

## Introduction

The following article is an edited version of sections of an unpublished book manuscript written by Stephen Forslund of Tacoma, Washington in approximately 1975. Readers are encouraged to refer to the original document in the Scandinavian Immigrant Experience Collection at Pacific Lutheran University. (endnote 1) as dates and names may not be accurate due to the difficulty of reading the original. In addition, Forslund writes from the knowledge of the time which may not be always accurate in light of current information. Any editing mistakes are the responsibility of this editor. Question marks indicate items that were not resolvable by this editor. Where possible, the original wording as written by Forslund is used to capture the flavor of thinking at the time of writing. Some wording may be offensive to some readers.

The editor would like to express appreciation to Kerstin Ringdahl, Curator of the Scandinavian Immigrant Experience Collection (SIE), Pacific Lutheran University and to the University for assistance and allowing access to the original material.

Stephen Forslund was born in 1892 in Borlänge, Dalarna, Sweden. He immigrated to the United States in 1911 and worked for the Griffin Wheel Company in Tacoma. With an intense interest in Swedish Tacoma, he wrote many articles for the Tacoma News Tribune and saved his articles in several scrapbooks along with a draft book manuscript.

## TACOMA SWEDISH CHURCHES

The notable event in the small colony of Swedes in Tacoma in 1882 was the founding of the Swedish Lutheran Church by the pioneer missionary Rev. Peter Carlson. He had visited Tacoma several times for about 3 years and had begun to despair that the Swedes would ever arrive in sufficient numbers to form a congregation. However, by 1882 some Swedish families had arrived in the area and a congregation was organized.

There seems to be a dispute as to where the congregation was organized. Hans Bergman's book "History of Scandinavians in Tacoma and Pierce County" (endnote 2) maintains that it took place in the home of August Johnson while an account of this event at the congregation's 90th anniversary states that it took place in the home of Carl Sehlstrom. Ernst Skarstedt's book "*Washington och dess svenska befolkning*" (endnote 3) states that there were 11 couples present. Officers were elected at the initial meeting, F. Kildehim. G. Sehlestrom and August Johnson were elected trustees, L.E. Breden, Morton Ruth, and Olof W. Nelson were elected deacons. Others present together with their wives were: Bengt Johnson, Peter Peterson, John Sandberg, Olof Olson and Andrew Olson. It was also emphasized, sometimes even prominently, that some of the original members were Norwegians. Looking over the above names it is hard to detect a Norwegian among them. It may be that some of the other Scandinavians joined the church after the congregation was established, as the first Norwegian

missionary did not appear until 1887. He was welcomed by the Swedish Lutheran pastor and was invited to hold his services in the Swedish church and also to share the parsonage until other arrangements could be made. However, the claim that this was the first Swedish church in Washington Territory is not quite correct. Rev. Carlson had gone east for a spell and was relieved by Rev. Jonas Vender. During his stay in Washington Territory, he was able to organize a Swedish Lutheran Church at La Conner in 1881. There was no other congregation formed until 1892 and no regular pastor serving until 1895. However, there was a Swedish Lutheran mission in Clarke County served by pastors from Astoria or Portland. Before organizing the Tacoma congregation, Rev. Carlson had elicited a promise of a donation of two lots from the Tacoma Land Company on the lower side of Tacoma Ave. between 11th and 12th street for a proposed site for the church.

The budding Swedish Lutheran congregation also began to build their church in 1883. This was a modest structure and measured 26 by 49 feet. K. M. Peterson was the contractor. The inside finish seems to have been done by the members themselves. Rev. Carlson who in his younger days was a carpenter, made the altar, altar railing, pulpit and pews with the help of some of the members. Alfred Stenstrom and Susie Swanson did the interior and exterior painting. The church was completed and ready for dedication in 1885 after the congregation had obtained its own pastor. Rev. A. G. Anderson, a newly ordained minister, arrived in Tacoma in 1884 to take charge of the struggling Swedish Lutheran congregation which now numbered 50 members. Rev. Anderson, born in 1854, was a native of Mårbeck Parish in Småland. He arrived in the Midwest in 1862, attended Augustana College and Seminary, graduating in 1882 (?). After a year of teaching at Augustana College and another year at Gustavus Adolphus College, he was ordained in 1884 and immediately came to Tacoma. Besides Tacoma, he held services in Seattle every other Sunday and ministered to his countrymen in Bothell, LaConner, Port Townsend and Port Angeles.

There is not too much recorded from 1885. The Swedish Lutheran Church was dedicated. Forslund supposed this was without too much pomp and ceremony as he understood that Rev. A. G. Anderson was then the only Swedish Lutheran pastor in the entire Territory of Washington.

When the Swedes began to arrive in larger numbers, the meeting capacity of the Swedish Lutheran Church was no longer sufficient. In the summer of 1888, a committee consisting of Gustav Pehrson, M. A. Klasell and Alfred Stenstrom was appointed to find a suitable location for a new church. The present location of the church was never too satisfactory anyway as it was located way below street level. An old timer expressed it this way: "usually people go up to the church but here we go down," as there was an 80 foot drop from the street. As a site for the new edifice, the committee recommended the northeast corner of South 8th and I streets which was available for a price of \$4,660. The committee's recommendation was accepted and the trustees of the congregation-- John Turner, Gustave Pehrson, A. Nordstrom and Olof Bloom, were authorized to sell the church property for \$800 with the provision that the congregation would have the privilege of using it for 6 months until the new church was finished. The Tacoma Land Company turned out to be something of an *Indian giver* however. Before the company would give the congregation a clear title to the property, they demanded the sum of \$900, the approximate value of the property when it was donated to the congregation.

Rev. G. A. Anderson who arrived in 1884 as the first pastor of the Swedish Lutheran Church resigned the pastorate in 1893 and accepted a call to Spokane. He was succeeded by Rev. P.A. Mattson, a newly ordained minister of the Augustana Synod in 1894.

