

RUDOLPH P. KORN

Memoirs as of

Holy Week, 1970

I, Rudolph P. Korn, p. em., second son of the sainted Rev. Paul Emil and Flora Matilda Winkler Korn, was born January 17, 1885 in Kurland, Russia where my father a graduate of the University of Leipzig, was professor of languages. Due to existing conditions in Russia at that time, my parents with their three children returned to their native Dresden, Saxony, Germany. Soon after that my father emigrated to the United States, coming to Cleveland, Ohio. Having accepted a Call from the Evangelical synod of North America (The German state church), he had his family come to America where he served a congregation at Etna, near Pittsburgh, Pa. From there we moved to Terre Haute, Ind., where he had accepted another Call. There, at the age of five years I began school. In 1890 we moved to Chicago, where my father accepted a position as teacher of languages in the German-American academy. However, after the Columbian Exposition of 1892, due to a financial crisis this school was forced to close its doors. During my residence in Chicago I attended Lutheran parish schools. Soon my father again entered the active ministry and accepted a Call to Princeton, Wisconsin, where he contacted Pastor Adolph Hoyer, a minister of the Wisconsin Lutheran synod. Following a colloquy, he was sent to the mission field in northeastern Wis., and the upper peninsula of Michigan as "Reiseprediger" which took him as far east as Sioux (Sault) Ste. Marie into the Canadian Soo where he established the first Lutheran mission. During his four years in the mission he served about eighteen preaching stations. Transportation in those pioneer days was limited and often he had to make train connections "per pedes apostolorum"--afoot. My brother and I often accompanying him on a 7-mile trek to meet a train. At other times he went with the section boss on a hand car.

Salaries were low and expenses high to support a family of six children by that time. In order to supplement his income father rented 40 acres of stumpland 1 1/2 miles from Hyde, now Bark River, Michigan. Since my parents had no experience in farming and my brother and I too young to take over, my father subleased the farm and took half of the products. The other two farmers took the "other half" for their labor. In Hyde we lived in a log house, with limited living accommodations. We had a cow which my mother had to learn to milk, chickens, ducks, geese, two sheep and a few turkeys which roamed the territory by day and roosted on the log barn at night. Farm work was all done manually, due to the stumps. We had to walk to Hyde daily for mail and groceries.

This farm venture proved to be a dismal failure, my father received the short end of the deal. At Hyde we attended public school. Also Sunday School in the rural school every Sunday morning, my mother being the teacher of all the SS children.

From Hyde we moved to Rapid River, Michigan, where the synod had purchased a large two-storied house, which was to serve as parsonage, church, and school. A large upstairs bedroom served as chapel with a big wooden, old-time drygoods box as pulpit and an old-fashioned kerosene stove as altar. The kitchen served as class room for the confirmands. Here I received my first year of preconfirmation instructions. A beautiful church now graces the place where the parsonage stood which served its 3-fold purpose. One incident I recall while living in Rapid River, is that Theodore Brenner, son of the sainted Pastor Brenner and brother of the sainted Professor Fred Brenner of the Wisconsin Lutheran seminary, had a team of horses which he kept in our barn. For the care of the horses my father could use the horses to drive to neighboring towns to conduct Services.

After four years of service in the mission field my father accepted a Call to St. John's Lutheran church, Slades Corners, Wis. (Kenosha County). I still remember the accompanying letter to my father's Call, written by Paul E. Sauer, elder brother of the late Pastor Alfred W. Sauer of St. Martin's Lutheran church, Winona, which was signed as follows: "Ihr zukuenftiger Nachbar, Store-keeper, Postmeister, Organist und Janitor" (Your future neighbor, storekeeper, postmaster, organist, and janitor). Father was installed there on the first Sunday in Advent 1898. I still recall the sermon text of the preacher, The Rev. Mr. Jaeger of Racine, conference visitor. John 12:32,33. On Palm Sunday, 1899 my brother and I were confirmed.

After exactly four years of service in Slades Corners, having also done mission work in Genena Junction, now Genoa City, and neighboring towns across the Wisconsin border in Illinois his service was suddenly terminated by a stroke on the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 1902, having preached his last sermon in the morning, and officiating at a silver wedding at the home of one of the members of his parish in the afternoon.

