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Remembrances . . .
From a Life Membership 1903 - 1993 at Norway Lutheran Church
by Melvin J. Johnson

Oh how thankful I am that the Lord has given me so many years of good physical body and mind to enjoy the memories of my years of life. I was born on a farm on the southeast shore of Wind Lake, Town of Norway, Racine County on August 28, 1903.

My parents, Ole and Lena Johnson, together with my father's parents, four brothers and one sister immigrated from Norway, Europe to settle among friends in this community in 1880. In 1884, my father and two uncles purchased the only three farms on the southeast shore of Wind Lake. I still live in my home on this land today, 1993. This land must have been a great place for the Indians, next to the lake, as we found an abundance of Indian arrows, axes, knives and grinders; and I have some of these items in my possession today.

My parents were very active in the Norway Lutheran Church. To not attend church on Sunday would be because of sickness or stormy weather. The children also attended Sunday School, always walking the 2-1/2 miles. Sunday School was every Sunday, and Elmer Jacobson was Superintendent and his son Clarence Jacobson was assistant. Both the English and Norwegian languages were used in Sunday School and church. This was quite common as the people, like my folks, had no knowledge of the English language until they came to America. Gradually, though, the English language prevailed.

Norway Church has been blessed with many pastors who served its people well, and they were active in community affairs. I think of one pastor in particular who served Norway Congregation from 1901-1908. He was Rev. Otto E. Schmidt. During the time Rev. Schmidt was here, the only means of transportation was by horseback, or horse and buggy. He was very much interested in getting better communication between his parishioners. He invited Dr. Charles Flett of Waterford and seven other citizens from around Norway to a meeting on March 7, 1902. The purpose was to organize a Wind Lake Telephone Company.

The second meeting was held at the Jacobson school house on March 10, 1902 for the purpose of electing officers. Rev. Otto E. Schmidt was elected President and Dr. Charles Flett was elected Vice President. J. E. Jacobson was elected Secretary and Hans Finholth was elected Treasurer. The central office and switchboard was to be in the Finholth Store (now the Sparkle City Restaurant). A Stock Company was organized, and at the first meeting nine members purchased 12 shares each at $5.00 per share.

Pastor Otto Schmidt wasn't a pastor who you only saw on Sunday in the pulpit preaching the Gospel. He lived with his people. They tell me he dug post holes, set poles, stretched wire and succeeded in promoting the welfare of the community. I don't remember Rev. Schmidt; I wish I did. He left here in 1908 when I was only five years old.

Rev. T. H. Bakke and his wife, Thonette, came here in 1908. I remember Pastor Bakke preaching in the Norwegian language. I remember his wife at our home counting the flowers on my mothers Christmas Cactus. His wife died in 1910. He later married my mother's sister, my Aunt Thora, and they moved from here in 1911.

Rev. Osmand Johnson accepted a Call to Norway in 1912. I remember his wife, three daughters, and one son quite well. The children were Mabel, Borgual, (I don't remember the third girl's name) and the boy, Paul. They had a problem living in the country without city conveniences. So they left in 1914.

Memories come alive to the time when Rev. John L. Kildahl accepted a Call to come to Norway Congregation in 1914. He came here as a graduate of our seminary at St. Paul, Minnesota. He was a single man, and he stayed at different homes until he married his wonderful wife, Edith. They then moved into the parsonage.

Rev. Kidahl was a dynamic preacher of the Word of God. He believed it, he lived it and he witnessed it to his people. He was the choir director and loved music. He cared for the young people and organized a Boy Scout troop. He was a great baseball player and would never miss a good baseball game!

Rev. Kildahl confirmed me with a class of 12. My cousin, Olaf Johnson and I were the last ones to be confirmed in the Norwegian language at Norway Church on March 17, 1918.

Pastor Kildahl had a wonderful sense of humor. When he first came he got a horse and an open two-passenger cart. The horse's name was Gert. He trained this horse, and it was so gentle. The horse seemed to understand everything Pastor said. Pastor served not only Norway Church but North Cape, five miles to the east and Vernon Church, ten miles northwest. It was a beautiful sight to see them come down the road. Gert could really travel.

