

*The Life and Ministry of
Erwin Schroeder:
A Video Biography*

**Church History
Project**

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Erwin Martin Schroeder was born on May 24, 1913 in Eitzen, Minnesota to Fredrich and Bertha (nee Meyer) Schroeder. He was baptized in Zion Lutheran Church in Eitzen on May 31, 1913, and confirmed on April 10, 1927. His confirmation verse was "Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name" (Psalm 86:11).

Although his father was a farmer, Erwin was influenced by his pastor, Pastor Ehlert, to enter into the public ministry. Erwin attended Northwestern Preparatory School and Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin. He continued his education at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Thiensville, Wisconsin. His first call was to be Dean of Men at Bethany Lutheran College of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Mankato, Minnesota. While at Bethany, Erwin took classes at the University of Minnesota to prepare himself to manage Bethany's library.

After one year's service at Bethany, Erwin accepted a call to serve as pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Woodville, Wisconsin. He stayed in Woodville for three years. It was during this time that Erwin married Selma Diersen, a young lady from his home congregation in Eitzen. They were married on August 15, 1940.

In 1942, Erwin accepted the call to St. Paul's in Ixonia, Wisconsin and served the congregation for two years.

In 1944, He again received a call; this time to Northwestern College and Preparatory School. While at Northwestern, Erwin taught Latin and library science. To

better prepare himself, he continued his training in library science and classical languages at the University of Chicago and the University of Wisconsin.

Aside from teaching, one of his main duties at Northwestern was the job of cataloging and converting of NWC's library to the Dewey Decimal system, a job which took over seven years to complete. His management of the bookstore and library for over forty years resulted in a substantial trust fund to purchase library acquisitions. By the end of his ministry at Northwestern, Erwin had expanded the library from a few thousand issues to over forty thousand.

In the classroom, Erwin was known as a tough, but fair teacher. He expected a lot out of his students and was up front with them about it. While some of his students may not have appreciated it at the time, many pastors in the Wisconsin Synod have said that his teaching was instrumental in their preparation for the ministry. What did not always come across in the classroom was that Erwin truly cared for his students and those who desired to enter the ministry. He would go to extra measures for those who showed their desire and used their God-given gifts. He retired from Northwestern in 1986 after serving over forty years as a professor there.

Professor Schroeder also had a nickname. He was known as "Smiley" to nearly all who knew him. Yet it was a name that was used rarely, if ever, in his presence. The name was given to him in an ironic sense in that he seldom smiled in public.

Erwin had a tremendous influence on his children's futures. Although he never strongly pushed his children to go into the ministry, all six of his sons – Kent, Lynn, Keith, Neal, Joel, and Mark went into the preaching ministry and his two daughters, Jean and Joyce went into the teaching ministry. All of his children say that it was his quite

example and the life of faith that he and Selma lived that influenced their decisions. His influence was not only on his family, but others as well. He was respected by his colleagues on the Northwestern faculty and made a large impression on many pastors in the Wisconsin Synod. Numerous pastors have stated that it was Erwin who was their biggest influence to go into the public ministry.

In July of 1994, Erwin suffered a fall at his home in Watertown. On July 27, 1994, his Heavenly Father called him home at the age of eighty-one. His funeral was at Trinity Lutheran in Watertown, Wisconsin. During the service, Erwin's grandchildren the faith that he had lived and had instilled in his children and grandchildren by singing "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." He was buried in St. Paul's Lutheran Cemetery in Ixonia, Wisconsin. Throughout his entire life, Erwin lived his faith and gave himself wholeheartedly in service to the Lord.