

A Family Privileged to Serve:
The Family History of Consecutive Ministers from Peter Stern to Jesse Stern

Written by: Jesse A. Stern

Church History 3031
Prof. J. Korthals
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Essayist's Note:

Before I type a word to trace the line of pastors in the Peter Stern family, I must first make mention of an entirely different line of servants. For generations, the LORD has blessed the Stern family to be teachers who are faithful to the Word of God and lay people who willingly serve in so many capacities. While this paper will discuss the six public ministers of the gospel, let it be said that we are humbly thankful for and gratefully acknowledge those who serve alongside us. From workers in the medical field to the classroom (both public and parochial), whether they mentor an inner-city teenager or teach a disabled child, from the church musician to countless other forms of service, our family is humbly thankful for their faithful service to the Savior-King.

For Sterns that read this today or for anyone that may read this somewhere down the line, don't feel as though you must become a minister because your fathers and grandfathers have been ministers. The most important thing, and this is my earnest prayer, is that you remain close to the words and promises of our Savior Jesus. Keep him close to your heart and he will bless your work, in whatever field that may be. God be with you and bless you as you work in his harvest field. In all things Soli Deo Gloria!

December 9, 2007

Jesse Andrew Stern

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse Andrew Stern". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” These are the words of our Lord recorded for us in Matthew 9:37, 38.

As Peter Stern walked the fields outside Dossenheim, Germany, he probably never dreamt that the Lord of the harvest would send out workers through his family. By grace alone, the Lord has used the Stern family as workers in his harvest field for six consecutive generations. This paper will trace the line of workers from Peter Stern to Jesse Stern. Undeserving though we may be, we have been a family humbly blessed to sow the gospel and privileged to serve our Savior publicly since the early 1800s. In all this, and for all this, all praise, thanks, honor and glory be to our God and to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

On August 20, 1814, Peter Stern was born to a farmer in Dossenheim in the country of Heidelberg, in the Palatinate. His father, also Peter, was educated to be an economist and served as an estate manager in Dossenheim. Peter Stern, the farmer, died in 1842 in Moosburg, which is in the Swiss district of Thurgau.

In the 1820s, a teacher-training school was set up in Karlsruhe by the government of Baden. The school was directed by Pastor Wilhelm Stern (no relation). He was a rationalist who rejected the idea that salvation is by Christ alone. However, while at Karlsruhe, Pastor W. Stern left rationalism behind and associated with Pietism.

In 1830, at the same time that Pastor W. Stern abandoned rationalism, sixteen-year-old Peter Stern enrolled in the teaching school. Under the auspices and influence of Pastor W. Stern, Peter Stern also became interested in the Pietists Movement.

After graduation from Karlsruhe, Peter was sent to Broetsingen, near Pforzheim, to be the lower grade teacher. He later transferred to Zeisenhausen where he married Philippine Doll, the

daughter of a tavern owner, on May 20, 1840. Soon after, the couple moved to Oberschuepf in Baden and started a family. In 1846, Peter was once again transferred; this time he went to Spranthal, near Bretten.

In 1848, Peter was assigned to Buechenbronn. Because there was no pastor at the congregation in Buechenbronn, Peter volunteered to read a sermon every other week and help with Communion when necessary. The pastor at the nearby church in Broetzingen, Pastor Maun, was not a supporter of the Lutherans. For this reason, Peter would not use Maun's sermons. Often times, Peter had to sort through sermons on his own before he found one he felt comfortable reading to the people. At a time of unbelief and rationalism affected the spirituality thousands, Peter was intent on reading sermons that were in line with God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions.

As Peter began to fill the role of pastor, he soon recognized that the congregation lacked constant spiritual guidance. To strengthen the spirituality, he started and conducted mid-week devotions. Before long, he was asked to hold these devotions twice a week, once on Sunday evenings and once during the week. Some people would walk from their homes almost two hours away to gather around God's Word.

During this time, Peter served as a schoolteacher for the Evangelical Church in Buechenbronn. He served there faithfully until 1859 when, for reasons of conscience, he left the state church. He was uncomfortable with the unity many Reformed and Lutheran churches tried to force. In 1858, Peter's wife, Philippine, and oldest son, Gotthold, left the state church. Peter himself wouldn't leave until almost a year later.

Concerning the step away from the state church, Peter's youngest son, Gottlob, wrote,

For our parents this [leaving], so important and significant step for their whole lives, was not a hasty and thoughtless action that could have brought them material advantages, rather, it was taken out of conviction based on God's Word and the confessional writings of our Ev. Lutheran church. God's Word was dearer to our parents than all else¹.