One day Pastor was going somewhere, and he stopped at the Krogstad store (now Sparkle City Restaurant) to get something. He left Gert untied as she would always wait patiently for her master. Some boys playing with fireworks threw a firecracker close to Gert. Naturally, the horse got frightened and Gert took off in full speed. With the roads as they were in those days, full of pot holes, the cart kept flying from one side to the other. The horse knew where to go.

When Pastor Kildahl was on his honeymoon, his brother, Carl, who stayed at the parsonage, came down to our house quite often. The horse, Gert, came to our farm. My father happened to be close by, and he went over and tried to cool her down. We then drove Gert back up to the road to find Pastor Kildahl. He came walking, picking up books, blankets, etc.

In the spring of May 10, 1916 I was attending graded school where the Col. Heg monument now stands. At 9:00 a.m. our teacher was about to ring the bell to start school when we heard someone hollering, "Fire." The Norway parsonage was on fire! Pastor and his wife Edith were helpless. There was no Fire Department at that time. Even though people came, there was nothing that could be done but to watch it burn down. How the fire started was a mystery.

All records since the beginning of Norway Congregation in 1843, including birth records, confirmations, marriages, deaths and membership records were gone. All records prior to 1916 were destroyed, which was a tragedy to Norway Congregation. The congregation voted to build a new parsonage on the same site immediately.

When the brick church on the hill was built in 1869-70, it was set on a ground foundation, no basement. In 1915 the congregation voted to have the church raised, remove the ground from under and complete a full basement. I have memories of going to Sunday School and we children playing under the church while it was supported by jacks.

Rev. and Mrs. Kildahl served Norway Congregation well from 1914-1920. A young couple, full of the Spirit to go forward with the Lord's work. He was a dynamic preacher, strong in his convictions and determination pertaining to the Lord's work. His wife, Edith, worked equally with her husband among the young people and ladies of the congregation. Norway Congregation was known in the entire Milwaukee circuit for its leadership. The Norway Choir gave concerts in many city churches.

The Kildahls chose to leave Norway in the peak of their popularity in 1920. They loved Norway so much that they got a grave lot in Norway Cemetery.

I have memories of another pastor and his family, the Rev. J. M. Hestenes. He served Norway, North Cape, and Vernon from 1920-1928. His wife and children, (Harda, Margaret, Joseph, Erling and Leonard --who passed away here as a child) are buried on the family lot in Norway Cemetery.

Rev. Hestenes, like all the pastors I worked with in the church, had certain strong feelings for his religious work. Rev. Hestenes, having a family of four children to raise in this permissive world, was concerned for his children. He set aside a certain Sunday evening to give a lecture on the evil of the modern dance. It was well attended by the young people. I am sure we all respected him for his opinions.

When it came time for his oldest daughter, Harda, to help in high school to get ready for the Junior Prom (which included a fancy dress for the girls and a dance), she was fearful that she could not go, as this was a couples' affair.

Because I was a friend of the family, Harda asked me if I would be her partner for the Prom. I accepted and thanked her for the honor. We went to the Prom and had a wonderful time. She said I could dance if I wanted to, but should could not. I said, "No, I won't, we are partners together." We had a wonderful evening, and I am sure her mother was very happy for her daughter that she could attend the Prom.

Rev. Hestenes served the congregation well. He, his wife, and family had very likable personalities. The children attended school here and worked very well with the young people of the congregation. Rev. Hestenes was very much concerned about missions. He and the family left Norway to devote full time to solicit funds for the mission of the church in 1928.

The Congregation hired the Rev. Oscar Rem as a seminary student. He interned with Rev. Hestenes teaching Bible day school and youth work. I became a good friend of Oscar, and that friendship lasted until he passed away here at Norway.

He married a local girl Marie Jacobson here at Norway. Rev. Rem served several congregations as pastor. He retired here at Norway and is buried at Norway Church Cemetery. His sister Carolyn Jacobson is a member of Norway.

Rev. H. C. M. Jahren, a single man, came to Norway with his mother in 1928. He later married Amy who joined him. A devoted pastor doing the Lord's work, he loved to dwell on the history of the Bible and the history of Norway Congregation. He published a monthly paper called OLD MUSKEGO SAGA.