My brother and I were freshmen at Northwestern University (now Northwestern College, Watertown, Wis.). It was our intention to leave school and find employment to help mother support the six minor children. However we were persuaded to continue our studies in preparation for the holy ministry. We were assured of support from the congregations of the conference to which my father had belonged. In the spring of 1903 my mother and four children moved to Burlington, Wis., where my younger sister and brother who had been confirmed found employment.

During my college and seminary years I did some tonsorial work, was a part-time shoe clerk in Milwaukee. During summer vacations I worked in order to support myself as much as possible, taking whatever job was available, including farmwork, attendant for bricklayers, in my junior year at college I taught parochial school in Burlington, Wis., a month during Lent; in my senior year at seminary I vicared at Town Auburn and Bloomer, Wis.

In June 1906 my brother and I received our B.A. at Watertown and in the Fall of that year entered the Wisconsin Synod Lutheran Seminary then located at Wauwautona, Wis., from which we were graduated in 1909. I accepted the Call extended to me by the Wisconsin Synod assignment committee to St. John's Lutheran Church, Surprise, Neb. (Rising City). On July 25, 1909, I was ordained with my brother in my home congregation at Burlington, Wis., by my sainted pastor, The Rev. Frederick Soll, at that time president of the Wisconsin Synod, and installed on August 1, 1909 in St. John's Lutheran Church, Rising City, Neb., by Pastor C. E. Berg, who is now living in retirement with his daughter in Tomah, Wis. He was present at my 55th anniversary in 1964 at St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Winona, Minn. In my first congregation I served as pastor, teacher, etc., at a salary of \$400 per year, plus free fuel (corn cobs) and feed for our team of horses, and chickens. April 14, 1910 I was united in holy wedlock with Miss Estelle Schroeder of Watertown by the sainted Rev. F. H. Eggers at St. John's Lutheran Church, Watertown, Wis. Seven children were born to this union, four daughters and three sons, of whom two sons died in early infancy. Those living are: Lucille, Mrs. Verl Jefferies, Durango, Colo.; Elda, Mrs. Edgar Luehmann, St. Charles, Minn.; Janice, Mrs. Marion Kelly, Albuquerque, N.M.; S/M/S Kenneth R. Korn, currently stationed with his family in Okinawa; and Carol, at home. I also have sixteen grandchildren and fifteen great-grandchildren. My wife by my first marriage died on August 28, 1955 after a lingering illness, leaving me with a minor daughter to look after domestic interests. Due to these added duties, and impaired hearing, I decided to retire after thirty years of service at St. John's Lutheran Church, Lewiston, Minn.; in November, 1958 I retired and moved to St. Charles, Minn.

On July 27, 1969 St. Matthew Lutheran Church, St. Charles observed my sixtieth anniversary with a special morning service and a fellowship dinner and Open House following. My pastor, the Rev. Norbert A. Reinke, conducted the service.

During my more than sixty years of service in Christ's Kingdom I have served congregations in Nebraska, Renville and Town Lincoln, Renville County, Minn., Goodhue, Minn.; Arcadia and Cream, Wis., and Lewiston, Minn. After my retirement I served Zion Lutheran Church, Crete, Ill., until Feb., 1959 and St. Michael's, Fountain City, Wis., July 1, 1959 to Jan. 1, 1960 as interim pastor. I filled in as vacancy pastor in Garrison, Neb., 1912-1913; Olivia and Danube, Minn., Alma and Nelson, Wis.; Town Ridgeway, Altura, St. Charles; St. Matthew, Winona; following the death of Rev. H. Backer in 1960 I served as assisting pastor at St. Martin's, Winona, until July 1, 1967. My service there consisted in calling upon shut-ins, sick in hospitals and Nursing Homes, and delinquents, and preaching and assisting with Communion whenever needed. During this period of time I also served as interim pastor at Redeemer Church, Winona, 1962-63; and took care of the preaching services in St. John's, Town Hart, Winona Co., and St. Mark's, Rushford, Fillmore Co., 1965-66. I also served Immanuel, Lewiston (Silo), and Grace, Stockton during a vacancy. Currently I am still preaching for vacationing pastors during the summer months; Commune shut-ins and visit Nursing Homes for St. Martin's, in neighboring towns; and conduct services at the Whitewater Manor Nursing Home. St. Charles; also assist the local pastor at Communion, and conduct German services at St. Martin's, Winona.