The Stern family was determined to stand on the firm foundation of God's Holy Word and cling to its saving promises. While God's Word in its truth and purity was their main encouragement, the Sterns received further backing from other devout Lutherans as well. They were comforted by the godly support of men like Pastor Max Frommel, Loehe, Harms, and even some American Lutherans by the names of Vetter and Walther. Correspondence to these faithful Lutherans helped to solidify the Sterns' decision to leave the state church.

When Peter finally left the state church, the family moved to Inspringen. While here, Pastor Max Frommel served their spiritual needs as a pastor faithful to the Word of God. Thankful for a new teacher in their midst, the congregation soon called Peter Stern to be the school's new religion teacher. Here, he supported himself, his wife, and his six children on 50 gulden a year plus the gifts of fruits and vegetables from the congregation members. For additional money, he worked for rich families in Pforzheim at a tutor.

Peter diligently taught in the homes of the Lutheran families scattered over the countryside. Summer and winter, day and night, he faithfully walked to instruct God's children in the truths of the saving Word. Along the way, he would memorize Latin vocabulary, study and memorize his favorite hymns and Psalms, and familiarize himself all the more with his Bible. While his main objective was to teach the children, he also ministered to the adults. Happily, with walking stick in hand, he went to teach.

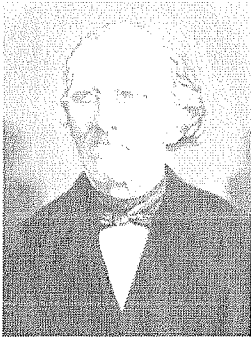
In the 1860s, along with his teaching and sermon-reading responsibilities, Peter took on the task of the church choir director and sexton. Serving as what we today would call a staff-

¹ Stern, Gottlob. A Family History. Pg. 6.

minister, Peter faithfully ministered to the congregation. With a pastor's heart, he knew every member of the church and was equally concerned about an individual's salvation as he was with his own. Like a faithful shepherd, he also went after those who had strayed away. In thanksgiving, his life revolved around service to his Savior King.

Since he had stepped away from the state church, the Stern family was somewhat ostracized by many of the townspeople. And yet, Peter faithfully taught religion in the homes of parents in the area around Inspringen. On the Sundays when there was no service in Inspringen, Peter would go with the pastor to another preaching station and lead the singing. By the grace of God, on April 22, 1883 Peter Stern celebrated his 50th anniversary in the ministry in good health.

When he was 73 years old, Peter became sick and was bedridden for 11 months. Though



ill, he continued to conduct his catechism classes. The only change he allowed to occur was that the kids had to come to learn at his bedside. In all of his teaching, he never lost sight of what was truly important. He remained intent to instruct the children entrusted to him by Christ in the saving truths of Scripture. Concerned for the children's salvation, he

offered a heartfelt prayer at the beginning and the close of each lesson.

During the last days of Peter's life, his mind was not as clear as it once was. Often, when the family would check up on him, he spoke to an "imaginary" friend. No one else was in the room. On a few occasions, when checked upon, he would ask about this friend who had promised to return. On July 19, 1888 at the age of 73 years, 11 months, and 33 days, Peter asked once more for the whereabouts of his friend. No one knew; he became sad because the friend promised to come and see him. At 8 o'clock on July 19, 1888, Peter's friend came and took him to his heavenly home.

Though never publicly ordained, Peter, this faithful servant of the Lord was laid to rest with the words of Paul, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” Galatians 6:14.

His wife, Philippine, died on March 10, 1895. At the age of 76, she was laid to rest next to her husband at the cemetery in Inspringen.

By the grace of God, the faith that Peter and Philippine cherished was instilled into their six children Gotthold, Marie, Ferdinand, Emil Frederik, Philippine Emma, and Gottlob [Gottlieb]. By that same grace, Peter and Philippine’s youngest son, Gottlob, also went on to proclaim the gospel message.

Gottlob Stern was born on February 22, 1859. Of his own birth, he wrote,

My mother had a difficult pregnancy and labor and when I was born I was thought to be a stillborn. I was laid aside, later to be prepared for burial, and so the doctor could attend to my mother. . .The doctor glanced at me and noticed a shallow breathing, so he quickly poured cold water on me and I survived. That’s how or why I was named “Gottlob” (Praise God!).²

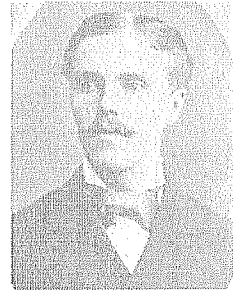
His pastor, Pastor Mau, baptized Gottlob ten months before his father left the state-church. Gottlob had learned to read and write by the time he was seven, so Peter sent him to the Gymnasium in Pforzheim. Although he arrived at school a few weeks late, he was well enough prepared that he could have easily caught up with the rest of the class. By his own admission however, Gottlob was lazy when it came to his studies and he didn’t pass. He returned home to a disappointed father and was further tutored to the point where he successfully passed the class. In 1871, he was accepted into the 7th grade of the public school. After graduation, as was the custom, Gottlob was allowed to take confirmation classes.