Rev. Jahren also edited a magazine called The Old Muskego Church for the 100th year anniversary from 1843 to 1943. (Note: The reason "Muskego" was used at that time was because the Town of Norway was not organized until 1847. So prior to 1847, we were considered to be part of Muskego.)

On November 30, 1929 Rev. Jahren performed the wedding marriage for Esther Dukleth and myself, Melvin Johnson. It was a beautiful church wedding that lasted until "death do us part" when Esther died December 26, 1983. We had two sons, Richard and Warren. I remain a single man.

In 1930 the Congregation elected a Cemetery Board: Ed Anderson, President, Martin Krogstad, Secretary, and Melvin J. Johnson, Treasurer. All records for lot owners were destroyed with the parsonage fire in 1915. I purchased a card filing system; and with the help of the Luther League young people, I set up a new complete record system.

Prior to 1930, each lot owner cared for his own cemetery lot. Some owners cared and kept their lot clean and beautiful while others let the weeds and grass grow wild. The Congregation voted to assess each cemetery lot owner $3.00 per year payable to the treasurer for maintenance to mow all lots. 1930 was the first year that the State law required all cemeteries to come under the jurisdiction of the County Probate Court. The treasurer of the Cemetery Board had to file annually a financial report of all income and expenditures together with all perpetual care funds, where invested and secured according to State law. I served as Treasurer from 1930-1947.

In 1942, Rev. Jahren realized that with the future growth of the community, we would eventually have to build to accommodate more people. He suggested the appointment of a Building Fund Committee by the Church Council. The Council appointed seven men -- John A. Malchine, William Larson, Gene Gunderson, Glenn Cook, Louis Noll, Roland Drought and Melvin J. Johnson. The first meeting was held February 19, 1942. John Malchine was elected Chairman, William Larson, Treasurer and Melvin Johnson, Secretary. This Committee also became the Building Committee. However, there was a lack of interest between the Congregation and the Committee; and no further meetings were held until November 28, 1949.

Rev. Jahren had now served Norway Congregation as pastor for 14 years. He was a man who loved church history. He had the honor of serving as pastor at the first Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America here at Norway. He enjoyed being host to the Crown Prince and his wife from Norway, Europe, who visited here in 1939. He also had the honor of being pastor here to help celebrate our 100th Year Anniversary. He loved the history and

wrote about it, and he also loved Norway. He didn't seem to realize that during the 14 years here, many of the old had died or passed away.

The Town of Norway, only 20 minutes away from Milwaukee, was a fast growing township with its five lakes and beautiful surroundings. People were moving out here to establish permanent homes -- a great mission field for the church.

There was a large group of young people getting of age to become active in the church. They lacked leadership and direction. As a result, the attendance at the church service dwindled. This continued until finally a group of people decided that something had to be cone. An appeal went out to the President of the district to seek new leadership (today we call the office "Bishop"). We have to realize that the District Office also has problems. The President has many friends in the ministry. Some pastors request the President to transfer them out of a congregation, and another pastor is satisfied where he is and refuses to move. Finally in 1948, Rev. Jahren accepted a call, and Norway and Vernon were free to seek another pastor.

During Rev. Jahren's term as pastor of the three congregations (Norway, North Cape and Vernon), North Cape realized it was large enough and financially able to support a pastor of their own; and they became an independent Congregation.

Norway's Congregation appointed six members to the Call Committee, and Vernon had three members. I, as a member from Norway, was appointed to be Secretary to keep minutes of the meeting and correspond to prospective pastors. The Committee first authorized me to write a letter to our District President asking for a list of possible pastor candidates to serve Norway and Vernon.

Norway was now without a pastor. A Rev. Johan Olsen (a retired pastor from New Berlin and a father to one of our members, Mrs. Oliver Sands) agreed to intern for Norway until we found an acceptable pastor. Rev. Olsen was a dynamic preacher. He worked with the people, and soon the church was filled on Sundays.

The District President sent me a list of pastors that might be acceptable to Norway and Vernon. I asked for a meeting of the Call Committee. They instructed me to write to those they thought might be qualified. Searching through the list of pastors presented, the Committee didn't feel that we were getting the kind of pastors that could adapt themselves to a fast-growing congregation like Norway.