### **THE SWEDISH LUTHERAN CHURCH GETS COMPETITION**

Discontent with prevailing religious conditions in Sweden in mid-19th century together with the absolute freedom prevailing in America were factors in the mass migration that began in this era. In Sweden, there had been some stringent laws against convocations (Sic), that is, private prayer meetings and religious assemblies not sanctioned by the state Lutheran Church. These laws were repealed in 1858, which caused the pietistic wing of the state church to erect mission houses and houses of prayer where lay preachers known as colporteurs could preach to their heart's content. There was no intent however, by those spiritually awakened people to withdraw from the established church. They just formed associations to propagate the gospel at home and abroad. The leader of this Pietistic wing was Paul Peter Waldenstrom, who had a degree in Philosophy from the University of Uppsala. Mr. Waldenstrom was a teacher of Hebrew, Greek and Theology in junior colleges and in 1864 had been ordained a pastor in the state church. In 1872 he published an article disagreeing with the orthodox Lutheran doctrine in regards to the vicarious atonement (Sic). This led to a lot of wrangling, which culminated in the forming of the Swedish Mission Covenant Society.

In 1858, one of these colporteurs, John Senngren, arrived in Chicago from Småland and by 1873 a Mission Synod was formed and in 1889 the Swedish Mission Church of Tacoma was organized with 13 members. Four lots at South 18th and J Street were purchased for \$5000 in 1890 and in 1893 a church was built there at a cost of \$3000. The organizing pastor was Rev C.A. Nelson who was hired with an agreed salary of \$300 a year. He was followed by Rev. J. E. Bjorklund in 1891, who stayed until 1893. Since then a number of pastors have served. In later years the Mission Friends adopted the name "Covenant" for their denomination. In reality, they are just an offshoot from the Lutheran church in the same manner as the Methodists are an offshoot from the Episcopalians or the Church of England. Here in the United States, the denominations have collaborated more closely with the Congregationalists than with other denominations. In Sweden, where they have a membership of about 106,000, their members also retain their membership in the State Lutheran Church and pay their assessment and taxes to this body although for several decades it has been possible for them to resign from this church if they so desired.

### **A SWEDISH METHODIST CHURCH WAS ORGANISED IN 1891**

Forslund wrote that it would be hard to estimate just how many souls comprised the Swedish Community in Tacoma in 1891. Two denominations were already ministering to the spiritual needs of their countrymen in this area but apparently in some circles it was felt that there could be room for one more. The Methodists had been the first religious group to work among the nineteenth century Swedish immigrants to this country. Around 1890 or shortly thereafter, Rev. Eric Sjögren arrived in the Puget Sound area via San Francisco to look over the prospects for his denomination. He was followed by Rev.

C. J. Wigram. Neither of these two traveling missionaries were able to form any new congregations. However, in 1883, Rev. Andrew Farrell was assigned to the area for a period of three years. He was able to organize a congregation in Seattle in December, 1883. Rev. Farrell and the ministers that followed made regular visits to Tacoma but the Swedish Methodist Church was not organized until 1891 by Rev. August Peterson. When Forslund arrived here in 1911, the church and parsonage were located on the S.E. corner at So. 11<sup>th</sup> and J. St. where the congregation remained until it ceased to exist in the later part of the 1920's. This congregation never had any great impact in the Swedish community. The peak in membership probably never exceeded 50 adults with perhaps two or three dozen pupils in the Sunday school. It was the policy of the Methodist Church to rotate their ministers every three years, however, some of the ministers came back to for another assignment after serving somewhere else. Rev. K. O. Bergland served a term in the 1890's and came back 25 years later. J. N. Burdell served around 1906 and came back for an assignment some 10 years later. Among others who served were Andrew Farrell, A. B. Howe, John A. Anderson, John Ovell, and others. Some interesting characters filled the pulpit as laymen from time to time such as Uncle Carlson who spoke the best (or the worst) *Swenglish* you ever heard. Also in close competition was Dr. Sten Sture Nordin who had been a barber surgeon or a medic in the Swedish Army. In Tacoma he worked as a masseur and a physical therapist and the title of doctor must have been self-conferred. He kept his office and lived in the Methodist parsonage until he left the area. Once when he was going to introduce a young lady who was to sing "A Morn of May," he declared that he had heard of September Morn but never a Morn of May. Rev J. W. Beck, who served around 1912, was the only one of the ministers who acquainted himself with the rest of the Swedes and even corralled some of the marriage business which was normally reserved for the Lutheran pastors. The congregation struggled along until about 1927 when it ceased to exist. The church building was acquired by a Pentecostal group who remained there until recently when it was acquired by a "colored" congregation.

### **Swedish Baptist Churches**

Forslund supposed that the members of the Swedish community suffered with the rest of the population when the economic paralysis set in. Despite these depressed circumstances, the Swedish community found room for another church to care for their spiritual needs. The First Swedish Baptist Church was organized on January 21, 1893. A Scandinavian Baptist Church had been organized in 1885. On the membership rolls were Baptists from the three Scandinavian countries as well as some Swedish-speaking Finns. On account of language difficulties and other misunderstandings, the Swedes decided to withdraw and form a congregation of their own. The congregation met first in a rental hall on So. 9<sup>th</sup> and Yakima Ave. and then after a few months, a vacant church building at So. 13<sup>th</sup> and G St. was rented where the congregation worshipped until 1898 when there was another move to 1420 So. J Street. Finally in 1899, the property at the SE corner of South 12<sup>th</sup> and J Street was acquired and a frame church was built the following year. This building housed the congregation for the next four or five decades until property at So. 11<sup>th</sup> and Grant Ave was acquired and a modern church was erected. By then, the use of the Swedish language had been abandoned. Some years previously, an announcement appeared in the Daily Press that "the Swedish Baptist Congregation had shed the last vestige of its Swedish

traditions and henceforth English would be the official language and the congregation would be known as the Central Baptist Church.” As far as can be remembered, this congregation kept very much to themselves and kept aloof from participation in any Swedish undertaking. A notable exception was when there was a local drive for a proposed Swedish museum in Philadelphia in the late 1920’s and again some years later, when the 300th anniversary of the landing of the first Swedish colonists on the Delaware was observed. No membership statistics are available, but during the Swedish period the membership seems to have hovered around 175 to 200.