Because he had been a sickly child and was restored to good health, Gottlob was already very aware of God’s presence and understood that God had never forsaken him. He referred to

² Stern, Gottlob. A Short Description from my Birth until my 18th Year. Pg. 23

his confirmation classes as “the crown of my schooling.”³ As he looked closely at God’s Word, he learned all the more how compassionate God was, even to an unfaithful sinner. Gottlob was confirmed on Pentecost Monday 1873.

After his confirmation, Gottlob decided to follow in his father’s footsteps and become a teacher. No information was available as to where he studied or how he spent the years between his confirmation and his immigration to America in 1881.



Under the persuasion of Dr. C.F.W. Walther, Gottlob came to America and began his studies at the Theological Seminary in Springfield, IL. Two years later, in 1883, he completed his pastoral studies. After graduation, because his father wanted him to be a teacher, he decided not to begin immediately in the parish.

On September 22, 1883, Gottlob married Maria Landskron, of Stuttgart. The two of them moved to Monroe, MI, where, for one year, Gottlob taught at Trinity School (LCMS). Over the years, the Lord would bless Gottlob and Maria with eight children (Frederic [WELS pastor], Otto C., Helmuth, Marie (Wallschlaeger), Julia (Schoen), Max [WELS pastor], Paula (Gerth), Johanna (Gruhn)).

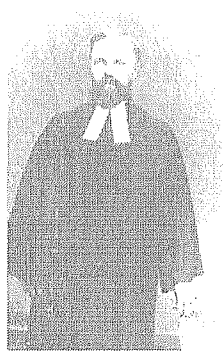
Having fulfilled his father’s wish with a year of teaching, Gottlob entered into the pastoral ministry. In 1885, he was ordained as Pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Bedford, Ohio (presently: Maple Heights). According to Maria’s obituary, the two left Bedford and carried out mission work in New York and Pennsylvania before they arrived in Sebewaing, Michigan. On November 15, 1890, Gottlob began his service at New Salem Ev. Lutheran Church.

The early days of this ministry were trying times for Gottlob and family. The recent merger of the Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota Synods brought with it the intention to

³ Stern. Ibid. pg. 27

downsize Michigan Lutheran Seminary into a preparatory school. At first, New Salem wished to be a member of the Michigan Synod, but decided to suspend membership within the Synod until the MLS issue and other pre-existing quarrels within the Synod itself could be settled.

Despite being a congregation independent of a Synod, New Salem still wanted to make their voice heard at the Synodical Conference in Evansville, Indiana. While at the Conference, however, New Salem's official stance changed entirely.



Gottlob's conscience was troubled by New Salem's present affiliation so he resigned his pastoral leadership. He remained in Sebewaing, and along with nearly one-third of the New Salem Christians formed Zion Lutheran Congregation. This small group of Christians held their services at an old country school. After Gottlob left in 1897, the majority of the Zion-Lutherans later joined Immanuel Lutheran Church (LCMS).

The years in Sebewaing were difficult years but Gottlob remained faithful to his Lord and to his work there until 1897. From Sebewaing, Gottlob went to Iron Ridge, Wisconsin where he had received a call to serve God's people at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church. Here, the Lord blessed his ministry and his work and the congregation grew both numerically, structurally, and, more important, spiritually. Here, at St. Matthew's, he found the spiritual family he craved while at New Salem.

Almost five years later, in 1902, Gottlob received a call to minister at St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin and at St. John in the Town of Trenton. He was installed on August 31, 1902 and served there faithfully until April of 1909 when he moved to Zion, in the Town of Leeds (now Arlington, Wisconsin). It was written about him that he, "was held in loving esteem by the members of Zion, especially the children whom he instructed in

parts of the catechism and also in the secular subjects. He was affectionately called Papa Stern and Maria was lovingly referred to as Mama Stern.⁴”

Due to health problems from gallstones, Gottlob resigned from Zion. On September 10, 1918, he preached his farewell sermon to God’s saints and his dear friends and moved to Columbus, WI. Even sickness could not keep him away from the ministry, as he served as guest preacher and vacancy pastor for churches in the area, but mainly for his beloved flock at Zion.