I requested the District President send me a second list of possible qualified pastors. I again wrote letters to those the Committee considered to be qualified. Again some pastors thought the challenge was too great. Others wanted the call; but in the judgment of the Committee and the Congregation, they were not satisfactory candidates.

Finally the Committee decided to go the democratic way. Each member of the Committee was to contact pastors or some one who could give us advice as to a qualified pastor for Norway and Vernon. I was given a list of five qualified pastors. After reviewing them all as to their qualifications, I was instructed to write to number two on the list -- Rev. Charles T. Paulson from Calmar, Iowa. Through several letters of questions and answers, an invitation was extended to Rev. Paulson to visit Norway on a Sunday evening to meet the Call Committee and members of the Norway and Vernon congregations. The Call Committee and members of the congregations were satisfied that Rev. Paulson was very qualified to be their pastor. A letter of call was sent to Rev. Paulson May 11, 1949 from the congregations of Norway and Vernon.

On May 30, 1949, I received a telephone call from Rev. Paulson stating that he wanted to make a one-day visit to Norway Congregation with his wife Irene and family. He wanted to know if I was available to show them around. I extended an invitation for them to have an afternoon meal with Esther and me before they went back.
"Memories"

Rev. Paulson naturally had a lot of questions to ask about Norway and its future growth. He stated to me that if he accepted this call it would be for four years. This shocked me, and I asked him why? His answer was that at every congregation he served it took him four years to visit every home in the congregation, and canvas the community

for future members. He then was ready to move on. I told him, "I applaud you for your attitude, Pastor, but Norway is different."

Throughout our visit that afternoon I told him that he impressed me as a man that wants a challenge. I related to him the geographical location of our church area. I told him about the Town of Norway with its beautiful lakes and surroundings, the people who were constantly moving out of the city for country living. "Norway Congregation would forever move forward if we get proper leadership," I told him, "The only way you can leave Norway is to retire as the work for the Lord will never get done at Norway." I encouraged him to accept the challenge, and they returned back to Iowa that night. I do not have the dates, but some time later on a Sunday afternoon, about 2:00 p.m., I received a telephone call from the Burlington telegraph office addressed to the Norway and Vernon Congregations stating that the Rev. Charles T. Paulson will accept the call to be their Pastor. Memories, Memories, what a day of rejoicing! Our prayers had been answered. I telephoned our District President the following Monday morning after Rev. Paulson had accepted our call. I asked him if he knew Rev. Paulson and he said that he did. I told him that he had accepted our call to be Pastor for our congregations. He told me that Pastor Paulson was not his choice, but that he would make us a good pastor. Rev. Paulson was installed at Norway as its pastor on September 4, 1949.

Rev. Paulson had a wonderful personality for meeting people, and was a man with a lot of ambition and determination. His ambition to go forward for the Lord's work and his dynamic sermons caused the church to be filled to capacity. The Sunday School was also filled to capacity.

The Building Committee that was organized during Rev. Jahren's ministry at Norway was reorganized on November 28, 1949. There was no question but to build. Where to build and what type of church to build were the questions. Many congregational meetings were held as to site, type, and size of the building.

The land the church and fellowship hall now stand on was owned by Severt Johnson. He told us if we wanted to build on his land, he would give us the land. Mr. and Mrs. Massman owned the corner lot where he and his wife lived. The Congregation later purchased this property from Massman's, moved the house to another location, and annexed the land to the church property. On January 7, 1952 a final decision was made to build on the Severt Johnson property. The next project was to find out the type of church building would be practical for a 100-year old congregation.

After a lot of traveling and consulting with several architects, a church building was found on the north side of Milwaukee that we all agreed would adapt itself to Norway. We found out that the architect of the building was Edgar A. Steubenrach of Sheboygan, Wisconsin. As Secretary of the Building Committee, I contacted him and asked him to meet with our Committee and submit plans and various designs of churches he had built. Mr. Steubenrach agreed to meet with us and presented various plans. A plan we agreed upon was a fellowship hall with Sunday School rooms and church attached. He gave us an estimated cost of around $400,000. Although the Congregation had already $40,000 in its building fund treasury, we didn't want to create that large of a debt on the Congregation.