Just as the Swedish Baptists pulled out of the Scandinavian congregation, the Swedish-Finnish Baptists pulled out of the Swedish Church and formed a congregation of their own around 1908 or 1910. The congregation bought the former Swedish Mission Church at South 18<sup>th</sup> and J St. and moved the building to the vicinity of South 23<sup>rd</sup> and Sheridan. The membership was never very large, but the church also served as a focal point for Swedish-Finnish activities. After some two or three decades, the congregation petered out. The chapel still stands at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Sheridan and has been used by a Pentecostal congregation of some kind. Among the ministers that served, Forslund recalls J. Stormans who, before entering the ministry, was a member of the Swedish church and also Rev. Herman Myhrman, who was a student at the University of Puget Sound along with his ministry. Later he was a missionary to China for a season. Upon his return he taught in one of the local high schools and was also active in Democratic politics.

Bethany Baptist church of Puyallup was also an offshoot of the Swedish Baptist Church. It was first known as the Swedish Bethany Baptist Church of Puyallup, then as Pioneer Ave. Baptist Church and finally as Bethany Baptist Church. Phillip Erickson, owner of Western Monumental Works, resided in Puyallup for several years. He was an interested and practicing Baptist and Forslund presumed that it was through his efforts that the congregation was organized in the first place. The Scandinavian Baptist Church was located at South 10<sup>th</sup> and K Street. After the Swedes pulled out, it seems it became a struggling congregation. Apparently there were less Danes and Norwegians of the Baptist persuasion. They managed to hang together for two or three decades longer until sometime in the 1920’s when they disbanded and the dilapidated church was torn down. The site was subsequently acquired by an Open Bible or Pentecostal congregation known as “Faith Temple” and a fireproof edifice was erected. Forslund mentions that most, if not all, of the finishing work on the church was done by a countryman, K.W. Lagstrom, a carpenter and cabinetmaker by trade who had been the custodian in the former location. All the work was done for practically nothing. Mr. Lagstrom was active in the Swedish societies for year until a revivalist hit the city and he seemed to have got more religion than he could digest and dropped everything - former friends and all. Faith Temple acquired the former Swedish Covenant Church around 1970 and the sanctuary was home to an Italian Fraternal Organization and is now known as Forum Auditorium.

Forslund believed that the Swedish-Finnish Baptist Church Building was the former Swedish Mission Church and had moved from its former location to 23<sup>rd</sup> and Sheridan. However, Leonard Svedberg maintains that it was erected by the congregation. There is no one around to check with at this late date (1975) so there are the two versions.

## Swedish Covenant (Mission Friend) Church

The financial depression had its effect on all activities and among all categories in the early 1890's. As stated earlier, a Mission Friends congregation had been organized among the Swedes in 1889 with 13 members. Forslund learned that the congregation was organized in the home of Charles F. Erickson, then living at 1209 S. Yakima Ave. The group seems to have had a lot of optimism even if they were few in number, for in the next few months they contracted to buy 4 lots at South 18<sup>th</sup> and J Street on which to build a church for the sum of \$5000. They also made preparations to start building a sanctuary. But before the building really got underway, Rev. C.A. Nelson who was the founder and first pastor of the church, received a call to Portland, Oregon and left. One can hardly blame him for seeking greener pastures. The congregation could only guarantee him a salary of \$300 a year. Unless he was subsidized from some other source this seems hardly enough to have been enough to keep body and soul together even in this era. There was a vacancy before Rev. J. K. Bjorklund arrived in 1891. During his pastorate the congregation experienced some growth and the chapel was built. He served until 1893 when he also received a call from somewhere and took off. Before leaving, Forslund thought he found a bride here, a sister of John and C. M. Hedberg, mentioned earlier. These were difficult times. The congregation had shouldered a considerable debt, funds were meager, and the earning capacity of the members very limited. Besides the financial difficulties they also had difficulty in obtaining a permanent pastor. Many calls were extended only to be refused. It is presumed the pulpit was largely filled by laymen during the extended vacancy. About this time, there was a disagreement among the membership that their preachers had to be professionally trained. Most of the members felt that spiritual zeal and the gift of oratory was sufficient. Finally N.J. Lindquist accepted a call in 1895 and served until 1898. He was followed by Rev. M. E. Anderson, also known as *Solskens* (Sunshine) Anderson, who served well into the new century. He then left the pastorate of the Mission Friend's Church but probably remained in the area as a home missionary. In the twenties, he visited Swedish settlements in Western Washington and held cottage prayer meetings and had a small farm on the outskirts of Tacoma where the family peddled milk.

The situation seems to have been about the same in the other Swedish churches. The Swedish Baptist Church seems to have had frequent changes of pastors. There they had one of the deacons and a charter member, F. R. Goranson, to fall back on. He served no less than five times in the pulpit during vacancies. This congregation did not have a church home of their own for the first seven or eight years and as a consequence the congregation worshipped in several rented locations during the early years. The Swedish Methodists seem to have acquired some kind of a house of worship soon after organizing. They did some moving around too, but they seem to have picked up their chapel and taken it with them when they moved.

## Church Growth Continues

The Swedes of Tacoma never lived in enclaves as seems to have been the case in some of the Eastern and Midwest cities - notably in Chicago, Minneapolis-St Paul and elsewhere - even to some extent in earlier days in the Green Lake and Ballard areas of Seattle. Searching the city directories from around

the turn of the century and before, one gets the impression that our countrymen were spread out from Pt. Defiance to Fern Hill and from Portland Ave. to South Tacoma. Yet there are some indications that those of the same religious persuasion preferred to live in the same neighborhood. Knowing something of their background it can be safely stated that most of the Swedish Lutherans preferred 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. in the Prospect, Fife, and Pine St. areas. The Covenanters, then known as the Mission Friends, had their house of worship located at So. 18<sup>th</sup> and J St. and Forslund has located a number of the membership living in the immediate area.