On August 23, 1931, Gottlob met his Savior Jesus whose grace he had faithfully proclaimed for 46 years. Maria lived for another 18 years and died on May 14, 1949. Both Gottlob and Maria are buried at Hillside Cemetery in Columbus, WI. Their epitaph contains the promise of our victorious Savior and the source of their comfort and joy, “I am the Resurrection and the Life” (John 11:25).

Before he died, Gottlob enjoyed the privilege of ordaining his oldest son, Frederic, into the public ministry as the third “Pastor Stern.”

Frederic Emil Stern was born on March 23, 1885 in Bedford, Ohio and was born into God’s family through holy baptism on March 29, 1885. In 1898, he was confirmed by his father at St. Matthew’s in Iron Ridge, Wisconsin. He then went on to Northwestern College in Watertown, WI.

While at Northwestern Fred worked for the newspaper and considered a career in journalism. Because of his journalistic gifts, he was offered a job at a new newspaper in Austin, Minnesota. He went through his senior year at Northwestern College, in fact, uncertain whether to make a career of writing sermons or editorials.

When asked by a newspaper why he made the decision towards the ministry, for example, Fred replied, “I knew my folks wanted me to try to become a minister, and they asked

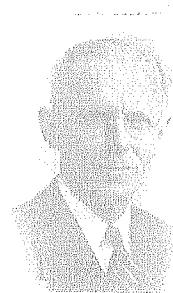
⁴ Zion, Arlington, WI. History. Pg. 66

me to give the seminary a try for one year. Then if I didn't want to go any further in the ministry, I could do what I wanted.⁵ Much like his father, who complied with Peter's wishes to be a teacher, Fred listened to Gottlob and enrolled at the Seminary in Wauwatosa.

After graduation, he was ordained by his father on July 17, 1910 at Zion in Leeds, WI. He then served as a "pioneer pastor," doing mission work in the state of Washington. While here, he served as a circuit-rider for what was soon to become the WELS Pacific Northwest District. For almost two years, Fred lived in Mansfield and served seven small congregations scattered throughout eastern Washington. Serving all seven churches demanded an entire week because he was forced to travel stagecoach or horse and buggy.

In 1912, he came back to Wisconsin to be married. On August 21, 1912, Fred married Lydia Pieper, the daughter of Professor August Peiper, and the two of them then returned to Mansfield.

St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Watertown, WI still conducted services in German in 1916. Because English was becoming more dominant throughout the area, Fred was called to be an English-speaking missionary in Watertown. Concerned about the seven flocks under his care in Washington, he declined the call. A few weeks later, he received the same call a second time. This time, Pastor J. Klingmann told Fred that he was convinced that the Holy Spirit would use Fred's gifts in Watertown. Under this encouragement, Fred accepted the call, returned to Wisconsin, and began the initial steps toward forming an English-speaking congregation.



As he went about his work in Watertown, he was known as "the bicycling pastor" because, instead of a car, he used a bike to get around town. By grace, the Lord blessed Fred's

⁵ From the Glenwood, Minnesota newspaper. Thursday, July 14, 1960.

missionary work and an English speaking church was formed. The congregation, which later took the name "Trinity," served as his flock until 1932.

While in Watertown, on October 27, 1923, the Lord in his wisdom called home Fred's beloved wife, Lydia. The two were married for only 11 years, but the Lord had richly blessed the Sterns with five children - four daughters and one son. On October 25, 1925, Pastor Stern married Bertha Frahnke of Milwaukee. She died in Glenwood, Minnesota on March 6, 1961.

After he completed his service at Trinity, the Stern family moved to Detroit, Michigan. Here, Fred served Mt. Olive congregation from 1933-1939. A wonderful blessing came while in Detroit in that he was able to send his children to Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw. The Sterns came to know and love the school that their Gottlob Stern loved and that their own grandchildren and great-grandchildren come to love as well.

After almost six years in Detroit, Fred received a call to be the missionary to Arizona. From August 1939 until October 1941, he lived in Tucson but canvassed much of Arizona looking for places to establish a preaching station. Prayerfully, he considered where God's Word might flourish. His studies determined that Chandler and Winslow opportune places for God's work to begin. The Winslow pastor was also to work in the cities along the Santa Fe Railroad. This work eventually resulted in a Flagstaff ministry. Little would Fred know that his own grandson, Jonathan, would serve the Flagstaff congregation nearly 60 years later.

From Arizona, Fred took a call up to Seattle, Washington where he began the groundwork for Grace Congregation, the first WELS church in the Seattle area. He made Seattle his home from 1941 until 1951.

In 1952 he accepted a call back to the Midwest and served as pastor of Calvary Congregation in Glenwood, Minnesota. While in Glenwood, he was blessed to celebrate his 50th

anniversary in the public ministry. Looking back on the decision to try the Seminary for a year, he said with a smile, "I've never been sorry I made that decision more than 50 years ago⁶." He served here until 1963 when he retired to Two Rivers, WI where his only son, Theodore, was already serving in the ministry.