An agreement between the Building Committee and architect was to leave the plans intact for the church and educational unit. However, at this time he should only draw plans and specifications for the educational unit. When this project was completed and paid for, we would build the church. Louis Axlelson made a motion to have a Congregational meeting November 2, 1952 give final approval of the plans, accept bids and award contracts. This would give us Sunday School rooms, and the fellowship hall could temporarily be used for church service.

The architect prepared plans and specifications for any and all bidders. Bids were advertised in Western Builder, Dodge Reports and the local papers. Bids were opened on October 31, 1952, and read aloud by the Secretary of the Building Committee: Four bids for the general contract with low bidder Cecil Mehring of Waterford at $134,736.89. Five bids for electrical contract with low bidder Bakke Electric Co. of Waterford at $11,373.00. Two bids for plumbing with low bidder Reinemann of Burlington at $11,079.00. Six bids for heating with the low bidder Bon Heating Co. of Milwaukee at $9,765.00. All alternates were cared for between the architect and the Building Committee.

Oh what a great step forward for the Kingdom's work at Norway Congregation. As soon as the contracts were signed and all legal work completed, construction started. I had an 8 mm movie camera that I used to show the progress of construction from the excavation of the basement ground until the day of dedication. Roy Gulbrandson, a member of our Congregation, and employee of the general contractor, was foreman of all masonry work. Charles Paulson Jr. ("Chuck") was employed by the general contractor as a masonry tender mixing and supplying mortar for the stone masons.

We, as the Building Committee members, were not without our share of problems. We were elected to carry out the wishes of the Congregation, to care for differences that might come between contractors, and to make decisions on all alternates.

As the building came to its completion, different organizations of the congregation contributed money for buying the necessary fixtures, chairs, desks and tables for the Sunday School and fellowship hall. The women's organization took care of the kitchen needs, curtains, drapes and lounge facilities.

Memories and a day of rejoicing for Pastor Paulson and the Congregation. Memories to those that are no longer with us, and to those of us that are still here. The fellowship we had unwrapping crates of furniture and stocking the Sunday School rooms and fellowship hall was wonderful. The dedication of the educational unit was September 12, 1954.

Memories . . . "Praise the Lord." One step of our building program has been completed -- the Educational Unit. It was a day of rejoicing. Thanks to the Almighty God for answered prayers, to the Building Committee, the Congregation, and especially for our Pastor Paulson for his guidance and direction to go forward for the Lord's work here at Norway.

The Sunday School children left the old church on the hill and assembled in the new fellowship hall for its morning service. Then they and their teachers were assigned to their individual class room. Pastor Paulson made such a personal contact with the Sunday School children that he called most of them by their first name.

The second church service was held after Sunday School in the fellowship hall. The stage was used for altar, lectern and pulpit; and the seating capacity was for 400 in chairs.

When the Educational Unit was finished, it left the congregation with a debt of $75,000. The Building Committee and congregation agreed that construction of the church would not be started until the debt of the Unit had been paid. In 1962 the debt of the Educational Unit was paid in full. All money now coming in would apply to the construction of a new church.

The constant growth of membership in the church and Sunday School caused the Congregation to seek help for Pastor Paulson. The Congregation agreed to go into an intern program with our seminary. Each student was to serve one year. They were Stan Rosengren, Ivan Ives, Jay Eisenhauer, and William Breen.

I remember those young men very distinctly. I am positively sure that each of those young men went on in life profited by the one year that they worked with Pastor Paulson. I remember one person in particular. One day as I was at the Unit, Pastor Paulson said he wanted me to come to his office (which then was the present choir room). As we entered his office, he held up a pack of cards about 1/2" thick. I said, What's that?" He said Bill Breen brought them in. They are prospects for new members. "Memories." I said, "Pastor your four years have come and gone. Remember I told you that the mission field in Norway will go on for years."