In 1899 Rev. P. A. Matson accepted a call to Minnesota and resigned the pastorate of the Swedish Lutheran church. He was succeeded the next year by Rev. C. Frisk who served the congregation for the next decade. About this time or before, the Swedish community had been blessed with still another church to care for their souls; the Swedish Free Church. This was just an offshoot of the Covenant denomination who in turn had decamped from the Lutherans. This congregation worshipped in a barnlike structure at 14<sup>th</sup> and South M Street. The first pastor seems to have been a Rev. Everlöv about whom nothing is known at this late date(1975). The old church was torn down and replaced with a somewhat better structure sometime around 1915. This was probably the straw that broke the camel's back. The membership had never been very great and the ministers came and went. With the added expense of the new church even if it was not too elaborate, the burden was too much and the congregation petered out shortly after the First World War.

The principal difference between the Free Church and the Covenanters seems to have been in the interpretation of some of the scriptures. Their evangelists were apt to be more vehement in their preaching and some even practiced faith healing. It is said by some that they may have been forerunners of the Pentecostal movement. People still have a flair for religious controversy but there was perhaps even more hairsplitting about the interpretation of Bible passages in earlier days. As far as Forslund could ascertain when he arrived in Tacoma early in the century, the demarcation between the different Swedish denominations was rather sharp. Fundamentalists prevailed. Members of the various faiths were reasonably sure that theirs was the only true and revealed religion and that the almighty looked with favor on their particular faith. They could not stand for the competition from fraternal and secret societies either. No member of a secret or fraternal order was worthy of membership in most of these denominations. In some instances, this extended to membership in labor unions. The Swedish Lutheran Church was especially vehement in this respect, up into the 1920's. As long as the bylaws of the First Lutheran Church were printed in Swedish, it read "The membership in this congregation shall be denied to persons who are members of 'Free Masons' or other ungodly societies." This controversy had really started a decade or so before when the Modern Woodmen (probably the IWW, endnote 3) started to invade some of the Swedish communities in Minnesota and organized lodges of the order. A self-centered Lutheran minister at Chisago Lake, Minnesota decided that no real Christian of the Lutheran faith could be a member of the congregation if he held membership in a secret society. He then proceeded to expel such members who were known to hold membership in secret orders and even read the bans from the pulpit. This controversy had raged for some time in the mid-west and with the arrival of a new minister in the Lutheran Church, it reached Tacoma. It seems, however, that no one was

excommunicated and some compromise was made stating that the members could receive the benefits these societies offered, but should not take an active part in the work. In a few years, when it appeared that a good many of the members had disregarded these inhibitions, the whole thing was forgotten.

Since the congregation was organized in 1893, the Swedish Baptists had worshipped in several rented locations. In 1899, when Rev. N. Hayland was serving as pastor, a site at the South East corner of So. 12<sup>th</sup> and J Street was acquired for a future church home. Erection of the church began some time the following year and the church was dedicated in 1902. The congregation worshipped there for the next four or five decades until a more elaborate edifice was built at So. 11<sup>th</sup> and Grant Ave., the prefix "Swedish" was dropped and the name "Central Baptist Church" was adopted. Rev. N. J. Thornquist assumed the pastorate in 1900 and served until 1904. He was a native of Hallesjö in the province of Jamtland, Sweden. He came to Minnesota in 1881 at the age of 23 and studied for some years at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota with a view of becoming a Lutheran minister. He later converted to the Baptist faith and became a minister in this denomination serving several congregations in the Midwest before coming to Tacoma. While serving a congregation in Bismark, N.D., he was Chaplain of the House of Representatives in North Dakota's legislature 1897-98. Rev. N. J. Thornquist resigned the pastorate of the Swedish Baptist Church in 1904 and was succeeded the next year by Rev. A. P. Ekman, who served until 1917.

The Swedes had five churches to care for their spiritual needs. Just how many other churches other Scandinavian people had here in Tacoma is not known. However, they must have felt in some quarters that this was insufficient, so a corps of "The Salvation Army" came into being in May 1902. For years their citadel was located in the basement in the building (which is still (1975) standing on the north east corner of South 13<sup>th</sup> and Tacoma Avenue) until about 1914 when they erected their own building at South 12<sup>th</sup> and K street. The first officers were a Capt. Anderson and a Lieutenant Bardgren. Whether they were male or female is not indicated and no initials are given. In 1904 The Pacific Coast Division of the Salvation Army was formed and the first commander was Staff Captain Lina Lindstrom.

Rev. J.W. Carlson arrived in 1905 as minister of the Mission Friend's Church. During his ministry, the new edifice at So. 10<sup>th</sup> and I street was erected and he served the congregation until 1913. He was a grumpy sort of fellow and there was not much sunshine about him. Not much of a public orator, he was a fundamentalist to the core and he was absolutely sure that he had the only true religion.

By about 1908 (?), the Swedes in Tacoma were well provided with churches and organizations for their spiritual welfare but there always seemed to be room for one more. The Swedish Lutheran Church in uptown Tacoma had maintained a Sunday afternoon Sunday school branch in South Tacoma for some years early in the century in rented quarters in the Asbury Methodist Church. South Tacoma was then a bustling center and Forslund was told that the northern Pacific Shops employed about 1300 men about that time. There was a rather close knit Swedish Community living out there. If it was the Augustana Synod or the people themselves that started to be concerned about their spiritual welfare, was unknown. At any rate, a congregation named "*Svenska Lutheranska Immanuels Församlingen*" was organized about 1908 or 1909. The preliminary work seems to have been done by a Rev. Nystrom who