According to Grandma Ruth Stern (Ted's wife), Fred often times found his way into St. John's church office and began working to the point that he would annoy the young Reverend Stern. In an attempt to pacify the retired Pastor Stern, Ruth suggested that Fred be asked to make the monthly shut-in visits and sick calls. Happily, Fred undertook the task and conveniently showed up at the shut-in's homes right around lunch.

Pastor Frederic Stern was taken into eternal glory on June 18, 1972. He was blessed with good health virtually his entire life. On Monday, June 12, in fact, he was on his way to visit his son's grave and instead of walking half a block down the road to the steps, he tried to walk up a grassy hill. While walking, he slipped on the wet grass, fell back, and hit his head. He never regained consciousness. He was buried on June 21, 1972 at the Lutheran Cemetery in Watertown, Wisconsin. The sermon text was Matthew 25:34, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."

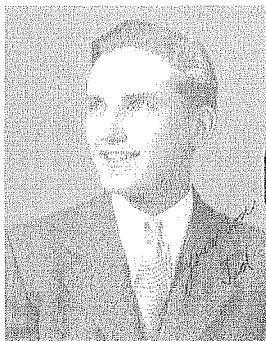
In Fred's obituary Pastor E. Stelter wrote, "Blessed with good health and abounding zeal, Pastor Stern actually spent 61 of his 87 years in the work of his Lord - almost to the very day that he died. That is a blessing devoutly to be prayed for."

The blessings of the public ministry were handed on to Frederic's only son, Theodore. Although his time in this world was short by man's standards, the Lord did use Theodore as his faithful servant and blessed his efforts.

⁶The County Tribune (Glenwood, MN): July 14, 1960

Theodore Frederic Stern was born on September 21, 1918 in Watertown, Wisconsin. He attended St. Mark's Lutheran School until his family moved to Detroit, Michigan when his dad took the call to serve at Mt. Olive in 1932.

In the fall of that same year Theodore went to Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw,



Michigan, where he was encouraged to study for the pastoral ministry. At MLS, Ted excelled academically and athletically, but after graduating in 1936, he decided not to enroll at Northwestern College to prepare for the ministry. Instead, Ted briefly considered a career as a lawyer, but after his year off, he led by God's grace to reconsider the public ministry. He enrolled in Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin in the fall of 1937.

While at Northwestern and later at the Seminary, Ted once again applied himself to his studies and did very well. He was blessed with the gifts to understand the Greek and Hebrew as well as exceptional organizational skills. Both of these blessings would serve him well in the ministry as a pastor, husband, and father.

In 1944 he graduated Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon with a *magna cum laude* and was assigned as an instructor to his alma mater, Michigan Lutheran Seminary. He taught at MLS for one year and then married Ruth Zeile, the daughter of Pastor Andrew Zeile. Pastor Zeile was a conservative minister who had a proper understanding of God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions. He served Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Saginaw, MI and was the President of the Michigan District for the LCMS.

From Saginaw, the Sterns headed west to Omak, Washington, where Pastor Ted Stern began his parish service. He served God's people at Trinity, Omak from 1945 until 1950. While out west, he and Ruth were blessed with two daughters - Miriam (b. Nov. 19, 1946) and Dorothy

(Koepsell, b. April 26, 1948). In 1950, he was called to shepherd the saints at Salem Congregation in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. Here they were again blessed with two more children, Priscilla (Braun, b. May 28, 1951, d. Sept. 6, 2007) and Jonathan (b. July 28, 1952).



In the fall of 1956, the Sterns moved to Two Rivers, Wisconsin, and in October of the same year, Ted was installed as pastor of his final congregation, St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church.

Throughout his years, Ted loved being both a pastor and a father. As a pastor, he was professional, polished, and gifted in his sermonizing. As a father, he was both loving and firm. Mindful of the importance of being there for his children, he would readily excuse himself from a meeting to attend to his families needs. Throughout his 23 years in the parish and as a father, both offices remained extremely important to him.

After Pastor Walter Haase retired in 1960, Ted served as the only shepherd for the 1300 souls at St. John's. By grace alone, God equipped his servant with the necessary gifts for such a task.

The major Synodical event that took place in Ted's ministry was the separation of fellowship between the Wisconsin Synod and the Missouri Synod. In 1961, the split tore apart churches and families all across America. As a WELS pastor married to the daughter of an LCMS District President, both Ted's ministry and his family felt the effects directly. When the split became official, Ted's in-laws, LCMS Presidents and Pastors, could no longer participate in any celebration services when they came to visit the Sterns. The same stood true for Pastor Stern when he went to Saginaw. At times, heated doctrinal debates would take place at family

gathering. Most debates resulted by both sides mutually agreeing not to discuss doctrine and practice any further around family.