When the Educational Unit was completed, it gave us room to carry on one of the original traditional "Lutefisk" dinners that was originally organized by the pioneers from Norway and is carried on to this day. In the old church on the hill we would seat about 90 people. In our new unit, we were able to seat 275 at tables. I think of the years gone by, 75 years and more, when my mother and the other pioneer women would prepare this wonderful meal for all that wanted to come "at a price." I always thought at that time when those women could no longer do this work, that the tradition would cease. But I was wrong thanks to their children and grandchildren and to the many new members who helped keep this tradition alive. The Lutefisk Dinner is usually held the second Friday in

February. I have a complete Norwegian costume and have had the honor to pray the Norwegian table prayer at each table before the meal. I love to speak the Norwegian language when possible.

The original Building Committee that was appointed in 1942, had dwindled down to three. Some resigned for personal reasons, some became disinterested, and some left for physical reasons.

According to my Secretary records, in March 1960 the Church Council appointed a new Building Committee consisting of Allan Jones, Loris Roed, Chester Alaxson, William Larson and Melvin J. Johnson. Allan Jones was elected President and Melvin J. Johnson was elected Secretary.

On March 31, 1960, the Congregation appointed three additional members to the Building Committee -- John L. Malchine, George Vogel, and George Delikat.

In the fall of 1962 the Congregation voted to call V. Truman Jordahl as our interim pastor.

"Memories". . . We were in the midst of planning for our new church when Pastor Paulson at Sunday Church service told me he wished to talk to me. It seemed that we were both busy. He set the time for 8:00 a.m. on Friday, January 11, at his office in the church. I made preparations to be there on time. As I was about to leave my home, I got a telephone call from Esther Clausen, a member of our congregation. She told me to be prepared for a shock, as her husband Roland was on a rescue call to Norway parsonage. Pastor Paulson had left his house to go about 200 feet to his mail box to put some mail in. On returning back to his house (the weather was about 10 degrees below 0), he got a massive heart attack and died instantly. "Memories". . . You would like to forget, but you never will. Life must go on.

The Building Committee and the Congregation were just in the process of going forward to build the final stage of our project -- the Church, the house of worship, where our beloved Pastor Paulson would preach the first sermon from its pulpit. The Lord saw it differently. He took him unto himself. As a result, I believe there became a greater determination to go forward to build as Pastor wanted it, such as we have it today.

Many congregational meetings were held to determine where to build the church and what type of design. There were many different opinions that came forth, and that was good. It is always good that every individual has a chance to express their opinion. Some felt a modern church separate from the Unit on the Massman property would be ideal. Others felt we should remain with the original plan with the church attached. Votes were taken and finally the original attached plan prevailed.

According to my Secretary records dated January 20, 1962, Eugene Gunderson made a motion to have new plans made for attaching the Gothic Church. It was seconded by William Larson. Results of the ballot were 103 yes and 54 no. At the same meeting, a motion was made by Melvin J. Johnson that the architect be instructed to draw plans for a Gothic church attached to the present unit at floor level, less offices and with an alternate to remove all ground from under the church for possible future use.

My memory is so clear of what happened that day that I feel credit must be given to those that deserve it. After I completed my motion and explained the need to excavate the ground from under the church, a Mrs. Amanda (John) Stalbaum (Bless her memory as she is not with us any more.), addressed the Congregation. She stated, "Melvin is right. I understand all our 12 Sunday School rooms are in use. It won't be long before we will be looking for additional rooms." The vote was 103 yes, 15 no.

On June 3, 1963 the Building Committee instructed the architect to draw plans and prepare specifications with alternates as approved by the Congregation. Advertising for bids was to be placed in Western Builder and Dodge Reports, and local newspaper.

Bids were opened on July 10, 1963 in the fellowship hall. Bids were opened and read aloud by the Secretary. Low bidder for general contract was Magill and Welkos of Elkorn at $141,000. The electrical low bid by Bakke Electric Co. was $11,450. The low bid for plumbing and heating was Steinke Hardware of Waterford at $16,338. As soon as all contracts were signed, bonds approved and all legal work cared for, construction was to start.