left the pastorate after a few months. Just where the new congregation worshipped initially is not recorded. The Visitation Catholic Church had just built their new brick edifice and efforts were made to acquire the old frame church nearby. When these negotiations stranded, Gus Markoff was commissioned to build a Chapel on acquired lots at the corner of So. 88<sup>th</sup> (?) and Birmingham St. In spite of his name Mr. Markoff was a Swede, born in Halland, but other dates are lacking. The chapel probably had a seating capacity of around 100. Later Mr. Markoff built a parsonage next door. A kitchen and a hall for social gathering were added to the church later. After Rev. Nystom's departure, a call was extended to Rev. Axel M. Green who was then serving a congregation somewhere in Minnesota. Rev. Green accepted and served Immanuel until 1915 when he accepted a call to a church in Ballard. Later he was appointed chaplain and manager of Emanuel hospital in Portland, Ore. Rev. Green is, of course, long gone. He was born in Småland, Sweden and came to Tacoma as a very young lad. Forslund understood that he had an older brother here who passed away. In the minutes of Swedish Order of Valhalla in the late nineties we find the following paragraphs: "Attention is called to two Swedish cripples who were in desperate straits. One named Salvin who had lost both legs in an accident. The other by the name of Green had been severely injured in an explosion." Neither were members of the Lodge but it was decided to appoint a committee to render whatever aid they could. A collection was started with \$10 appropriated from the treasury. The committee approached the county commissioners who agreed to supply Salvin with artificial legs. Green seems to have succumbed from his injuries. The 1895 City Directory lists Axel M. Green as a waiter in W.D. Wallace's' restaurant 1120 C. St. Room 718 South Yakima Ave. He was born in the late 1870's so he could only have been around 17 years old then. A couple of old-timers remembered him as a very good pool player. After he lost his brother and through the influence of the minister of the Swedish Lutheran Church which must have been Rev. Matson, he decided to dedicate his life to the church and went east for his education. Having reached his goal, he was now ordained and back in the west again as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in South Tacoma.

Initially it may have appeared that the Immanuel Church would have some kind of a future. The country was growing, people were coming west and the Northern Pacific Shops were expanding. So was the nearby Griffin Wheel Foundry (where Forslund made his living for over forty years). However, newcomers to the area were more apt to settle in an area about two miles east then best known as the "Sixth Addition" even if they did make their living in South Tacoma. So the membership of the church never increased much over the original families plus nominal Lutherans who would attend the services occasionally. There were some interesting persons in these pioneer families. He remembers the Henry Delin's, Pete Johnson's, Pete Levin's and Charlie Orman's. All these fellows were blacksmiths. Delin had several sons that became active in several lines of business, all passed away at an early age. Pete Levin married Mrs. John (Alma) Nestrom, who was a real pioneer in South Tacoma, having settled there with her first husband in 1891. Pete was quite a bass singer and belonged to the Swedish Male Choruses existing at the time. Charley Orman was something of a character. He was a native of Värmland, Sweden and like most Värmlanders he was witty and always had a suitable reply ready. Charley was not stingy but he had a way of hanging on to his money where he would make a profit and he acquired a number of houses around 47<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Washington and Adams Streets. There were Swedes in all the departments in the shop; John Hallen, Herman Felt, and others were over at Griffin Wheel Works. Most

of these were members of Immanuel Church. Noticing the trend of the Swedes settling in the Sixth Addition, Rev. Green started a mission in a rented hall at 56<sup>th</sup> and M St. Eventually this mission grew into Swedish Lutheran Bethel Congregation organized in 1914. Besides serving Immanuel, Rev. Green also preached in Olympia one Sunday per month. After Rev Green left for Ballard, Rev. Herman Anderson was assigned to the pastorate. He was a native of Blekinge, Sweden and had arrived in Minnesota before the turn of the century. Early in life he had been the hired man on Forslund's father in law's farm in his home province. Rev. Anderson served until 1920. For the next several years the pulpit was occupied by no less than a dozen ministers, students and laymen. Services became more or less irregular. Rev. E. A. Larson arrived in 1928 and by then there was just a remnant of the membership left and they united with the Bethel Church sometime during the depression years. The parsonage had been disposed of before 1920. The chapel was sold to the Visitation Catholic Parish and is now known as Bennett Hall.

Early in 1911 Rev. C. E. Frisk resigned the pastorate of the Swedish Lutheran Church after tenure of 10 years. There was a rumble that all was not amicable between the pastor and some of the members of the congregation. He had his followers and there were some resignations but there was no exodus. A pioneer family did transfer to an English speaking Lutheran Church. Rev. Frisk had a call to Ballard where he served briefly before accepting a call to a large church in Taylors Falls, Minnesota where he perhaps served the rest of his active ministry.

The Christian Science Church on Division and I St. was built in 1911 by Edward Young. Mr. Young was a prominent contractor in this era. Biographical data are lacking but Forslund heard that he was a native of Bohuslan, Sweden and had lived in Chicago before coming to Tacoma. He was married twice. His first wife passed away rather young. He remarried and there were children from both marriages. Other structures to Mr. Young's credit are the Lincoln High School, which he built in partnership with a Mr. Olson who was a Norwegian, and the First Lutheran Church, built under Mr. Young's supervision. He was a long time trustee in this church. He also built a number of commercial structures and apartments.

After Rev. Frisk's resignation from the pastorate of the Swedish Lutheran Church, there was a vacancy of nearly two years. In the interim, the pulpit was supplied by visiting pastors. Rev. Herman Lind occupied the pulpit most of the time. In 1913 Rev. Ernest C. Bloomquist accepted the call. He was then serving congregations on the East Coast and arrived in Tacoma in the fall. Rev. Bloomquist was then a man of about 36 years old. He was born in the mining district in Michigan, but grew up in Duluth, Minnesota. The congregation soon learned that he was a powerful pulpit orator, and spoke English and Swedish with the same ease. He was also a talented musician and a splendid singer. Mrs. Bloomquist, (Florence Lindgren), from Moline, Illinois was also a talented musician and singer. It is cogent that with this new leadership the activities within the congregation increased to a marked degree. Soon after the Bloomquist's had been established, Prof. Per Olsson appeared and was engaged as organist and choirmaster. He was a man about 30 and had received his musical education both in Sweden and Germany and was from Småland. He was a member of American Guild of Organists and earlier had been a professor of music at Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota and had been organist and choirmaster in some of the large Swedish Lutheran Churches in the East. Like most of the musicians, he had his peculiarities. His hair was always long and curly; he always wore a Prince Albert or a cut-away coat; and

was never seen without a walking stick. At times he would be a bit irresponsible in more ways than one but he certainly was a virtuoso on the organ. Each evening service was preceded by a 15 minute organ concert and, as this became known, the church was always well filled. The choir also made great strides under his baton and gained the reputation of being one of the best in the city. Besides his position in the church, he also maintained a downtown studio where he taught piano, organ and theory.