Through these difficult times, by the grace of God, Ted remained firm in his faith and diligent as a pastor. Only seven years after the Synodical split, Ted was called home. A pastor of 1300 and a father of four, the Lord called him to eternal glory on March 5, 1968. He was 49 years old when he died of a brain tumor. His funeral was officiated by long-time friend and Christian brother, Missionary Pastor Theodore Sauer. The text for Pastor Sauer's funeral sermon was Isaiah 45:15, "Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel." For 24 years, Ted faithfully proclaimed his Savior's work in the public ministry. He was buried at Pioneers Rest Cemetery in Two Rivers, Wisconsin.

After her husband died, Ruth Stern moved to Milwaukee and worked as the secretary to the President of the Wisconsin Synod. Her background in the LCMS and knowledge of the WELS proved beneficial as she worked with President O. J. Naumann and President Carl Mischke.

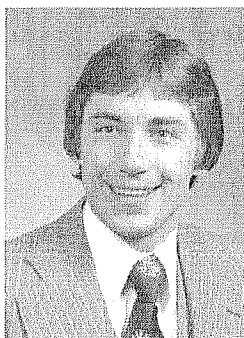
Today, Ruth resides in an assisted living home in Waukesha, Wisconsin. At 93 years old, she still places her days in the hands of a gracious Lord. Eagerly, it seems, she looks forward to the day when she too will meet her Savior. Until that day comes, her Daily Meditations book lies open on her dresser and her comfort lies in the victory of Jesus empty tomb.

In his grace, the Lord richly blessed Ted with a God-fearing wife. In that same grace, Ted was given a son, Jonathan, who too would go on to serve the Savior in the public ministry.

Jonathan David Stern was born on July 28, 1952 while Pastor Ted Stern served in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. He was baptized two weeks later on August 10, 1952. When he was four, he moved to Two Rivers and attended grade school at St. John's.

Even though Manitowoc Lutheran High School was only a few minutes away and the three girls already went there, Ted still felt it important that his son attend Northwestern Preparatory School in Watertown, Wisconsin where he could be encouraged to consider the pastoral ministry. So after his confirmation in 1966,⁷ Ted and Ruth dropped Jon off in Watertown.

Jon readily admits that while his dad was alive, and even for a time after his dad died, the last thing he wanted to be was a pastor. But along the way, God in his grace placed wonderful lay people who encouraged him to continue in his training. In 1974, Jon graduated from Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin and headed for the Seminary in Mequon.



After his first year in Mequon, he took a job in Glacier National Park driving the red jammer busses. That summer, he still couldn't see himself as a pastor so he wrote a letter to WLS President Lawrenz to report that he would not be returning to the Seminary in the fall. For the meantime, he planned to work as a day laborer in Montana wherever he could find work. After a month out West, he came back to see his mom and visit his friends at the Seminary. Realizing that he did not want to be a job-hopper for the rest of his life, he humbly requested to be re-instated as a student at the Seminary. Although he had missed nearly an entire month, the faculty allowed him to return and continue his studies.

In the Spring of 1976 he accepted an under-graduate tutor position at Northwestern Prep. His main job was the dorm supervision of 240 young men; but he also taught Ancient History, coached Prep and College tennis, helped out with basketball, and served as the faculty's coffee and doughnut boy. After tutoring, he was assigned as Vicar to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Benton Harbor, Michigan. Here, under Michigan District President Walter Zarling, he was

⁷ Jon's Confirmation date: April 3, 1966

once again encouraged to become a minister. In August of 1978, he returned to Mequon for his final year at the Seminary and graduated in the spring of 1979.

On June 24, 1979, he married Patricia Weitz of Oshkosh, Wisconsin who taught at Siloah Lutheran School. The two then moved to Plymouth, Minnesota after Jon received a call to Ascension Lutheran Church, a mission congregation in one of the newer suburbs of Minneapolis. Here, Pat and Jon were blessed with twin daughters, Mollie Leigh and Hannah Hilary (Scharf) (March 27, 1980), and a son, Jesse Andrew (April 20, 1981).

The early days in Jon's ministry were enjoyable, but not without difficulty. In October of 1981, Jesse was admitted to Minneapolis Children's Hospital where he would intermittently spend almost six months. During this time, because of Jesse's sickness, the Sterns got cut off from their insurance company so Jon began painting as a side job to pay the bills. Eventually the Sterns were without a house, and Jon and Jesse moved in with Ascension member Les Goetzke while Pat took the twins to live in Oshkosh, WI. But the grace of God once again proved immeasurable as the Lord saw the Stern's through these trying times.

