS: 5th Grade (Isaiah 9:2, John 1:4-5, 1:14)

CHRISTMAS GOSPEL: St. Luke 2:8-12 (5th-6th Grades)

CHILDREN: #123.1-5 – “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”

CHRISTMAS GOSPEL: St. Luke 2:13-14 (All Grades)

CHILDREN: #125.1, 3 – “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

Light for All

NARRATION: *The angels told the shepherds that the good news of Christ’s coming is for “all people.” The shepherds told this news to everyone they met. Even wise men far away learned of Jesus’ birth and set out after a star to find Him. The light of the Gospel reached Norway around the year 1000, and before long, much of the country was converted to Christianity.*

CHRISTMAS GOSPEL: St. Luke 2:15-20 (7th Grade)

CONGREGATION: #143.1-7 – “The Happy Christmas Comes”

RECITATIONS: 6th Grade (Isaiah 60:1-2, 60:3-4, 60:6, Matthew 2:1-2, 2:9-10, 2:11)

CHILDREN: “Dejlig er den himmel blå”

CONGREGATION: #120.1-4 - "Bright and Glorious Is the Sky"

Walking in the Light

NARRATION: The evangelical preaching of the Lutheran reformers came to Norway in the 1520s, and Lutheranism was declared the official state religion in 1536. When a significant portion of the Norwegian population emigrated to America in the nineteenth century, Norwegian Lutheran preachers followed. By the grace of God, the clear Gospel teaching of those faithful preachers continues to shine forth in our churches today.

RECITATIONS: 7th Grade (1 Thessalonians 5:4-6, 1 Peter 2:9, Colossians 1:13-14, 2 Peter 1:19, 2 Corinthians 4:6)

CONGREGATION: #120.5-6 - "Bright and Glorious Is the Sky"

OFFERING & LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

CONGREGATION: #140 - "Silent Night"

PRAYERS & BENEDICTION

CONGREGATION: #153.1-4, 7 - "The People That in Darkness Sat"

ANNOUNCEMENTS & SHARING OF GIFTS

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