As mentioned earlier, *Svenska Evangelisk Lutheran Bethel Församlingen* came into being in 1914 as an outgrowth of the mission Rev. Axel M. Green had started some time earlier. Charter members were Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Nelson, Mr. and Mrs. Karl W von Walter, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Person, Mr. and Mrs. John Swanson, Mr. and Mrs. Gust Hogdahl, Mr. and Mrs. William E. Dahlberg, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Berglund. At this writing (1975) Mrs. Carl Berglund is the last remaining charter member. Initially the congregation met in the South Side Improvement Club ballroom close to South 56<sup>th</sup> and M St. Soon a building site was acquired at South 56<sup>th</sup> (?) and I Street for \$1010. A modest chapel was erected at a cost of \$1809. Until the chapel was finished some of the services were also held in the Norwegian Lutheran church nearby. Mr. Andrew Nelson was elected the first Sunday school superintendent. He was well and favorably known in the neighborhood as “The bicycle missionary” because he rode his bike wherever he went. In a wider circle he was known as “Hand Car Nelson” because he built hand cars of various kinds in the Northern Pacific Shops in South Tacoma.

Rev R. P. Ekman, who had served the Swedish Baptist Church as minister resigned in 1917. There is no biography and no one seems to remember him now. His successor was Rev. Charles Asplund, who was born in Munkfors, Värmland but moved to Domnarvet, Dalarna when he was a child. He affiliated with the Baptists when he was 18 and emigrated to America in 1881 when he was 19. He graduated from Morgen Park Seminary in 1887 and was then ordained. He served congregations in the Midwest and came to Bellingham, WA in 1902. Rev. Asplund served the Tacoma congregation until 1924.

In 1920 Rev. Hjalmar Sundquist, terminated his pastorate at the Swedish Mission Church. He was succeeded by Rev. H.J. Hedstrom who came from the Roseland congregation in Chicago. Forslund remembers him as an entertaining and forceful speaker of the evangelistic type. He had been a Salvation Army officer in Sweden in his younger years and the experience was noticeable in his preaching. He served until 1923, when he was called to a congregation in Chicago. Rev. Aelfrid (?) Westlind from Fryksande, Värmland assumed the pastorate of the Swedish Covenant Church in 1923. He was then a man close to 40. Endowed with a warm outgoing personality, he made a lot of friends in the Swedish community. Like most “Värmlanders” he had a vivid imagination and was quite an orator. While he could be rather orthodox in his preaching, his sermons were never dull and he had a sense of humor. Rev. Westlind probably served the congregation into the 1930's. A number of years later when he was on his way to a new field in California, he stopped to visit his friends in Tacoma and dropped a remark that it would not be a bad idea for him to get a *hönsförsamling* (Chicken Congregation). If the hens got unruly, at least he could wring their necks.

In 1924, Nels Nelson Grandahl assumed the pastorate of the Swedish Baptist Church. He was born in the province of Ångermanland. There he served as a circuit rider in this denomination and after advanced

studies at the Bethel Seminary in Stockholm, served as pastor at several locations in the northern part of the country. He emigrated to America with his family in 1913 at the age of 31. He had several Baptist congregations in the Midwest before arriving here. With the arrival of Rev. Grandahl, the Swedish Baptists could claim the distinction of having the tallest minister in Tacoma.

On November 4, 1924, a very stormy night, the Swedish Lutheran Church then located at South 8<sup>th</sup> and I Street, was gutted by fire. The fire was blamed on a faulty fire place in the custodian's quarters. The church was built in 1889 and had been a gathering place for the Swedish community for 35 years. There had been a desire of part of the congregation for some time to erect a more modern structure and now this problem became actual. A temporary location for the morning services and Sunday school were secured at Valhalla Hall. Sunday evening services and special gatherings were held at St. John English Lutheran Church. For larger gatherings, like an early morning Easter service and the early morning "Swedish *Julotta*", the First Christian Church at South 6<sup>th</sup> and K St. was usually obtained. This was a large fire proof edifice built in 1908. It was abandoned in the sixties when the congregation built a new church plant at 6<sup>th</sup> Ave and Orchard St. Western Clinic now occupies the site.

A story from this era is a little too good not to relate. The First Baptist Church downtown had a minister, Oscar Johnson, who was a great story teller. In spite of his name it is doubtful that he had any Swedish ancestry. He was from the Deep South. Once when his sermon was something about "cooperation" he declared that cooperation was a word that had been coined by the early Swedes in Minnesota. He informed his congregation that he had learned that a cow is called "ko" in Swedish. In the summertime when flies, mosquitoes and horse flies were bad, the cows stood there and switched their tails but could only reach so far. Then a couple of cows discovered that if they reversed themselves so one would have the head where the other had their stern they could keep themselves comparatively free from flies. The Swedes farmers noticed this and called it "ko-operations."

After the debris had been cleared off after the fire of the Swedish Lutheran Church, plans were made to rebuild in the same location. However, voices were heard that, as long as we are going to build a substantial church, why not build it in a more central location? There were sentiments both pro and con. Eventually a deal was made for the NW corner of South 6<sup>th</sup> and I St. just two blocks north of the former location. By now the prefix "Swedish" had been dropped and the congregation was known as "The First Lutheran Church" which was correct. It was the first Lutheran congregation that had been organized in Tacoma. Sometime later the First Norwegian Lutheran Church got a new minister who tried to appropriate the distinction of being "First" and even headed the advertisements about the services in the daily press with two clasping hands with the following motto "Welcome Hands for Friendships Tie, Extends First Lutheran Church on Eye." Well, even though the First (Swedish) Lutheran Church was homeless and no longer on I St, it did not mean that they were willing to give up the distinction of being "First" in the field (the Swedish Lutheran Church was founded in 1882 and the Norwegian in 1887). There were some rumblings about it out in the community and Forslund presumed that the matter was settled amicably. Most churches founded by ethnic groups in pioneer days with a foreign prefix dropped the prefix during this era and adopted new names and this was probably an aftermath of the post-war hysteria. The Norwegian Lutheran Church became "Messiah Lutheran Church."