The first stage of construction was to remove all ground from under the church to make that space available for future use. The ground was deposited on church property to make more available space for parking. I tried to make a visit to the church construction each day to follow the progress done. I believe it was in 1963 when the church construction was about half done, when one member of the congregation, the Sunday School Superintendent, asked me if it was possible to finish the basement of the church as she needed additional Sunday School rooms. I told her there was no problem, she just had to ask the President of the Church Council to call a special Congregational Meeting to appropriate $10,000, and we will have it done when the church building is finished. A congregational meeting was called, the project was approved and the money provided.

Loris Roed, a member of the congregation, was hired to enclose the exposed steel beams and any other carpenter work required. The general contractor was to prepare the ground floor and pour the concrete floor. This now would make us a room approximately 80 feet long and 40 feet wide, plus the room under the altar. The girls and boys rest room occupied the southwest corner of the basement. Tile floor was laid throughout except that two shuffle boards were installed with shuffle board tile inlaid in the floor for recreational purposes.

The basement kitchen, as was originally planned to serve both the Fireside room and the church basement was now made available. This room was used extensively for many years for the two or three dart ball teams for the dart ball tournaments, social gatherings, family gatherings, shuffle board games, and Sunday School with portable partitions. The Sunday School felt a need for this room, and it now has permanent partitions for Sunday School. As the building was being completed according to the architectural plans, The Building Committee had problems with the fixtures. Several companies bid on the pews -- some with a solid oak pew and some with different type and design of cushion pew. After reviewing all bids as to cost, quality and design, the Committee chose the Endicott Church Furniture Co. This was a four ribbed cushion pew for the church and choir. I was told at the time that we made a mistake in buying cushion pews as they would soil easily and wear out. The truth is those pews have served us for 30 years, without blemish or slight wear. The cushions are easily replaceable.

The original architectural plan for the altar showed a four foot opening coming on each side into the altar, and with an exposed opening into the Altar Guild room. The inside of the altar was painted walls. We had several meetings with the Altar Guild and other committees to make a change. The saying goes, "The Beauty of a Church is in the Altar."

We contacted several church furniture companies and finally decided on Waukesha Church Furniture Company. They agreed to close up the four foot openings on the sides with paneling and with a three foot door on each side. To panel the complete inside of the altar and build a altar, pulpit and lectern to match the paneling -- a beautiful piece of work.

Just a note to let you know what someone else, not a member of our congregation -- thinks about our church. A funeral was being held at our church. I was in the narthex for some reason and a helper to an undertaker knew me by name and asked to talk to me. We went into the fellowship hall. He said, "Melvin, I know you had a lot to do with this building. I just want to tell you that as undertakers we cover a lot of territory in many different churches of all different denominations. But this is the most beautiful church I have ever been in.

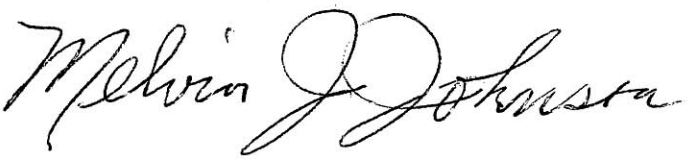
The church was completed in its construction and dedicated to the Almighty God by Pastor V. Truman Jordahl and James Amundson on May 24, 1964. Eugene Gunderson and I lifted the corner stone in place and Roy Gulbranson applied the mortar to hold it in place.

This concludes my life memory of Norway Lutheran Church to date August 29, 1993. I have been an active member in the church since my early Sunday School days, Luther League, Men's Club, Brotherhood, Dart ball, Church Council, Call Committee, Cemetery Board and Men's Breakfast Bible Study. I was appointed Secretary of the Building Committee in 1942 and served during construction of the Educational Unit dedicated in 1954. I served during planning and construction of the church that was dedicated in 1964 and enjoyed knowing we had a debt free congregation in 1978.

I was appointed to the Building Committee for the new addition to our Fellowship Unit, but chose not to serve. I am a member of the 150th Anniversary Committee, which causes me to write my memories.

Memories to Norway Lutheran Church for its pastors and its people. It has always been the center of our lives for me, my wife Esther, our sons Richard and Warren, for my wonderful daughters-in-law, our six grandchildren and our 10 great grandchildren. They are giving me an open house 90th Birthday Party at church on August 29, 1993.

Melvin J. Johnson



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