The Minnesota days were short lived because Jon received and accepted a call to serve at a small congregation in the thumb area of Michigan by the name "New Salem." Almost 100 years later, Pastor Jon Stern would serve the congregation that his great grandfather also served.

Late in 1982, then, the Stern family moved to Sebawaing, Michigan to shepherd God's flock at New Salem. The Sebawaing years proved to be some of the happiest days in Jon's ministry. Jon still says that while in Sebawaing, "Things just seemed to click."

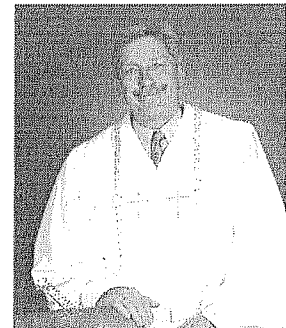
Here, the Lord continued to use Jon's gifts for the work of the gospel. With a new teacher in the school, Mr. David Lecker, the entire Sebawaing ministry was revived and began to thrive. For years, every child in the church old enough to attend school went to New Salem

Lutheran. The congregation grew close to the Sterns and the Sterns, now numbering six when Jenna Elizabeth entered into the world (March 7, 1986), grew close to the congregation. Jon still speaks of New Salem as “his Philippi” as he remembers them with joy and thanksgiving; much the same way that the Apostle Paul speaks of the original Philippian congregation.

After eight years of shepherding God’s people at New Salem, the Lord led Jon to take care of the Bethany flock in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. In 1990, we tearfully left our beloved friends in Sebawaing and headed to the other side of Lake Michigan. Things were so different in Manitowoc than in Sebawaing. The comfort of a small town was replaced with the intimidation of a larger one. The huge congregation feel of Bethany eclipsed the close-knit family we left in New Salem. Despite the change, Jon constantly relied on and faithfully proclaimed the one thing that never changes, the unconditional love of our Savior.

The Manitowoc days were also short-lived because we moved to Adrian, Michigan in August of 1992. Here, Jon faithfully served the saints at St. Stephen’s for 10 years; then in June of 2002 took the call to Mt. Calvary in Flagstaff, Arizona where he currently ministers. For the second time in his ministry, he has served a congregation at which a previous Pastor Stern has served.

Like every ministry, his has endured its share of ups and downs, but through it all, he has remained humbly thankful that the Lord has used him to proclaim the precious Gospel truths. He continues to conduct his ministry with a genuine pastor’s heart. Like Peter Stern generations before, he faithfully shepherds the flock that God has placed in his care. Firm in his doctrine and loving in his approach to the ministry, he remains true to the unchanging Word of our Lord. His concern is for both the spiritual and the



eternal welfare of God's people. In his preaching and teaching, he succeeds at bringing people back to the redemptive work of our Savior Jesus.

As he looks back on his ministry, he keeps these words in mind and offers them to anyone considering a career in the Lord's service.

Consider it [the ministry] the highest calling God gives to a man; not many tell you that, but the Bible says it. Be realistic and always know that where sin is the problem in our hearts and lives, Jesus is and will always be the solution. Every other profession serves only the needs of this life; the gospel serves the needs for this life and the life to come. And for those in the ministry, keep in mind, the Lord chose you, you did not choose the ministry. . . . One enters the ministry only by the grace of God; one serves in the ministry only by the grace of God; one is competent to serve only by the grace of God.⁸

As a father, he has been an immense blessing to his children, nieces and nephews. Always willing to listen or lend advice, he brings his genuine pastor's heart to his family's home. Whether taking time for dinner devotions, playing a game of H-O-R-S-E in a shirt and tie, hiking the Grand Canyon, or gathering us around the piano to sing a hymn, Mollie, Hannah, Jenna, and I have never lacked a dad.

Close to his side is his faithful wife, Pat. Currently, she teaches Special Education in the Flagstaff Public School system; her focus is on children with Autism. She too remains a faithful servant, a wonderful mother, and a great compliment to Jon's ministry. Her children humbly give thanks to the Lord for the blessing of their Christian mom.

Both parents have been a constant source of Christian encouragement to their children. They were intent to bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. After confirmation and graduation from St. Stephen's in Adrian, they sent each of us to Michigan Lutheran Seminary where we would continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior.

⁸ From an e-mail dad sent me on December 3, 2007.

From MLS, Mollie, their oldest, went on to Martin Luther College to become a teacher. In May of 2002, she was assigned to Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, WI - the same school Jon tutored at 26 years earlier. Currently, she teaches at Martin Luther School in Plzen, Czech Republic. Lord willing, she will return to Luther Prep in August to teach English.