Building of the new First Lutheran Church got under way early in 1926. Contracts were let piecemeal. Some labor was hired and some was donated. Construction went along as money became available. The new location did not exactly sit well with everybody. A Lutheran church of another synod had been located one short block north for decades and it was felt in some quarters that First Lutheran was infringing on their territory. But as nobody chose to make an issue of the matter, the opposition - if there ever was any - soon died away. Edward Young, a member of the Board of Trustees of the congregation was in charge of construction. By the end of the year or early 1927, the superstructure was up, the roof was on and the basement was finished enough so the congregation could move in and hold their regular services there. The sanctuary was not finished for several years afterwards. Large services, like the early morning Easter and Christmas morning services that drew a large crowd of both members and nominal Lutherans, were still being held at the First Christian Church. As usual the women proved to be the money getters. Having no regular gathering place at their disposal, they organized "Silver Teas." Silver Teas in the Afternoon, Silver Teas in the evening, Silver Teas for women and Silver Teas for men. With the Swedish predilection for coffee it is doubtful that tea was served anywhere but it turned out to be an appropriate name for those gatherings. Then it was not below the dignity of the church to serve dinners and make a few dollars. As the kitchen equipment was installed and dishes were available, the ladies decided on a dinner at \$3.00 a plate. This was in the days when one dollar was a big price for a dinner and there were some misgivings that the project wouldn't be a success. But a capacity crowd attended the dinner. There were also the usual subscription drives which were fairly successful. Even some of the nominal Lutherans in the Swedish community responded.

About this time the Swedish Methodist Congregation was dissolved. During the 36 years the congregation had existed, it had only been able to attract a limited number of communicants for the Swedish community. Although the Methodist faith had been brought to Sweden as early as 1806, there were only 12,666 Methodists in Sweden by 1846. The Swedish Methodists were the first in the field in the service to the Swedish immigrants. Likewise, they became the first to be absorbed by the parent organization. As soon as the majority of the members spoke English more readily than Swedish, it was felt there was no further need for a separate organization. In 1942 the last Swedish conference (in Illinois) was absorbed by the English speaking body of the same area.

Rev E. C. Bloomquist received a call from a large congregation in Rockford, Ill and left the pastorate of First Lutheran Church early in 1928. Like everyone else in public life he had his virtues and perhaps some faults, no one can please everybody. During his nearly 15 years he was active in both church and civic affairs. The First Lutheran congregation had a healthy increase in membership during his pastorate. In the mid-1920's the membership was 921 of which 707 were adults and it became the center of activities of the Swedish community. He did a lot to bring the Swedes together during his years in Tacoma. Even the Covenant Church had a farewell party for him before he left.

During the vacancy of a few months, Rev. Otto R Karlstrom served as interim pastor. He was also a native of Småland and had sailed the seven seas in his youth and had arrived in America in 1901 and had graduated from Augustana College a decade or so later. He was the organizer and former pastor of

Bethany Lutheran Church in Seattle. Later he organized a Lutheran Mission for sailors, loggers and itinerant workers in Seattle, with a branch in Tacoma.

Rev. Ernest O. Svenson of Duluth, Minnesota was highly recommended as a successor to Rev. Bloomquist, and was extended a call which he accepted. He had received all but his theological education in Sweden and had arrived in America at a rather mature age. On a visit before he assumed the pastorate, it was discovered that he was an ineffective speaker and that he had a peculiar accent. No doubt he was a sincere and earnest clergyman but his misfortune was that he came from the west coast of Sweden from an area where most of the people were strong fundamentalists and followers of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century clergyman Sehartau (Sic) - there very few if any from this area in Tacoma. He also came from higher strata of society than the ordinary immigrant and his former pastorate had been an all English-speaking congregation. Shortly after his arrival he declared that while serving this English speaking congregation, he had lost his capacity to speak Swedish and insisted that the once a month Swedish service be cancelled. This did not sit too well with some of the older members. But a compromise was reached whereby there would be an afternoon Swedish service once a month. The attendance at these services turned out to be larger than expected, which did not exactly please the minister. Sometimes he would absent himself, get one of the old deacons to conduct the service, and read a chapter from some book of homilies for a sermon. The Swedes began to feel that they were being snubbed, especially those who had been raised in the Lutheran faith before emigrating but never united with a church here. These people began to look elsewhere when in need of ministerial services and the First Lutheran lost a great deal of the "good will" from the Swedish Community it had enjoyed ever since its inception nearly fifty years earlier. Apparently he was the wrong man, in the wrong place, at the wrong time. The main Sanctuary was finished during his pastorate. He was rather obdurate in theological matters and there were some skirmishes, and some left in a huff. In the mid 1930's, his father-in-law passed away in the Midwest and left a large farm to be managed. He left to attend the funeral and sometime later tendered his resignation.

Rev. E. Arthur Larson arrived in 1928 from Astoria, Oregon to take charge of the two Swedish Lutheran Congregations on Tacoma's south side. The city of Auburn had also been added to the pastorate. Rev. Larson was born in Ashtabula, Ohio in 1895. He attended the public schools there and later Augustana College, graduating in 1919. Mrs. Larson is the former Ebba Anderson born in Narke, Sweden and she came with her parents to Missoula, Montana at the age of 5. It must have taken a great deal of courage to assume the duties of this pastorate. None of the three congregations had over a couple of scores of members. Only a handful of members remained in Emmanuel in South Tacoma and the remainder of the congregation consolidated with Bethel. Eventually the Auburn church became self-supporting and in 1942 Bethel became an independent parish. Rev. Larson served Bethel for 36 years until his retirement in 1964. Besides his ministerial duties he served as instructor in Swedish for 18 years at Pacific Lutheran University. During his years in Tacoma he earned the devotion and respect of the Swedish population and is usually referred to as "*Svenskarnas Präst*" (The Swedes' Minister). His efforts, even in retirement, to perform ministerial services and to hold an occasional Swedish service and the traditional "*Julotta*" were very much appreciated.