While serving St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Fountain City, Wis., I became acquainted with Deaconess Louise Mochlenbrock who was serving as matron at the Home for the Aged there. We were united in holy wedlock in St. Michael's Church on October 25, 1959.

In September, 1967 I organized an Older Adult Center for active retirees who meet at the St. Charles city hall council chamber every Tuesday and Friday afternoons for sociability, games, and craft, sponsored by the Southeastern Minnesota Citizens Action Council, Inc., for Fillmore, Houston and Winona Counties, with headquarters at Rushford, Minn. I served as host for two years and in October, 1969 I received a plaque and citation from Minnesota Governor LeVander as Outstanding Senior Citizen of Winona County.

The Lord has signally blessed me during my tenure of service in His Vineyard, for which I am sincerely grateful. I must confess with Jacob: "I am not worthy of all the mercy and all the truth that Thou hast bestowed upon Thy servant," Gen. 32:10; and with St. Paul: "I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." I Tim. 1:12.

I wish to relate a few of my experiences and incidents during my pastorate in the Arcadia-Cream parish. I received this Call to the parish December, 1921, and it was stated that I had train connections between the two churches. I had no knowledge of the geographical lines between the two places, and took for granted that I would conduct a Service in Arcadia and then go by train to Cream for the afternoon Service. To my utter surprise this was wishful thinking. During the winter months, (I came there in January, 1922), when it was impossible to make the trip by car (and, by the way, I had to leave my car in Goodhue until spring), I had to take the Green Bay & Western to Winona on a Friday afternoon, stay there over night, and next morning at 6, take the Burlington to Alma, Wisconsin, where a farmer from the Cream congregation would meet me, then drive about seven miles across the hill

stay at a parishioner's home for the night, often in a cold spare bedroom from which he smoked sausages and hams had been removed and the window opened to clear the atmosphere at about 20 below. The next morning I would conduct services, German; every third time English. One family would take me to its home for dinner, and in the afternoon take me with the children that attended Alma High School (horse drawn vehicle), from where I took the train in the evening to Winona, stayed there over night and return home Monday morning. Those were my train connections. During the summer the distance and fall months the distance between the two churches was 21 miles. In winter and spring in later years, when I was able to travel by car via Bluff Siding and Fountain City it was 50 miles. I could leave home Sunday morning and return in the afternoon and have a Service in the evening. At one time I served Alma and Nelson as interim pastor for about eight months, most part during the winter months, a distance of six y miles from home, oftentimes in snow storms and conducting four Services a Sunday. Another interesting incident I recall during my pastorate at Arcadia, Wisconsin: St. Olaf Choir was to give a concert in Winona on Palm Sunday, March 25, 1923. There were a number of Norwegian Lutheran congregations east of Arcadia, but no train on the Green Bay & Western on Sundays. Car travel at that time of the year was out. These Norwegians wanted to attend the concert. Pastor J. H. Wein, then pastor of the Central Lutheran Church, Winona, conceived the idea to have a train chartered on that Sunday from Moridian Junction to Winona. A good friend of his whom I had known since I was pastor in Kenville, Minn., his native home, gave me the assignment to make arrangements for this special train. I hesitated, reluctant, but finally yielded; I contacted the Arcadia station agent and put the proposition before him. Word was received from headquarters in Green Bay that we could have the train for a consideration of a \$400 guarantee. Since the pastors of the Norwegian congregations had promised to pay this pro rata fare to Winona, I was sure that we would make up the \$400. There were quite a number from Arcadia who promised that they would pay their fare even if they could not go, which was encouraging. Another dark cloud in our undertaking was that we had a heavy snow on Palm Sunday morning, and it was feared that many of the rural people would not be able to make it to the depot. When the train pulled into the Arcadia station at noon I told the conductor, whom I knew quite well from other trips to Winona, how many were going and how much I had collected. Ours was the least fare due to the shortest distance. He then went through the train again to check. When he returned he reported that we made it. You can imagine what a load was lifted from me. I had guaranteed the \$400 on my own recognizance, and it would have been my responsibility to make up the deficit, if any. It reminds me of a story I once heard of a man who boarded a passenger train. When the "cowdoctor" (conductor) came to him and asked him for his ticket, he answered: "My face is my ticket." And, said he, "the conductor punched it." My face was my ticket on this venture, but fortunately it was not punched by the conductor. There are many more incidents I experienced during my pastorate; however, it would take up too much space.