After MLS, Hannah too went on to MLC. In May of 2002, she was assigned as the lower grade teacher at Bay Pines Lutheran School in Seminole Florida. In May of 2004, she married Nathanael Scharf of West Allis, WI, and taught English at Luther Prep school along side her twin sister. In 2005, the Scharfs moved to Thornton, Colorado. As Nate vicared in Thornton, Hannah taught at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran School in Westminster, CO. After Nate's vicar year, they returned to Milwaukee and Hannah taught at Loving Shepherd in Milwaukee. From the Seminary, Nate was assigned as Tutor at Luther Prep School in Watertown. Both Scharfs enjoy teaching there and are thankful for every blessing the Lord has poured out on them. They are expecting another wonderful blessing, a son, on Feb. 5, 2008.

After MLS, Jenna, the youngest, moved home to Flagstaff, AZ to attend Northern Arizona University. Currently, she is studying biology and chemistry in the hopes to become an endocrinologist. She was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes in the fall of 1995 and since then has hoped to help children afflicted with the same disease. She serves as a faithful lay-leader as organist and Sunday School/VBS teacher at Mt. Calvary. We are proud of her service to our Savior.

The only son born to Pat and Jon is Jesse Andrew. I was born on April 20, 1981 in St. Louis Park, Minnesota. I was given the middle name Andrew because that was my great grandpa Zeile's first name and the name of the apostle who, among other things, was known for pointing people to Jesus. God claimed me as his own through the waters of holy baptism on

April 22, 1981. I was very sick as an infant and, on multiple occasions, it seemed as though my time of grace was drawing to a close. On some occasions, my family even prayed that it be so because I was so sick. But our Gracious Savior in his providential care saw fit to restore my health.

I started grade school at New Salem in Sebawaing and then, in the third grade, moved to Bethany, Manitowoc. I'm not sure I really understood what was going on and why we left Michigan. Then again, I don't know that I understood why we moved back to Michigan in August of 1992. Regardless, I started the sixth grade at St. Stephens in Adrian, Michigan.

I was confirmed by my father, Pastor Jonathan Stern, on May 7, 1995. My confirmation verse is Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." I went to Michigan Lutheran Seminary the next fall and was encouraged to consider the public ministry. For the most part, I still didn't know what I wanted to do when I graduated, so I followed my friends to Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota in the fall of 1999. By the grace of God, I graduated from MLC in May of 2003.

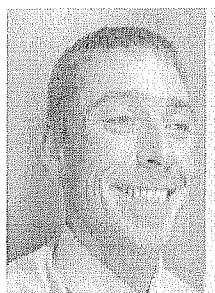
I took a year off after college to live at home in Flagstaff. Watching my friends go to the Seminary without me was one of the hardest things I've done. During this year, I worked for the Flagstaff Park Department and Water Department. I quickly decided not to work there for the rest of my life. After extensive conversations with a number of friends and a few visits back to the Midwest to see family, I decided to try the Seminary for one year.

The initial years at the Seminary did not convince me that the ministry was for me. I wanted to quit on numerous occasions, but the Lord used the family and friends that I had in the area to keep me here. In particular, he used Matthew and Jeremy Braun, Pastor Clark Schultz, and the entire Koepsell family to encourage me to stay at the Seminary. They helped me to see

that the Lord had a plan in mind for me and could use me to accomplish his work. I remain thankful for their constant encouragement.

In his grace, the Lord sent me to Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Salt Lake City, Utah to vicar. He used Pastor Michael Quandt (now Professor at WLS) and Pastor Jon Micheel to help me experience ministry on a first hand basis. Their help and encouragement of all the people at Prince of Peace gave me the push I needed to return to the Seminary. I thank God that he has placed pastors and people like them in our synod.

Today, by the grace of God alone, I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. If it is



his will, I will be a worker in his harvest field six months from now. Should the Lord use me, I pray that he would give me the strength to stand firm on his promises, the confidence to proclaim his Word boldly, and a servant's heart that realizes that I, like so many before me, especially the five generations of Sterns, am humbly privileged to serve.

The Stern family has been privileged to serve the Savior publicly for six consecutive generations. While some may view that as a rarity, we consider it an immense blessing that he has used us. In thanksgiving to our great God, we proudly sing and take to heart the words of Christian Worship Hymn 293, "God's word is our great heritage and shall be our forever! To spread its light from age to age, shall be our chief endeavor. Through life, it guides our way. In death, it is our stay. Lord grant while worlds endure, we keep his teaching pure, throughout all generations."

May the Lord continue to send out workers into his harvest field.

Soli Deo Gloria!

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