First Lutheran Church must have celebrated their 50th anniversary in 1932 but Forlund could not remember there was much fuss about it. Valhalla Lodge reached their half century mark in 1934. He recalled that Albin Danielson was the "*Allfader*" or president at the time, and arranged for a sumptuous banquet and an initiation a record high of 65 new members, mostly sons and grandsons of early members. Regretfully, within the next couple of years most of them dropped out.

In 1936 Rev. Carl C. Rydell assumed the pastorate of the First Lutheran Church. He was a mild mannered man, Minnesota born, understood Swedish quite well but not proficient enough to preach a sermon. Unlike his predecessor, he did not make an issue of the language question and as far as Forslund remembers, did not get into any controversies with the membership. He was generally well liked and served the congregation for the next couple of decades

Rev. Nelson served the Swedish Baptist Church after Rev. Grandahl left for Minnesota in the early 1930's. Rev. Bror O. Lundgren assumed the pastorate in 1941. He was from Västerbotten, Sweden and had arrived in America in his teens. The church was now known as The Central Baptist Church. The Swedish Baptist conference also had discarded its Swedish prefix and became known as the Baptist General Conference. Rev. Lundgren served the congregation until 1975 when he retired. During his pastorate the old church and parsonage at South 12<sup>th</sup> and J St was disposed of and a new church was built at South 11<sup>th</sup> and Grant Ave. The membership which was 182 when he arrived, increased to over 300 (?).

Rev. Seastrand had succeeded Rev Rydell in the First Lutheran Church. He inaugurated a custom to hold a Swedish service on Sunday afternoon on the first Sunday in November each year. He was the son of a Swedish Lutheran minister and was born in Iowa. As a child he had adsorbed enough Swedish that he was able to conduct the liturgical part of the service himself but always got Rev. E. Arthur Larson from the Bethel Lutheran Church to preach the sermon. Rev. Seastrand declared that his folks only paid him a nickel a week for learning Swedish. "If they had paid me more money I might have learned more". During Rev. Seastrands pastorate, the time honored Swedish Lucia Festivals were also revived. He was a genial fellow and was generally well liked. With his bearing and voice he would have been fit timber for a Dean or a Bishop if he had been in Sweden. His successor was a Rev. Signes who was of Icelandic descent. The present pastor (1976) is Rev Lowell Erickson, also a son of an Augustana minister.

Perhaps we should not leave the First Lutheran Church without mentioning "Erma" who was a fixture there for 45 years. Miss Erma Anderson went to work there in 1928 as a part time secretary to the pastor 4 hours a day at a salary of 25 dollars a month. Before long this became a full time job and along the way she was a secretary to 5 pastors, two assistant, 15 interns and so many council presidents and committee chairmen that nobody would be able to count them. Erma kept the church running and was expected to arrange everything to the extent that when she retired in 1973, some of the parishioners were really afraid that the church might fall apart. Miss Anderson was born in Tacoma, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Edward Anderson. Mr. Anderson was born in Vissefjards, Småland and came to the mid-west in 1884 and to Tacoma in 1888. Mrs. Anderson was the former Thilda Amelia Hendrickson who passed away in 1904 when Erma was only two years old. Eventually Miss Cornelia Larson adopted Erma.

Cornelia was a seamstress and a native of Stenbrohult, Småland and had arrived in Tacoma in 1904. It is probable that she had arrived in America much earlier. In August 1963, Rev. E Arthur Larson reached his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. As it is the rule of his denomination that this is the proper time for a clergyman to retire, he then tendered his resignation from the pastorate of Bethel Lutheran Church. A call was extended to Rev. Lyndon K. Murk then serving a Lutheran Congregation in Great Falls, Montana. The call was accepted and Rev. Murk arrived in February. Rev. Murk was born in Willmar, Minnesota but grew up in Bellingham, WA. His ancestors came from Sweden perhaps 100 years ago and he is of the third or fourth American generation. His ancestors seem to have had their roots in both Gotland and Småland and continued the early morning Christmas service (Julotta) . He is proficient enough in Swedish that he is able to conduct the liturgical part of the service while Rev. Larson preaches the sermon (1975). Endowed with a very fine voice, he has for some years been a member of the Runeberg Chorus and when this chorus which specializes in Swedish songs went on a tour to the Swedish speaking part of Finland some years ago, he was the soloist.

On July 12, 1964, Bethel Lutheran Church celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with appropriate ceremonies. Of the 16 charter members, only Mrs. Carl Berglund remains on the membership roll. By request Mrs. Ester Goranson Larson rendered two Swedish hymns. Dr. A.G. Fjellman president of the NW Synod, preached the sermon. Prof. Theo Karl of Pacific Lutheran University was the lector and gave the history of the church in three parts "The Early Years – The Middle Years- and the Latter Years". Mr. John Langlov played the offertory. His mother, Mrs. Lorimer Langlov, was one of the first organists of the church. An exhibition of pictures and other memorabilia was arranged in the educational wing of the church.

The Covenant congregation disposed of their church and adjacent property at South 10<sup>th</sup> and I Street in the late sixties. The edifice was dedicated in 1909 and built under the supervision of Mr. Olof Larson, a prominent member of the congregation and at the time one of the more prominent builders in Tacoma. It is a solid structure with pleasing lines and one look should convince anyone that it will be sitting there a century hence and by that time perhaps will be regarded as a national shrine. The purchaser was "Faith Temple," a Pentecostal organization. This was the last church built by pioneer Swedes that their descendants abandoned. Their new church at South 36<sup>th</sup> and Orchard Street is out in the brush and does not appear nearly as interesting. Forslund mentioned earlier that this congregation was founded in 1869 by a small group of newcomer Swedes. He later learned that the group met in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles F Erickson, 1209 South Yakima Avenue.

Bethel Lutheran Church, which was the last organization in Tacoma founded by the Swedes, also observed their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1974 with a special service and an anniversary dinner after the services. The speaker of the day was Rev. Roger Olson of Portland, Oregon. The topic of his sermon was "Sixty Years of God's Grace."

By the late 1940's most of the homogeneity which marked the Swedish community in Tacoma had disappeared. The former Swedish churches were eager to be accepted by the general public and apparently would just as soon forget about their origins.